

**BLIGHTED PROPERTY REVIEW COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 26, 2021**

The regular meeting of the Blighted Property Review Committee (BPRC) was held on Thursday, August 26, 2021, at 11:30 am in Council Chambers of the City of Warren Municipal Building, 318 W. Third Avenue, Warren, PA.

By request of Raymond Pring, Denise Whipp called the meeting to order since he was only present via a zoom conference call.

ROLL CALL

Kelly Conti conducted roll call: Committee members present included Ray Pring via Zoom, Denise Whipp, Greg Fraser & Chief Dave Krogler. Also present were Vince DeJoy (Director of Zoning, Codes & Economic Development), Mike Holtz (DPW Director), Jessica Bee (Code Official), and Kelly Conti (BPRC Recording Secretary).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon a motion by Mr. Pring and a second by Chief Krogler, the minutes of the June 24, 2021, meeting were unanimously approved as presented by those present.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS

John C. DiPierro – representing 58 Locust St.
Hudson McKown – via conference call – representing 820 Carbon Place.
Brian Ferry – Warren Times Observer

CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence received

PROPERTIES UNDER CONSIDERATION OF 2ND DECLARATION OF BLIGHT

104 W. Third Avenue (East Street School House Apts., Inc.) - Property owner, Mr. Huck was not present at this meeting. Jess Bee stated that Mr. Huck was in the office yesterday and this morning obtaining permits, discussing progress and future plans. Per Mr. DeJoy, Mr. Huck is in the process of obtaining a demolition permit so he can bring everything down to the roof line prior to having Fox & Son's Excavating, LLC demolish the building.

During these discussions, Ms. Bee informed Mr. Huck he needed to submit an Asbestos Abatement and Demolition/Renovation Notification Form to the DEP to show the property has been abated and provide the Codes Department with proof of submittal. Per Mr. DeJoy, the environmental contractor sent all the laboratory analyses to the DEP from their end and Mr. Huck is working with Fox & Sons Excavating, LLC to provide the remaining documentation needed. Mr. Fraser expressed concerns regarding the length of time this property has been on the table. Mike Holtz and Mr. DeJoy explained some

of the issues, including denied grants to Mr. Huck and to the County as one of their total buildings on their application for the Blight Remediation Program. The County delay took approximately one year. Mr. DeJoy informed the board once the building is demolished, Mr. Huck's plans to build two new houses that will be constructed to fit the character of the neighborhood. Mr. DeJoy stated he would be willing to assist Mr. Huck with any programs and grant funding that might be available. Mr. Fraser questioned the appeal rights of Mr. Huck if the board moved this property to Second Blight status. Per Ms. Bee, Mr. Huck had already been through the appeals process as part of the first declaration of blight. A second declaration of blight would go to the Planning Commission to be certified as a blighted property and would then fall into the hands of the RDA. Denise Whipp asked if there would be any benefits to having this property in the hands of the RDA. Mr. DeJoy pointed out that it would be in the best interest of the City to keep this property in the public sector where Mr. Huck plans on building two new homes, instead of having to pay demolition fees for a property that would be left vacant due to lack of funds to infill with a new structure. Mr. Fraser made a motion to table the second blight discussion on this property for one more month based on the recent good faith effort being made by Mr. Huck. Mr. Pring stated that he reluctantly seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mr. Fraser requested Mr. Huck be present at the September 23rd meeting.

500 Market Street - Jess Bee sent a letter to the property owner Mr. Manuel Rebecchi, inviting him to the July meeting but received no response. Vince DeJoy has been in contact with the contractor in charge of fixing up this property. Mr. DeJoy showed multiple pictures of progress and upgrades that have been done. The contractor will continue to work on adding new carpeting, tile, baseboards, etc. Mr. Rebecchi plans to put the property on the market for sale within a month. Greg Fraser moved to table for another 30 days, Raymond Pring seconded the motion. Mr. DeJoy inquired if it was necessary to keep this on the table. Denise Whipp expressed safety concerns with the stairs and railing on the front of the building. Jess Bee added that they have a permit but haven't called her for an inspection yet. Motion to table for another 30 days stands with all in favor.

58 Locust Street - Mr. DiPierro informed the committee the house had been gutted and abandoned by the previous occupants who defaulted on the land contract. He currently has two parties interested in purchasing the house. Jess Bee asked Mr. DiPierro if he was advertising the property for sale, he declared he could but was not at this time due to two current offers. The first offer is from a neighbor to the north who is interested in using the property for parking and possibly installing a garage. The second offer is from a lady interested in rehabbing the property. Mr. DiPierro noted he would be taking a big loss with the current offers. One potential buyer presented Mr. DiPierro with an offer letter a few weeks ago. Greg Fraser asked if it has been reduced to a written contract, per Mr. DiPierro it has not. Mr. DiPierro stated he felt confident he would have a written declaration of sale within the next 60 days. Mr. Fraser requested this to be taken care of within 30 days. Ms. Bee pointed out that due to the open notice of violation, the purchaser must be aware of this blighted process and the corrections needing addressed. The purchaser must also provide a notarized document stating they will abate the property maintenance violations. Mr. DiPierro said he will put Ms. Bee in contact with the interested parties so she can discuss the matter with them. Mr. Fraser asked if Ms. Bee had been inside the building. Per Ms. Bee, she has not recently but

noted she had been told there was no flooring in the building. Per Mr. DiPierro the sub floor is still there. Mr. Holtz stated the City would need some resolution to this quickly. Mr. DiPierro is certain he will be entered into a contract with the neighbor to the north within 60 days tops. Mr. Krogler asked what happens to the blighted status if he sells the property. Mike Holtz stated if Mr. DiPierro chooses the offer to purchase the property and rehabilitate the house, we will be back here very quickly addressing the Blight issues with the new owner. Denise Whipp stated it would be the same as the property on 500 Market Street where the property was on the Blighted Property Committee Agenda when it switched hands, it stayed on as a blighted property under the new owner. If the property is purchased and the house is demolished, the blighted issue would be solved. Mr. Fraser moved to table for 30 days, Mr. Pring stated he felt 30 days was enough time to come back with a contract or a more definitive plan of action and seconded the motion to table. Mr. DeJoy requested that Mr. DiPierro contacts Ms. Bee if he signs a written sale agreement in less than 30 days so we can get things moving and not have to wait for 30 days to proceed further with this property.

219 Liberty Street. - Jessica Bee provided a copy of the first declaration of blight as well as the invitation sent to the owner for today's meeting for the second declaration of blight. Ms. Bee also noted there hasn't been any change in the condition of the building. Mr. Fraser asked if there had been any response from Summer16 LLC. Per Ms. Bee, there has not. Mr. Fraser asked how they acquired the title. Per Ms. Bee it was through a tax sale. She also noted that it is currently up for tax sale again and is currently in the repository. Mr. Fraser stated it was an obvious candidate for a second declaration and made a motion to move it to a 2nd Declaration of Blight, Mr. Pring seconded. All were unanimously in favor.

Presentation of properties to consider for first blight

820 Carbon Place - Mr. McKown was present via a conference call. Ms. Bee stated she had provided the committee with a property fact sheet, photos, a copy of the meeting invitation and email correspondence that Mr. McKown sent in response to the Blighted Property notice with some questions and concerns about the blighted process. She also informed the committee that this property has been vacant for approximately 11 years. The exterior of the structure has been minimally maintained; the grass has been cut but the home itself is missing sections of siding that have been patched back together. There are sections of the eaves and soffits that are missing, rotting and need repaired. The stairs lack the proper landing, guards and handrails, the interior of the structure is unknown. There is no water service, the status of the other utilities is unknown. This structure had a previous first and second declaration of blight in 2011 but Ms. Bee couldn't locate any documentation that further action had been taken by the Planning Commission. The taxes are current and there are no liens on the property. Mr. McKown stated he hadn't received the packet Ms. Bee was referring to and expressed his discontentment of not having factual documentation allowing him to be prepared for this meeting. He informed the committee that he regularly has people interested in purchasing and rehabilitating the property. Mr. McKown does not want any postings to be put on his property that the law and the Enabling Ordinance do not specifically authorize without his supervision. He requested the above-mentioned documents be emailed or mailed to 11 Jefferson St. Warren, PA, 16365 along with any future documents pertaining to his property. Mr. Fraser asked if his intentions are to

continue to offer the property for sale and if there were any current offers. Per Mr. McKown there are currently two interested parties, neither of which have been reduced to a written contract. Mr. Fraser motioned to move to declaration of first blight. Motion died for lack of a second.

Given the length of time this property has been languishing, Mr. Pring motioned to table this for 60 days to allot Mr. McKown time to get this property fixed. The motion was seconded. All were in favor of tabling for the October meeting. Mr. DeJoy requested Mr. McKown attend the October meeting to which he responded he plans to attend. Ms. Bee will send Mr. McKown a letter inviting him to the October meeting.

316 – 316 ½ Oneida Ave - Per Jess Bee, this property has been vacant for approximately 4 years, with very little maintenance during that time. The exterior is in a general state of disrepair. The porch and stairs to the side entrance are unusable. The front of the structure has been overtaken by trunks, trees, and vines. There is no water service, the status of other utilities is unknown. Ms. Bee showed photos of this property and a report showing multiple service requests sent to the property owner over the past few years. Code official Gary Swartz has been working with the property owner, Mrs. Andrea, on those property maintenance issues. She has expressed an interest in demolishing the property but hasn't taken any action in that direction. She has been issued several Quality-of-Life tickets which she has paid or been found guilty at the Magistrate for unpayment of tickets. It's becoming a larger issue as it continues to deteriorate. Taxes are current, there are no municipal liens on the property, but there is a small outstanding sewage bill from several years ago for about \$65. Mr. Fraser moved to declare first blight due to the number of complaints received against this property. Mr. Pring seconded that motion. All were in favor of the motion.

Old Business

Mission Statement – Mr. Pring requested to come back to this at the next meeting.

111 Pioneer Street – Jess Bee stated this property had been under first declaration of blight, the City took it to sale where it was purchased by a new owner who is renovating. The committee rescinded the first declaration back in May or June, but still asked for an update at this meeting. Mr. Bee was unable to reach the new owner through recent attempts but said there have been some noticeable improvements to the property. The owner has obtained all of the required permits.

New Business

306 Prospect Street - Per Ms. Bee this has been vacant for more than 6 months. It's owned by an out of state LLC. This property was left in deplorable conditions by the previous occupant. Due to lack of success in getting the owner to clean up the property, Public Works had to conduct the cleanup for this property. There will be a lien placed against the property for the cleanup fees. There have been multiple complaints against this property. Mr. Fraser would like this to be put in front of the committee to be considered for first declaration of blight. The property owner will be notified of this intent and be invited to attend the September meeting.

1022 Spring Street – Per Mike Holtz, the owner Jim Embree, was supposed to be here to give a presentation of plans for this property. This is Mr. Embree’s aunt’s house that has been vacant for 5 years. Per a previous conversation with Mr. Holtz, Mr. Embree is trying to sell the property to a neighbor to utilize for parking. Per Ms. Bee the water was terminated in 2015 and the status of any other utilities is unknown. There are no municipal liens or debts against the property. There have been multiple complaints regarding the property which have resulted in multiple service requests. Greg Fraser and Denise Whipp agreed to move this for consideration for first declaration of blight.

202 Pennsylvania Ave. East – Mr. Fraser requested an update on the former Swiss Cross building. Ms. Bee stated the previous tax sale was overturned and there had been talk of a relative attempting to purchase the property. The city solicitor office has been involved due to the debt owed to the city. No real effort has been made to purchase the property or stabilize the building. Property maintenance notifications have been sent to the owner. There has been discussion as to whether this would be a good candidate to be put up for sheriff’s sale.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Mr. Pring adjourned the meeting.

The next meeting will be held Thursday, September 23, 2021, at 11:30.

Minutes prepared by Kelly Conti