



**BLIGHTED PROPERTY REVIEW COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 24, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Blighted Property Review Committee (BPRC) was held on Thursday February 24, 2022, at 11:30 AM in Council Chambers of the City of Warren Municipal Building, 318 W. Third Avenue, Warren, PA.

ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Denise Whipp called the meeting to order. Members present included Vice Chair Denise Whipp, Dave Krogler Fire Chief, Doug Hearn, and Maurice Cashman. Also present were Randy Rossey, Director of Codes & Planning; Mike Holtz, DPW Director; Scott Taylor, Zoning & Ordinance Enforcement Official; and Kelly Conti, BPRC Recording Secretary. Absent from the meeting: Chair Ray Pring Jr.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS

James Embrey – representing 1022 Spring St.
Josh Cotton – Warren Time Observer

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon a motion by Mr. Hearn and a second by Mr. Krogler, the minutes of the January 27, 2021, meeting were unanimously approved as presented by those present.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence to come before the Committee.

CONSIDERATION OF 1ST DECLARATION OF BLIGHT

1022 Spring Street – Per Mr. Taylor the criteria put in place by the Committee in December 2021 that Mr. Embrey had to meet, such as the water service being turned on and windows being intact to prevent rodents from entering the building, have not been met as of February 7th, 2022. Mr. Embrey asked for a listing of the tasks he was supposed to complete so he could be sure to address each one, as his understanding was that he was to get the water and sewer turned back on. He informed the committee that a further call after the December meeting resulted in finding out there was an outstanding sewer bill, he was not aware of, that needed to be paid before the water could be turned back on. In email correspondence with either Mr. Rossey or Mr. Taylor he was directed to speak to the tax office. Larina from the tax office was able to contact the sewer company and get the issue resolved. This took a few days, but he was finally able to get a turn on date scheduled with the water company. Mr. Embrey provided the committee with a copy of a letter from the water company stating the water is to be reinstated on 3/2/22. Ms. Whipp requested an update on the status of the rest of the utilities at the property. Per Mr. Embrey, the house has electricity and electric heat. He offered to provide up to date billing showing it was paid, if needed. Mr. Krogler noted that at the December meeting Mr. Embrey stated there was someone interested in purchasing the property and that the committee had given him until February to show a letter of intent to purchase or a listing with a realtor. Per Mr. Embrey he doesn't have the property listed with a realtor and doesn't have any intent to sell the property. He did

attempt to contact the next-door neighbor as it is the neighbor's father that is interested in the property but hasn't heard back from him regarding wanting to look at the property for possible purchase. Mr. Embrey stated he wasn't aware there was a broken window on the property but would be going over within the month to get that fixed. He said there are some things that need to be fixed before he makes his decision of whether he wants to sell or rent out the property. Per Mr. Rossey, his last correspondence with Mr. Embrey was on Thursday January 13th when he emailed him letting him know the City was going to post the property uninhabitable because he failed to have the water service turned on by the agreed upon timeframe. It also informed him he would receive an official notice in the mail. Mr. Rossey informed Mr. Embrey, if the water does get turned back on the City would remove the uninhabitable posting. He also noted that if Mr. Embrey brings everything else into compliance, they would consider removing it from the blighted list. Mr. Embrey asked if a picture of the repaired window would suffice for the city. Mr. Taylor said he would have no problem with a picture or just a simple email stating it had been fixed, alerting him to check the property. Mr. Embrey then asked if there was anything other than getting the water turned back on that needed done to get the uninhabitable posting removed from the house. Per Mr. Taylor, the city needs to know that all the utilities are hooked up to the house, not necessarily on in the house. The water can be turned on to the house with the main line shut off. Mr. Embrey asked how he was to let Mr. Taylor know that the water was turned on. Per Mr. Taylor, an email or phone call would suffice. Once he confirms with the water company, he will remove the uninhabitable postings. Mr. Taylor asked Mr. Embrey to contact him by March 2nd or 3rd alerting him the water has been reinstated and the window has been repaired. This would be pending agreement from the committee to table this until the March meeting. Mr. Embrey asked Mr. Rossey if he had a copy of the registered letter, he had sent him in the mail, he wanted to question some of the sharper wording in the letter. Neither Mr. Rossey nor Mr. Taylor had a copy present. Mr. Embrey stated he believed the wording he was concerned with had something to do with the property being condemned. He felt the word condemned had a different meaning than being uninhabitable. Mr. Taylor's response was that if you look under the word condemned on the posting it states that it was condemned due to it being uninhabitable. This is standard wording on all condemned postings for properties that are deemed uninhabitable. Mr. Embrey asked for confirmation that this didn't mean the property needed to be destroyed, Mr. Taylor confirmed. Mr. Taylor asked if Mr. Embrey remembered the time frame that was put on the letter to abate the issues. Mr. Embrey did not but recalled something about a \$500 charge to be able to do something to which Mr. Taylor responded those are penalties that can be charged for non-conformity within the allotted timeframe. Mr. Embrey asked for confirmation that he did not have a \$500 fine against him and that if he gets the water turned on and the window repaired by 3/2/22 he wouldn't have any fines to pay and the posting will be removed. Mr. Taylor confirmed this. A motion to table this property until the March meeting was made by Mr. Krogler and seconded by Mr. Cashman. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Embrey inquired if he needed to attend the March meeting. Mr. Taylor stated he could speak to the committee on Mr. Embrey's behalf if the water has been reinstated and the window repaired.

104 Water Street – Per Mr. Taylor, this property has been an issue for quite a few years. He was recently able to make contact with the owner, Mr. Clark, and found that he doesn't live in the country, and he only gets mail packages once a month or so. In 2007 the City posted this property uninhabitable. It was later sold to another party, neither of which fixed any of the issues with the property. The utilities were removed in

2007. Mr. Taylor presented the committee with a fact sheet listing the property maintenance issues. Mr. Clark purchased this property via a tax sale a couple of years ago. Mr. Clark's intentions with this property were to rehabilitate the three existing apartments on the second floor and turn the first floor into a single apartment for him to use when he is in the country. The Covid-19 Pandemic put a damper on his plans as the cost of materials skyrocketed and contractors were difficult to obtain. Mr. Taylor reviewed some of the current issues with the building such as repairs needed to the brick exterior, the windows, and water going into the basement from the parking lot area through open windows in the basement. Mr. Taylor expressed his concerns of bricks falling from the third floor on pedestrians due to the current state of deterioration along with the possibility of a child or someone else getting in through the broken basement windows. During a phone conversation on February 7th, Mr. Clark stated he would contact a civil engineer to make sure the building was structurally sound since it has been vacant for so long and then start reaching out to contractors to find one to address the issues. He did offer to send up a key to allow the Mr. Taylor access to the inside of the building, but Mr. Taylor opted out since he is not sure of the safeness of the structure. Ms. Whipp asked if Mr. Clark has seen the inside of the property? Mr. Taylor responded yes; he was in it just over a year ago when he purchased it. Ms. Whipp asked Mr. Taylor to make sure the owner was aware that he could attend the BPRC meeting via Zoom or by phone. Ms. Whipp also asked for confirmation if it was 2018 when he purchased the property. It concerns her that he has let it sit for so long and is using increased material costs as an excuse when he took ownership of it four years ago. Per Mr. Taylor, County Assessment shows the final sale date was February 8, 2019. Mr. Cashman made a motion to table this until the April meeting with the stipulation that the owner attends the April meeting either by phone or Zoom. Mr. Hearn seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

516 Prospect Street – Per Mr. Taylor, the owner of this property lives in Florida. There have been property maintenance issues with this property for years. A few years ago, there was a notice of violation sent out by the Codes Department for a derelict shed on the property stating it was to be demolished, but it was not followed up on for pandemic reasons or whatever it may be. He restarted the process with this property and just a couple of days ago he was able to make contact with the owner, Tammy Rice. He had been told by neighbors that there was work being done on this property a couple of hours a day, but he was not able to make contact with them. There were some violations sent out a couple years ago regarding the roof, which has since been repaired and now has a metal roof. There were some clutter and garbage issues that he was told a couple days ago have been addressed, but he hasn't went out to confirm yet. Remnants of the shed that was to be demolished are still there. There are utility issues as well with this property. Per Ms. Rice the water was to be turned back on yesterday, the electric was on, and the gas was to be turned on by the first week and a half of March. He informed her that once the last utility has been turned on, he will remove the uninhabitable postings. Her intent is to then sell the property. Mr. Krogler made a motion to table this to the March meeting pending a report from Mr. Taylor that the trash has been picked up and the utilities have been turned on. Mr. Cashman seconded the motion. The motion carrier unanimously.

PROPERTIES UNDER CONSIDERATION OF 2ND DECLARATION OF BLIGHT

7 Hinkle Street- Per Mr. Taylor, four days before last month's meeting Mr. Moats was in his office at which time an agreement was made. Mr. Moats obtained a permit to repair the sidewalk that is also an issue with this property. He advised Mr. Taylor he would

attend last month's BPRC meeting, but he did not show up. He was also sent a notification in the mail notifying him that the Blighted Property Committee moved for a declaration of first blight on this property. There hasn't been any contact received from Mr. Moats regarding his absence at the last meeting or the declaration of blight notification. Mr. Cashman made a motion to table this until the March meeting. Mr. Hearn seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Cashman asked what the process was after a property is declared second blight. Mr. Rossey explained that once the BPRC declares second blight on a property it then moves to the Planning Commission for review. If the declaration of blight is upheld by the Planning Commission, the property then moves on to the Redevelopment Authority for consideration as to what to do with the property.

POTENTIAL BLIGHT CANDIDATES:

Ms. Whipp explained to new members of the committee that this will be a list of potential properties that are on the radar for blight issues. There haven't been any notifications sent out or any type of contact made with the owners regarding these properties being watched for blighted issues.

Mr. Taylor presented information as to why the properties below are on the blight radar:

- * 128 Water Street
- * 209 Jackson Avenue
- * 8 Morrison Street
- * 417 Laurel Street.
- * 1024 Spring Street

Update from the Planning Commission and RDA

306 Prospect Street – Per Mr. Taylor, the Planning Commission upheld the BPRC's decision of second declaration of blight for this property. This will now move on to the RDA, however, he recently found out the LLC Company that owns this property is currently in litigation with the Commonwealth, so he is not sure where this property will stand with that litigation. He received the registered mail receipt cards signed by the LLC, but they choose not to respond or show up to any of the meetings they were invited to attend.

Old Business

Mission Statement –

Mr. Pring was not present at the meeting to provide an update.

New Business

There was no new business to be addressed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

With there being no further business to come before the Authority, the meeting was adjourned upon motion by Mr. Cashman and a second by Mr. Krogler. The motion carried unanimously.

The next meeting will be held Thursday, March 17, 2022, at 11:30.
Minutes prepared by Kelly Conti