

## **City of Saint Paul**

15 West Kellogg Blvd. Saint Paul, MN 55102

## Minutes - Final

## **Legislative Hearings**

Marcia Moermond, Legislative Hearing Officer Mai Vang, Hearing Coordinator Joanna Zimny, Executive Assistant legislativehearings@ci.stpaul.mn.us 651-266-8585

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

9:00 AM

Room 330 City Hall & Court House/Remote

#### Remove/Repair Orders

#### 1 RLH RR 23-10

Ordering the rehabilitation or razing and removal of the structures at 1117 JENKS AVENUE within fifteen (15) days after the April 19, 2023, City Council Public Hearing. (Refer to May 28, 2024 Legislative Hearing)

**Sponsors:** Yang

Refer back to LH May 28, 2024 to review work plan, schedule, bids, financing, and affidavit from purchaser.

Eden Spencer, Greater Minnesota Housing Corporation, appeared via phone

Moermond: I understand you let staff know you haven't had a chance to pursue bids, but I wanted to check in and make sure our record is up to date. First, did you close on April 17th?

Spencer: no.

Moermond: what is going on?

Spencer: we applied and received funds from Minnesota Housing towards the rehab, we finally received our housing contract the end of March. I connected with Scott Fergus for access to do the scope of work, and I see we need to get a new Code Compliance Inspection Report done and a Performance Deposit. We also have to work within MN Housing requirements and getting it to bid and then we are hoping to get it rehabbed this summer.

Moermond: how do the MN Housing rehab funds relate to the closing? Why the delay due to that?

Spencer: to get the construction financing from our bank they wanted to see the sworn construction statement. The funding from MN Housing isn't the construction financing, it is to cover the gap between the cost to renovate the building and the price we will sell it for.

Moermond: so you have to lock rehab financing in before the closing.

Spencer: correct.

Moermond: that is helpful to know. Reach out to Clint Zane, he is a building inspector and is the one who runs the Code Compliance Inspection Report team. It seems to me that the current Code Compliance was done in March 2023. That means it is expired by about a month, could you get an extension of the current Code Compliance or possibly if he won't do that could you do a building-only Code Compliance. That means he does a walk through, but not all four trades go through.

How are you folks working out the Performance Deposit? It was posted by the previous owners.

Spencer: it is in the closing agreement.

Moermond: are they getting it back?

Spencer: they'll receive it back and we will post a new one.

Moermond: what is your anticipated timeline for locking in financing?

Spencer: the next month. Will take some time to put together the scope and bid it.

Moermond: May 28th you should have a much better idea of where you are at. If you're really close we can work with you on the pieces that are left. Let's set up a conversation for a month from now. In the meantime, I'm going to send this file to Council for a check in. Do you have any questions?

Spencer: I do not.

Moermond: are you all taking care of the property maintenance, or is it still Lisa Proechel?

Spencer: it is still them.

Referred to the City Council due back on 5/8/2024

#### **2** RLH RR 24-5

Ordering the rehabilitation or razing and removal of the structures at 802 MOUND STREET within fifteen (15) days after the April 17, 2024, City Council Public Hearing. (Amend to grant 180 days)

Sponsors: Johnson

Grant 180 days to rehabilitate the property.

Steve Nolander, CCM Finance/CCM F1, appeared Matt Forster, CCM Finance/CCM F1, appeared

Moermond: I take it the mortgage was not redeemed based on the fact the taxes were paid and you are here?

Nolander: yes.

Forster: Vacant Building receipt, receipt of taxes paid, I have a set of documents from proof of funds, the next is a screenshot of yesterday showing a balance of \$295,000.

Moermond: which would you like on the record? I will accept any of them.

Forster: the first one.

Moermond: so I need \$123,600. The Highland Bank statement?

Forster: yes.

Moermond: for your affidavit I would like you to write and initial from the Highland Bank account, that would be perfect. I won't enter into the record the paid taxes or Vacant Building fee, as that shows up in our system. We can see you've done it. Now, we have the money part done. Next is the sworn construction statement from High Caliber construction. They gave a bid of \$123,550. That's about what we thought.

Yannarelly: it looks more than adequate.

Moermond: per Ms. Zimny's March 15 letter, it looks like everything was tackled. Staff and I agree that you get 180 days to do the rehab and because we're in agreement I expect Mr. Yannarelly can put a note in the system and your contractor can do it as soon as tomorrow morning.

Yannarelly: and no problems at the site.

Referred to the City Council due back on 5/8/2024

#### 3 RLH RR 24-18

Ordering the rehabilitation or razing and removal of the structures at 857 LAFOND AVENUE within fifteen (15) days after the June 5, 2024, City Council Public Hearing.

**Sponsors:** Bowie

Remove within 15 days with no option to repair.

No one appeared

Staff report by Supervisor Joe Yannarelly: the building is a two story, wood frame. duplex on a lot of 3,920 square feet. The property was referred by code enforcement to vacant buildings on August 25, 2021 due to Xcel shut off. The current property owner is Donjia Coleman, per Amanda and Ramsey County Property records. On January 31, 2024, an inspection of the building was conducted, a list of deficiencies which constitute a nuisance condition was developed and photographs were taken. An Order to Abate a Nuisance Building was posted on February 7, 2024, with a compliance date of March 8, 2024. As of this date, the property remains in a condition which comprises a nuisance as defined by the legislative code. Taxation has placed an estimated market value of \$20,000 on the land and \$83,500 on the building. Real estate taxes are current. The vacant building registration fees were paid by assessment on October 3, 2023. As of April 22, 2024, a Code Compliance Inspection has not been done. As of April 22, 2024, the \$5,000 performance deposit has not been posted. There have been eight Summary Abatement notices since 2021. There have been five work orders issued for: Garbage/rubbish, boarding/securing, tall grass/weeds, Snow/ice and vehicles. Code Enforcement Officers estimate the cost to repair this structure exceeds \$100,000. The estimated cost to demolish exceeds \$30,000.

Moermond: Mr. Yannarelly, you heard from Garvis or Jarvis at Guardian Asset Management?

Yannarelly: one was referring to an Excessive Consumption and one about a car that has since been removed.

Moermond: there is no one here, mail was returned from the Lafond address, and I'm wondering if certified mail can be sent to Georgia?

Yannarelly: she did sign for it on March 22.

Moermond: looks like Department of Safety & Inspections sent certified mail of the hearing notice to both the Lafond address, and also an address in college Park, Georgia. There was returned mail from Lafond and for the Georgia address there's no receipt yet indicating the certified mail was signed for. Neither has it been returned. We just don't have a definitive answer, which either way is above the chapter 35 requirements. Lacking any participant in this I'm going to recommend the Council order the building removed within 15 with no option for rehabilitation. I'll ask our correspondence copy Guardian Asset Management, perhaps they have some role and can give us more information.

Referred to the City Council due back on 6/5/2024

#### Staff Reports

## **4** SR 24-47

Consideration of a potential stay of enforcement of demolition for Colleen Pollock, for property at 1058 JESSIE STREET.

#### Sponsors: Kim

Request for stay of demolition withdrawn and therefore LHO recommends denial.

Doreen Pollock, sister of owner, appeared Scott Sax, partner of Doreen Pollock, appeared

[Moermond gives background of appeals process & history of the orders on the building]

Staff report by Supervisor Joe Yannarelly: the building is a two story, wood frame, duplex. The property has been vacant since December 2, 2020 due to a fire. The current property owner is Colleen L. Pollock, per Amanda and Ramsey County Property records.

On August 9, 2023, an inspection of the building was conducted, a list of deficiencies which constitute a nuisance condition was developed and photographs were taken. An Order to Abate a Nuisance Building was posted on August 15, 2023, with a compliance date of September 14, 2023. As of this date, the property remains in a condition which comprises a nuisance as defined by the legislative code. Taxation has placed an estimated market value of \$20,000 on the land and \$60,000 on the building. Real estate taxes are current. The vacant building registration fees were paid by assessment on January 3, 2023. As of October 23, 2023, a Code Compliance Inspection has not been done. As of October 23, 2023, the \$5,000 performance deposit has not been posted. There have been two Summary Abatement notices since 2020 and one work order for boarding/securing. Code Enforcement Officers estimate the cost to repair this structure exceeds \$100,000. The estimated cost to demolish is \$18,500.

Moermond: we do have a Performance Deposit posted December 6th. It was paid by the attorney. And you paid the attorney?

Pollock: I did give her the money.

Moermond: I just bring it up because we have an email from him saying she did pay him that money. He posted it, she didn't. One of the bureaucratic things is do we carry forward the existing Performance Deposit because he posted by him in her name, is it you now, or do we just say officially we're moving it forward.

Sax: we were going to do the work. We did have a contractor look at it Sunday, he came up with \$180,000 as it sat. That's beyond our reach now. We decided that financially, physically, mentally, we weren't going to do it, but we felt we should come and let you know the reasons why. Let Colleen deal with it, we just can't do it. We aren't going to take \$200,000 out of our savings to do this.

Pollock: we thought we would be doing the rehab until this weekend.

Moermond: what you're talking about is often what I try to get people to look at. It isn't just money. It's the impact on the big picture of your life. Recognizing it is so important, especially now and not six weeks from now. That \$5,000 Performance Deposit you can get back. The thing is it is in your sister's name. She's the one who will have to ask for it back again. Mr. Yannarelly?

Yannarelly: it should be a matter of just requesting it back from Robert Humphrey.

Moermond: a couple of sentences in writing from Colleen to him should be enough. Because the City didn't give the grant of time there was no opportunity to perform. I'm glad you've come to a conclusion about it.

Pollock: it was a difficult one.

Moermond: I hope that Colleen lands ok in this whole thing. Because the Council officially asked me to review this, I need to send it back to them again and say you've chosen not to pursue this and my recommendation is to not issue a stay. That's the point at which Mr. Yannarelly can reach out to the contractor for demo.

Yannarelly: we're still waiting on the environmental review.

Moermond: let's put it in front of Council two weeks from tomorrow.

Received and Filed

### 10:00 a.m. Hearings

#### **Making Finding on Nuisance Abatements**

6 RLH RR 24-13

First Making finding on the appealed substantial abatement ordered for 1356 REANEY AVENUE in Council File RLH RR 23-23. (Refer back to April 23, 2024 Legislative Hearing)

<u>Sponsors:</u> Johnson

Layover to LH May 14, 2024 to review affidavit and new purchase agreement. New

purchaser to post \$5,000 PD, current \$5,000 PD recommended to be forfeit.

Joe Steinmaus appeared via phone

Voicemail for Vu left at 10:39 am: this is Marcia Moermond from St. Paul City Council calling you about your proposed rehab for 1356 Reaney. We have Mr. Steinmaus on the line and will follow up with you via email.

Moermond: 3 things we needed to check in on, Mr. Yannarelly will update the record.

Yannarelly: there have been some issues on the property. Had to send an order to secure last week. I haven't been back yet. Garage found open to entry. Last work order was December 19th.

Moermond: when would you be work ordering the garage?

Yannarelly: tomorrow.

Moermond: the garage, the title work, and no affidavit of dedication of funds. Mr. Steinmaus, I know you are nominally partnering with Mr. Vu on this.

Steinmaus: they just got the purchase agreement to us on Sunday. He's going to order title insurance today or tomorrow. People are just worn out.

Moermond: we've asked a couple of times for the affidavit and we keep getting back something from the bank about a line of credit. We're sending him example, and have done so. Some sort of misunderstanding.

Steinmaus: I've got one too, we'll get it in right away.

Moermond: that leaves us with the title work.

Steinmaus: yes, from the purchase agreement from the real owner. With all the assessments and taxes, we have to get title insurance. Mr. Vu will order that today from the title company.

Moermond: is he really hot to get going?

Steinmaus: yeah, they're depressed and have no money and they're ready to go. I talked to them Sunday, but there's 25k in taxes and special assessments. They agreed. Kevin is willing to put up the \$5,000 Performance Deposit.

Moermond: Jodisha still has hers out there. I'll lay this over for 2 weeks to come together.

Laid Over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 5/14/2024

#### **5** RLH RR 24-16

Second Making finding on the appealed substantial abatement ordered for 621 BIDWELL STREET in Council File RLH RR 23-66. (Public hearing continued to May 8, 2024)

Sponsors: Noecker

Continue CPH to May 8, 2024 for permits to be finaled and CC certificate issued, otherwise forfeit \$5,000 PD.

Shannon Powell, Freedom Mortgage, appeared via phone

Staff update by Supervisor Joe Yannarelly: still two open plumbing permits and the building permit with notes that there are several small punch list items to do before that is done.

Moermond: the Code Compliance plumbing permit, and then a second one?

Yannarelly: yes for the gas range.

Powell: that's the only one I'm aware of that is outstanding. They are going to be on site tomorrow for the plumbing inspection. They had a bracket installed and waiting for the connection of the gas, which will be tomorrow between 2 and 4.

Moermond: and the remaining building items?

Powell: those have all been finished and they planned on calling Clint Zane today to schedule that last inspection.

Moermond: this file is in front of Council tomorrow at 3:30, again. I feel like I've been kicking the can down the road for quite a while on this file. Would really love to close it down. I'm going to ask the Council tomorrow to continue it for 2 weeks. If it isn't done then, I'm going to ask them to forfeit the \$5,000 Performance Deposit in place. That seems to be enough time to get things done even if something goes wrong.

Powell: agreed.

Moermond: May 8 will be what we look at then.

Referred to the City Council due back on 4/24/2024

#### Other - Repurchase Appeals

## **7** RLH OA 24-3

Making recommendation to Ramsey County on the application of Fee Owner, Hotland Properties, LLC, for repurchase of tax forfeited property at 732 STATE STREET.

Sponsors: Noecker

Layover to May 14, 2024 at 10 am for further review.

Supervisor Joe Yannarelly: four violations in the last 3 years. So definitely some activity.

Moermond: some police calls, some serious. 2022 was a very bad year at the property. 2020 couple of things. 2021 an assault. Do we have an application for repurchase updated?

Mai Vang: no, just the same one we've had.

Moermond: Ms. Vang hasn't attached the most recent information we had about the woman who has applied for repurchase. The owner is still showing at Hotland Properties, LLC. We have no notion of how she fits into that. Nick Hanson has

indicated their office hasn't investigated how she is related to Hotland Properties. The original app for repurchase didn't list an actual human. Layover 2 weeks to get some answers.

Laid Over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 5/14/2024

#### 10 RLH OA 24-4

Making recommendation to Ramsey County on the application of Danny Tran for repurchase of tax forfeited property at 523 WESTERN AVENUE NORTH.

Sponsors: Bowie

Recommend allowing for repurchase.

Moermond: an application for repurchase from the former owner indicating he has been trying to get financial assistance to get his situation squared away and is asking for some grace. Our job is to look at whether or not this constitutes a municipal problem for Code or Police activities.

Yannarelly: not an issue for Code Enforcement.

Moermond: 17 calls for police in the last 5 years

Yannarelly: most of them had multiples in one day.

Moermond: and a lot looked to be of the nature that didn't constitute a municipal problem.

Yannarelly: suspicious person in the area being reported has happened 3 times. 2 welfare checks the same day. The domestics were two days, twice each day.

Moermond: so not a municipal problem on balance and recommend allowing for repurchase.

Referred to the City Council due back on 5/8/2024

#### 8 RLH OA 24-6

Making recommendation to Ramsey County on the application of David Neel Fodor for repurchase of tax forfeited property at 287 CECELIA PLACE.

Sponsors: Jost

Recommend allowing for repurchase.

Moermond: application to repurchase. Looks like the person gave the money to their father to take care of it, and it didn't. Here we are. We are looking at code and police issues.

Yannarelly: no police calls in the last 2 years. No code enforcement activity.

Moermond: a handful in the last 5 years. Given nothing in the last 2 years, not a municipal problem, recommend allowing for repurchase.

Referred to the City Council due back on 5/8/2024

#### 9 RLH OA 24-5

Making recommendation to Ramsey County on the application of Pang Fang Moua for repurchase of tax forfeited property at 67 MAGNOLIA AVENUE WEST.

Sponsors: Kim

Recommend allowing for repurchase.

Moermond: what about code history here?

Yannarelly: one in the last couple years for code, multiple dealings with car violations if you look beyond that. As far as police you have a reckless discharge of a firearm last August, not too problematic other than that.

Moermond: so not really a problem property in the last 5 years, recommend allowing for purchase.

Referred to the City Council due back on 5/8/2024

### 11:00 a.m. Hearings

# 11 RLH SAO 24-25 Appeal of Colleen Mulcahy to a Summary Abatement Order at 272 RICHMOND STREET.

Sponsors: Noecker

Grant to June 1, 2024 for compliance with the March 28, 2024 SAO.

Lisa Martin, Code Enforcement Supervisor, appeared via phone Nicole Paradise, Ramsey County House Calls, appeared via phone Colleen Mulcahy, owner, appeared via phone Michael Tschida, friend of owner, appeared via phone

Mulcahy: my brother was at the house with me, agreed to half responsibility. He moved out after the first year and stopped participating and paying. How do I go about having him involved?

Moermond: that's really between you guys. You are listed as one of the owners and live there, you have a right to appeal. He is not the appellant and I can't make him participate. Ms. Martin, walk us through what is going on code-wise.

Staff update by Supervisor Lisa Martin: we went out to do the inspection April 19. We met St. Paul Police Department, Ramsey County Calls, her case manager, and Michael Tschida. We did interior and exterior inspection. I worked with her 4 years ago. The interior was definitely more cluttered. There are 22 items on the Correction Notice. There is a disconnect notice from Xcel, I'm not sure the status of this. We did a deadline of May 6, for some of the items

Moermond: the one important finding is right now you didn't find anything that should say it is condemned. You have corrections, things that are wrong, but nothing to the level it needs to be vacated. Is that fair?

Martin: that is correct. All basic facilities are currently on. No condemnation.

Moermond: if the electric gets shut off you would send out a notice with a vacate date?

Martin: that is correct, it wouldn't be immediate.

Moermond: Ms. Paradise, Ms. Martin, did you say Coleen Mulcahy's case worker was there?

Martin: yes.

Moermond: I'll turn it over to Mr. Tschida. You were there Friday, what are your thoughts looking at the list?

Tschida: I heard the number 24. I don't have it in front of me.

Martin: it was emailed May 22 in the morning.

Paradise: I sent a copy yesterday to you, too, yesterday.

Tschida: I'm checking my junk. Oh, yep there it is. Thought I corrected that. I'm sorry about this. No one went on the roof.

Martin: there is leaking on the ceilings and walls.

Mulcahy: the plaster is falling. There's no water.

Tschida: 12 has been addressed. She has two carbon monoxide alarms. I got them yesterday. Ceilings is referring to the plaster. Dryer venting. Locks, dead bolts. Smoke detectors have been addressed. It is a combination I bought. I see the 24 here. It may help me if you could tell me which are due in May and which are due in June.

Moermond: on the last page of the orders, page 4, the first paragraph has them listed out.

Mulcahy: there's no water.

Martin: some of the damage is from the roof leaking.

Moermond: the shingles are significantly curled.

Mulcahy: it was covered by insurance and they said they won't cover it because the shingles are organic. I think I got scammed. Someone filed a claim for the house and it wasn't me. I don't know what to do about that situation. I need from help with law enforcement on these things. Same with the break ins. The police refuse to investigate anything.

[Mulcahy repeats same information as previous hearing about locks and previous tenants]

Tschida: she will have to have a roofer come and give his opinion on the soundness of the roof. I think the cost of a new roof would be the straw that broke the camel's back.

Moermond: are you good with a professional roofer doing an assessment, Ms. Martin?

Martin: absolutely.

Moermond: let Ms. Martin be there when the roofer comes to look at the ceiling and roof and figure out the best professional opinion.

Mulcahy: yeah.

Tschida: I think we should address what we can within Ms. Mulcahy's budget.

Moermond: I'm willing to look at different deadlines for sure. Ms. Martin, did you get into all parts of the building?

Martin: yes, we need access to both floors. The tenant was there.

Moermond: Mr. Tschida, we have this other tenant there. Any comments on that or other parts of the orders?

Tschida: it is a lot to digest. "Fences" is broad. Detached garages. There's no shed. The retaining wall belongs to the other property. There is a fence that doesn't belong to her.

Martin: the garage needs to be secured and there was decayed wood.

Mulcahy: I don't know what is sucking up \$300 a month worth of electricity. I have a fridge; the guy upstairs has a fridge.

Tschida: there's no one stealing electricity.

Mulcahy: they installed extra fixtures

Tschida: then unplug it.

Mulcahy: they turned into monsters and destroyed it.

Paradise: the Xcel bill is \$1,700 and the cold weather rule ends the end of the month. I'm guessing gas and electric will be shut off then. We can help with \$750 but it has to resolve the problem.

Moermond: the original set of orders that started this conversation was about cleaning up the yard. When I see what Ms. Martin wrote up she is thinking you could get an extension through June 6 for cleaning up the yard. Does that sound doable to you?

Mulcahy: yes.

Moermond: I will recommend the Council give you to June 6 to deal with that. Then we have Friday's correction notice and you say are appealing that too, so we can modify deadlines now if we need to.

[Martin explains what item 2 refers to]

Mulcahy: this sounds simple. Rotting wood, peeling paint.

Moermond: and making sure it is secure.

[Martin explains item 3 – rear deck and stairs to back door] Repaired, replaced, or removed.

Moermond: if removed, does it need steps to replace it?

Tschida: there is an existing concrete stairway the deck was built over.

Moermond: that's good news. Both have a June 6 deadline. I'm more concerned about the deck because of the rotting wood. Let's keep that as June 6, and push out the garage repair.

Tschida: June 6 works.

Moermond: Let's say August 5 for the garage. Item 4 the exterior doors?

Martin: the doors to the home need locks for safety.

Mulcahy: I've been trying to get locks for a long time. I finally got one halfway put in through women's advocacy. He didn't finish the frame. The criminals stole the lock. The police don't want to help with that. I can only say I'll do my best.

Moermond: they're saying two weeks to have it done, and I tend to agree for your safety.

Mulcahy: I really agree.

Tschida: the frame is the investment. That helper didn't do a great job but I wasn't there so I don't know what transpired.

[Mulcahy rehashes what happened with the doors from last hearing]

Tschida: there's an inner and outer door. Would a secure outer door work for the nearer deadline and a farther out deadline for the interior door. It is a security door; it has steel bars.

Martin: I'm fine with that. My biggest concern is making sure she is safe.

Tschida: the lock isn't a big investment. It is the frame. I'll take a look at it. See if I can build up the jam.

Martin: back door, basement door, and the front door.

Tschida: technically six doors. Inner and outer in each spot.

Moermond: so the outer door-

Mulcahy: I may be able to file an insurance claim for vandalism. I have police reports. My identity is compromised. My phone and computer are compromised. I'm suffering from a lot of stuff here. No help from the co-owner.

Tschida: we will get as much done as we can by May 6th.

Moermond: our last hearing you said you were on a waiting list for housing, so I wanted to know your plans so you weren't spending good money after bad.

Mulcahy: the list I got on is because I need to repair the locks. I am not safe here. I

have a camera that was hacked. No law enforcement will help with the vandalism or cyber hacking. I told my Arms worker and women's advocate person glitches in the camera. I called the camera police. I don't know what is going on. I looked into other housing because it would be a place I could lock the door. If Michael is by my side—

Tschida: from a distance. She isn't saving money. It is unreasonable to think she has another place to stay. It is 272 Richmond for Colleen. If that changes we'll let the City know. Otherwise, let's concentrate on Richmond.

Mulcahy: they can't stop the crime either. Someone told me I was on a waiting list but the application I had filled out she didn't ask for the application. I have a feeling I'm not really on this list. I had to go to the doctor to get eligible for the service in the first place. I want to finish school to finish my training to get into employment. I want to move by the school so I can be free of getting broken into. There's no security here, but I don't think my application is even in process. I don't know how to explore that. Many things I do on the computer are blocked.

Moermond: do you want Ms. Paradise to reach out and say you are interested in different housing and look at reapplying?

Mulcahy: isn't there NeighborWorks to help with this?

Moermond: maybe. I don't know what their criteria is. They do this kind of work.

Mulcahy: I want to get this place up to par and sell it with my brother.

FOLLOW-UP: Ms. Moermond reviewed the items from the April 26th inspection and attached deadlines to each of them. Additionally, a Legistar file will be created which is an appeal exclusively of the interior orders. This appeal on the Summary Abatement Order for the exterior conditions will remain.

Referred to the City Council due back on 5/8/2024

## 1:30 p.m. Hearings

# **12 RLH CO 24-3** Appeal of Colleen Mulcahy to a Correction Notice at 272 RICHMOND STREET.

Sponsors: Noecker

Grant to June 1, 2024 for compliance with the March 28, 2024 SAO.

See also RLH SAO 24-25 for initial conversation on property conditions.

Lisa Martin, Code Enforcement Supervisor, appeared via phone Nicole Paradise, Ramsey County House Calls, appeared via phone Colleen Mulcahy, owner, appeared via phone Michael Tschida, friend of owner, appeared via phone

Mulcahy: my brother was at the house with me, agreed to half responsibility. He moved out after the first year and stopped participating and paying. How do I go about having him involved?

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Martin: some of the damage is from the roof leaking.

Moermond: the shingles are significantly curled.

Mulcahy: it was covered by insurance and they said they won't cover it because the shingles are organic. I think I got scammed. Someone filed a claim for the house and it wasn't me. I don't know what to do about that situation. I need from help with law enforcement on these things. Same with the break ins. The police refuse to investigate anything.

[Mulcahy repeats same information as previous hearing about locks and previous tenants]

Tschida: she will have to have a roofer come and give his opinion on the soundness of the roof. I think the cost of a new roof would be the straw that broke the camel's back.

Moermond: are you good with a professional roofer doing an assessment, Ms. Martin?

Martin: absolutely.

Moermond: let Ms. Martin be there when the roofer comes to look at the ceiling and roof and figure out the best professional opinion.

Mulcahy: yeah.

Tschida: I think we should address what we can within Ms. Mulcahy's budget.

Moermond: I'm willing to look at different deadlines for sure. Ms. Martin, did you get into all parts of the building?

Martin: yes, we need access to both floors. The tenant was there.

Moermond: Mr. Tschida, we have this other tenant there. Any comments on that or other parts of the orders?

Tschida: it is a lot to digest. "Fences" is broad. Detached garages. There's no shed. The retaining wall belongs to the other property. There is a fence that doesn't belong to her.

Martin: the garage needs to be secured and there was decayed wood.

Mulcahy: I don't know what is sucking up \$300 a month worth of electricity. I have a fridge; the guy upstairs has a fridge.

Tschida: there's no one stealing electricity.

Mulcahy: they installed extra fixtures

Tschida: then unplug it.

Mulcahy: they turned into monsters and destroyed it.

Paradise: the Xcel bill is \$1,700 and the cold weather rule ends the end of the month. I'm guessing gas and electric will be shut off then. We can help with \$750 but it has to resolve the problem.

Moermond: the original set of orders that started this conversation was about cleaning up the yard. When I see what Ms. Martin wrote up she is thinking you could get an extension through June 6 for cleaning up the yard. Does that sound doable to you?

Mulcahy: yes.

Moermond: I will recommend the Council give you to June 6 to deal with that. Then we have Friday's correction notice and you say are appealing that too, so we can modify deadlines now if we need to.

[Martin explains what item 2 refers to]

Mulcahy: this sounds simple. Rotting wood, peeling paint.

Moermond: and making sure it is secure.

[Martin explains item 3 – rear deck and stairs to back door] Repaired, replaced, or removed.

Moermond: if removed, does it need steps to replace it?

Tschida: there is an existing concrete stairway the deck was built over.

Moermond: that's good news. Both have a June 6 deadline. I'm more concerned about the deck because of the rotting wood. Let's keep that as June 6, and push out the garage repair.

Tschida: June 6 works.

Moermond: Let's say August 5 for the garage. Item 4 the exterior doors?

Martin: the doors to the home need locks for safety.

Mulcahy: I've been trying to get locks for a long time. I finally got one halfway put in through women's advocacy. He didn't finish the frame. The criminals stole the lock. The police don't want to help with that. I can only say I'll do my best.

Moermond: they're saying two weeks to have it done, and I tend to agree for your safety.

Mulcahy: I really agree.

Tschida: the frame is the investment. That helper didn't do a great job but I wasn't there so I don't know what transpired.

[Mulcahy rehashes what happened with the doors from last hearing]

Tschida: there's an inner and outer door. Would a secure outer door work for the nearer deadline and a farther out deadline for the interior door. It is a security door; it has steel bars.

Martin: I'm fine with that. My biggest concern is making sure she is safe.

Tschida: the lock isn't a big investment. It is the frame. I'll take a look at it. See if I can build up the jam.

Martin: back door, basement door, and the front door.

Tschida: technically six doors. Inner and outer in each spot.

Moermond: so the outer door-

Mulcahy: I may be able to file an insurance claim for vandalism. I have police reports. My identity is compromised. My phone and computer are compromised. I'm suffering from a lot of stuff here. No help from the co-owner.

Tschida: we will get as much done as we can by May 6th.

Moermond: our last hearing you said you were on a waiting list for housing, so I wanted to know your plans so you weren't spending good money after bad.

Mulcahy: the list I got on is because I need to repair the locks. I am not safe here. I have a camera that was hacked. No law enforcement will help with the vandalism or cyber hacking. I told my Arms worker and women's advocate person glitches in the camera. I called the camera police. I don't know what is going on. I looked into other housing because it would be a place I could lock the door. If Michael is by my side—

Tschida: from a distance. She isn't saving money. It is unreasonable to think she has another place to stay. It is 272 Richmond for Colleen. If that changes we'll let the City know. Otherwise, let's concentrate on Richmond.

Mulcahy: they can't stop the crime either. Someone told me I was on a waiting list but the application I had filled out she didn't ask for the application. I have a feeling I'm not really on this list. I had to go to the doctor to get eligible for the service in the first place. I want to finish school to finish my training to get into employment. I want to move by the school so I can be free of getting broken into. There's no security here, but I don't think my application is even in process. I don't know how to explore that. Many things I do on the computer are blocked.

Moermond: do you want Ms. Paradise to reach out and say you are interested in different housing and look at reapplying?

Mulcahy: isn't there NeighborWorks to help with this?

Moermond: maybe. I don't know what their criteria is. They do this kind of work.

Mulcahy: I want to get this place up to par and sell it with my brother.

FOLLOW-UP: Ms. Moermond reviewed the items from the April 26th inspection and attached deadlines to each of them. Additionally, a Legistar file will be created which is an appeal exclusively of the interior orders. This appeal on the Summary Abatement Order for the exterior conditions will remain.

Referred to the City Council due back on 5/8/2024

## 1:00 p.m. Hearings

#### **Vacant Building Registrations**

## 13 RLH VBR 24-27

Appeal of Chelsea Foss to a Vacant Building Registration Warning Letter Requirement at 69 LYTON PLACE.

Sponsors: Bowie

Waive VB fee to June 4, 2024 to have Fire C of O issued. Make property a Cat 1 VB and allow permits.

Chelsea Foss, owner, appeared via phone

[Moermond gives background of appeals process]

Staff report by Supervisor Mitch Imbertson: residential home not registered in the Fire Certificate of Occupancy program. We received a complaint February 22, 2024 alleging it was unsanitary and occupied as a rental without a Certificate of Occupancy. An inspection was done by Inspector Chute February 26 and the inspector was notified the tenant was in process of being evicted and removed. Reinspection was done February 28 and the tenant was moving out and retrieving final belongings from the property. It was condemned due to being illegally occupied and due to sanitation issues. It was referred to the Vacant Building program for monitoring. The February 27 report has 16 issues including some serious safety issues including clogged plumbing, and two 100 lb. propane tanks inside the property.

Moermond: the tenant was moving out on February 26, so was referred to the Vacant Building program then?

Imbertson: we were told the tenant was moving out prior to any orders from us to vacate, and then 2/28 they appeared to be substantially moved out.

Staff report by Supervisor Matt Dornfeld: we opened a Category 2 Vacant Building March 4, 2024 per the Fire Inspection condemnation. At the time of my inspection, I was unable to confirm vacancy. It did appear tenants were in the process were moving out as there were personal belongings in the front. Nothing to add other than April 16 I did advise the appellant to appeal, which they obviously did.

Moermond: you submitted quite an exhaustive statement Ms. Foss. Why are you appealing?

Foss: I am looking to appeal the condemnation because of the repairs I've done. I have done each of the 16th corrections besides the Certificate of Occupancy. I originally went with Renter's Warehouse, I asked at least once about any license I need to rent, they said no, we'll handle it. It isn't needed in St. Paul. I never researched anything because they said it wasn't needed. The first time I heard of it was during Chute's inspection. The other 15 have been corrected, along with other things. We're actually at the house working today and almost done with repairs. It is looking really good, back to its original glory.

Moermond: you're looking for it not to be condemned and not in the Vacant Building program?

Foss: yes. I'd like a fee waiver if it does have to be in the program, but ultimately I'd

like it out of the program. I'd like to talk to someone about getting the Certificate of Occupancy so when everything is done I can start renting again if that's ok.

Moermond: did you read in the letter that you can go to the website to find the forms? The second to last paragraph on page 2 of the orders.

Foss: the correction notice?

Moermond: yes, the February 27 correction notice. You hired and trusted someone who didn't follow through, but it is still your responsibility. You like to rely on people who are in the business, but you're the owner. I have limited patience with your circumstance. I'm willing to work with you. You're working off a set of orders based off a complaint. Mr. Imbertson was this a comprehensive inspection?

Imbertson: my understanding was that there was access to the whole property, but frequently with sanitation issues and belongings we aren't able to see things as thoroughly. Sometimes additional items may come up when we have proper access.

Moermond: you'd like a full inspection that may include more items than the original 16 items.

Imbertson: yes, work off a complete report so there aren't surprises on a reinspection.

Moermond: this went into the Vacant Building program March 4, we're at the 45-day mark now. 90 days to address the issues would take us to June 4. I will recommend the Council waive the Vacant Building fee through June 4 to allow you to have your Certificate of Occupancy issued. My advice would be to reach out as soon as possible to get that Certificate of Occupancy scheduled.

Shaff: we need a provisional Fire Certificate of Occupancy form submitted.

Foss: I did contact Chute to do the inspection, and he said he was no longer the inspector.

Moermond: that may have been because it was referred to the Vacant Building program.

Imbertson: I believe that your assessment is correct. I would start with contacting Chute, and if there's a reason he can't do it he can let us know.

Referred to the City Council due back on 5/8/2024

#### Orders To Vacate - Fire Certificate of Occupancy

## 9:00 a.m. Hearings

#### 14 RLH VO 24-11

Appeal of David Bustad, tenant, to a Revocation of Fire Certificate of Occupancy and Order to Vacate at 1194 MARYLAND AVENUE EAST.

<u>Sponsors:</u> Yang

Fire C of O issued or property vacated by June 1, 2024.

Davis Bustad, tenant, appeared via phone

Lifeng Geng, owner, appeared via phone

Staff update by Supervisor Leanna Shaff: Inspector Chute and I tried to inspector the whole property on Friday. we only had access to the basement. No real changes we could see except for the addition of a few things on the exterior. The hose bib appeared to show extensive plumbing work with no permits. The water heater isn't installed to code. A lot of plumbing wasn't supported properly. I conferred with the senior plumbing inspector. The shed out back is boarded up and has been neglected. Other than that, no real change in orders. From my viewpoint, it is a single-family home. It does look like the appellant does have a sleeping room in the basement level. There is also a bathroom, laundry room, main room with another doorway that was locked. I was told that was the property owner's room. We don't get involved with their civil agreement, so no changes in our orders except with some additions.

Moermond: right now, whether or not a Certificate of Occupancy is required is based on whether or not it is owner occupied and the definition applied. In this case we hear from the tenant it isn't owner occupied a majority of the time. We have an owner address in Canada which reinforces that. Tell me how you assess that.

Shaff: it appears the property owner's primary address is in Canada. Whether or not they have a room and/or stay at the house whatever amount, given it isn't their primary address it needs a Certificate of Occupancy.

Moermond: is your determination that it is not an owner-occupied property and it doesn't matter whether or not you say Mr. Bustad is a housemate, if you will, because if that were the case—

Shaff: being I didn't have access on Friday to the rest of the house, but talking to Inspector Chute, I've seen cases where a property owner does maintain a room in the house and rents out the rest. How they do that within their private agreement—they would still have a Certificate of Occupancy though. There is nothing prohibited it as long as when you're in the room you can exit easily. Whatever their agreement and the rest of the house is, it is a civil matter.

Moermond: although you scheduled an inspection on the 19th access wasn't provided so the conditions leading to the revocation have not been addressed.

Shaff: correct.

Bustad: since my landlord has arrived I had to call the police since I caught him changing the locks. The way he has attempted to set up---

Moermond: to interject, we were just notified the property owner called the front desk.

[Lifeng Geng added to hearing]

[Bustad I'm going to go use the restroom while you add him to the call]

Moermond: we started without you and going to backtrack slightly. [Moermond summarizes what was already discussed]

Shaff: Inspector Chute and I tried to inspect the whole property on Friday. We only had access to the basement.

Geng: I'm terribly sorry. I had a meeting.

Moermond: let her finish please.

Shaff: The hose bib appeared to show extensive plumbing work with no permits. The water heater isn't installed to code. A lot of plumbing wasn't supported properly. Same with the water heater. I conferred with the senior plumbing inspector. It wasn't' done under permit or to code. The shed out back is boarded up, been neglected. The window wells still had garbage in them. The basement has a sleeping room, main room, bathroom. There was a locked room without access. It appears to be a single-family home. The property owner's primary residence is in Canada. By definition this is a Fire Certificate of Occupancy property. It isn't unheard of for a property owner to have agreement with tenants that they maintain a room there. There may be civil issues we don't get involved with. Encouraged the appellant to contact SMRLS, but without the repairs being done we do intend to move forward with enforcement action.

Moermond: Mr. Bustad, you had just started to make comments. I'll turn it back over to you.

Bustad: my civil agreement is a roommate agreement, but up until the inspection he has spent less than 7 days onsite with me. I am here to try to appeal, I found out because I saw the posting on the front door. The inspection still happened even after I appealed. Unsure how that happened.

Moermond: I indicated in the previous hearing it was an error from our office, no email went to the Inspector as it should have.

Bustad: the only changes in the basement other than my cleaning are absolutely nothing. The landlord has said there will be a contractor on site on the 25th to measure the window and remove the lock from my door. No work has been done to the basement. I'm here just trying to voice my concerns. Nothing was done until the City started pressing.

Geng: I'm sorry for missing the inspection. I had a meeting scheduled and couldn't miss it. I received the list from the City April 15 and 19. I intend to fully cooperate with the City and get the repairs done. After receiving the April 15 list I already started calling the contractors for the egress windows. I called seven plumbers since yesterday. The labor market is tight. I called the floor and only two replied. Last week one said they would send me a quote Monday, but they didn't. I called three times this morning and they won't answer. I have another scheduled April 25 for the egress windows. Item one- stove top is grease covered. I sent the notice to the person in the basement to cleanup. He refused. Lighting in the room. It was in good shape, now it is gone. There are holes in the wall, they weren't there when the roommate moved in. April 15 Officer Chute was there doing the inspection there were no holes in the wall. Then the 19th there were holes. I removed the boards from the cover of the egress, but someone keeps putting them back. I've removed it 3 times. The power to the smoke alarm has been cut off.

Moermond: I don't know I need this level of detail. I'll be honest, I'm looking strictly at the deadline for getting a Fire Certificate of Occupancy issued. I'm doing that knowing there hasn't been an inspection of the upstairs and that still needs to happen.

Arrangements need to be made for that to happen quickly.

Shaff: Inspector Chute was in the upper unit on the 15th, but the thing I heard last

week is if you ran water upstairs it ran into the basement. I don't know we have a comprehensive list. I would still like access to the upper level.

Bustad: that is something that has been an issue since November. I have a contact stating he would do the repairs after he moved the main floor people moved out. There's been a longstanding repair issue with the bathtub.

Moermond: noted. Ms. Shaff. other comments?

Shaff: I would just like access to make sure if there are additional things I find them. I still see it as a single-family home.

Geng: if you want to check upstairs, sure, when do you want to do it? Last time Mr. Chute said everything was normal. If you want to see it that is fine.

Shaff: tomorrow at 1 pm?

Geng: sure, no problem.

Moermond: the Fire Certificate of Occupancy needs to be issued by June 1.

Geng: it is difficult to fix because if the stove is cleaned, they put the grease on again. If the City could come out May 30 or June 1—

Moermond: the City will not be used as an eviction tool.

[Bustad claps in background]

Moermond: compliance or must be vacated by June 1.

Referred to the City Council due back on 5/8/2024

#### **15** RLH VO 24-13

Appeal of Dharmedra Bhakta to a Revocation of Fire Certificate of Occupancy and Order to Vacate at 901 SNELLING AVENUE NORTH.

#### **Sponsors:** Bowie

Layover to LH May 14, 2024 at 1:30 p.m. for further discussion. Property to be reinspected by Fire staff prior to May 14 hearing.

Patrick Bower, attorney, appeared
Mitul Bhakta, o/b/o Midway Hospitality and son of owner, appeared
Dharmendra Bhakta, o/b/o Midway Hospitality and uncle of Mitul appeared

[Moermond gives background of appeals process]

Staff report by Supervisor Mitchell Imbertson: 28-unit hotel occupancy due for renewal of the Fire Certificate of Occupancy. That started with an appointment letter in August and the initial inspection October 22, 2023. There were a number of reinspections made. We were getting little compliance and finding new issues or repairs that weren't done correctly. Minor changes with the list but most of the items on the current list are similar to those in October. Came to March 19 reinspection, still no compliance. We didn't have a clear work plan and the property went to pending revocation order, 30 days to comply or vacate. The reinspection was done April 17, 2024 and we didn't have full access for the reinspection, but for the items we could see outside, there was no

progress. Electrical permit related to some of the repairs still opened and not inspected or approved yet. We talked through options on site and explained we had limited ability to grant additional time and already had issued a pending revocation notice and we were happy to hear offers of a work plan but the time to consider that would have been prior to the reinspection date or following any earlier notices. We were told there was the ability to complete in short time, but we didn't have that yet and hadn't seen any significant progress.

Moermond: it looked like in reading the March 19 orders they indicated a reinspection April 17. I gather from your comments that there was, and you found substantial noncompliance, but I didn't have a copy of any orders from that. She indicates there wasn't anything.

Imbertson: there was not, there was an appeal filed before we could issue a new written report or send to the Vacant Building program.

Moermond: are there inspector notes in the system from then? Can I get those? That all happened the same day, so I'm assuming the March 19 list is 33 items, the February list is 34 items. I was curious what kind of changes there were between March and April but because there was an appeal filed simultaneously it wasn't written. We have seven months since this started.

Bower: I spoke with inspector Niemeyer. You were out with him on April 17?

Imbertson: yes, he's the main inspector. I went with him on the 17th. The rest were just him.

Bower: he told me there was long-term noncompliance. Is it still pending revocation status still?

Imbertson: that was issued March 19th, with reinspection on April 17 at 12 pm or the property vacated. The intent is meant as a last chance to comply or vacate if you are unable to comply.

Bower: he told me there were multiple notices the last seven months. They currently lease it out to a family friend who runs the midway motel and he hasn't received the notices.

Moermond: for seven months?

Mitul Bhakta: no, in March. We're not here to make excuses, we want to resolve this. I agree it has gone way too long. We're leasing the property to another entity who runs it. The correspondence was sent to the property address, so we never got the mail. Since it was addressed to Midway Hospitality he didn't open it. There was significant miscommunication between us and him. Obviously, we've resolved that and will make sure it doesn't happen again. We wanted to make sure we complete this list, the vast majority are done.

Bower: I provided you a list are all deficiencies in the March 19th orders and their current status.

Moermond: per you.

Bower: I've also provided photos. I know that it is not extremely helpful, it requires

reinspection but we wanted to show that in the last week a lot of these deficiencies have been cured. Several more are in progress with estimated completion dates. The first page has an email confirming that there will be some additional work done by Blue Sky Chimney out of Eden Prairie with an estimated completion date to be determined based on availability. I wanted to put together that list to show that my clients do take this seriously and were able to make a significant number of cures over the last week. I know photos aren't everything—an outlet can be any outlet in the City. That is why we're here today. We're hoping to request that the current status be lifted or removed but we know that requires additional reinspections. We defer to you on when specific inspections can be scheduled, if they are allowed.

Moermond: Mr. Imbertson, how do you get the contact information for who the Responsible Party is for the Certificate of Occupancy?

Imbertson: I don't know when this property was put into the system, but the info would default to whatever was on file form previous inspection and any changes we'd make would be what we were provided by ownership or Ramsey County updates. So any address would be something we were told of.

Moermond: licensing for hotel/motel use and whether that has kept up with the leasing information. Any comments on that? Do they have a valid license to operate?

Mitul Bhakta: yes.

Moermond: so that you dealt with that, but not updating the fire inspection information. And no one opened the mail clearly from Fire Inspections. Clearly someone was providing access to them for an inspection. These orders listed specific units. I'm hearing no notice from you, but someone is turning a key and letting them in. I'm focusing on that because this is the past we've dealt with. What would be different these past six months to moving forward. You aren't operating the business. The one you're saying is responsible is not here.

Mitul Bhakta: that's fair. We're the building owners which is why we're here and we're taking this seriously. Our primary objective is to clear these deficiencies so it doesn't happen again in the future. Most of them have been completed, some done within the week. The permits for electrical and plumbing called out should be addressed very soon.

Moermond: who is the correct contact for the Fire Certificate of Occupancy if not you?

Mitul Bhakta: does that go to building owner or operator?

Moermond: that is up to the endeavor. In the past you were, now you aren't anymore?

Mitul Bhakta: totally fair.

Moermond: but the letters are going to you and not being forwarded or opened. This isn't a great business operation model I'm hearing.

Mitul Bhakta: that is totally fair. I'm not here to make excuses. We're trying to fix the issues. We've had some frank discussions with the operator the last several weeks. We will fix this so it doesn't happen again. We're here to fix whatever has to happen.

Moermond: do you know who went with the inspector on the previous inspections?

Mitul Bhakta: either the operator or a staff member. We weren't there.

Moermond: and those are the folks for Staff to work with, even though you're managing the repairs?

Mitul Bhakta: I think it makes sense for us to work with the inspectors.

Moermond: the previous contact was Sumesh Bhakta.

Mitul Bhakta: that was my father who passed away in January 2021. We bought in 2006 and lived on site until he passed away and we moved and leased the hotel. We've never had this problem. This was never an issue in the past. We always pride ourselves in being a good member of the community. We have Hamline nearby. Lots of homeowners nearby. That is still home for me, even though we don't go and are actively running the business. It is still our building and we value it. When we heard about this we were floored. All these years of blood, sweat, and tears into the property.

Moermond: how did you hear about it?

Dharmendra Bhakta: one of the staff members called when Mr. Imbertson was there.

Mitul Bhakta: they did let us know about the inspections, and indicated they would be taken care of. There was some trust we had but that has been eroded now. That's how we got here.

Imbertson: I'd need to review this work plan, I'm glad to see it though and hear some are completed.

Mitul Bhakta: if I may, can we get clarification on number 27?

Imbertson: whatever documentation they need for sizing that it is appropriate for hearing as a sole heat source. I don't have record on original boiler installation and whether it was supplementary or replacement system. With the boiler being removed and just these electric heaters being used, we need the mechanical calculations they are sized correctly to meet code to maintain the heat you need. From our understanding the boiler was removed after an issue without our knowledge, so if that isn't supplementing the heat we need documentation that the electrical heaters meet code for primary.

Mitul Bhakta: those PTAC units have always been there. We ran the boiler during the extreme months because it was more efficient. It is a lot more maintenance and we had a lot of issues with the boiler. The PTACs in there now are 9,000 BTU heat pumps. I just want to make sure you get the right information.

Imbertson: that's part of the permit inspection to finalize the electric permit for these too. I know there were discussions with Niemeyer for the trades inspectors, he had put someone in contact with them. That information can be given again. Electrical was Dave Blank.

Moermond: I'm not operating with the intent of closing businesses. I do want a path forward that is likely to succeed. I'm hearing you are taking over the management of the facility in terms of its repairs and maintenance. That is substantially different in my view. This property hasn't been on my radar in the past, which is good. That brings is

to timelines. Within next 3 weeks let's have Niemeyer out to revisit the list. Then I can figure out extensions for other things if warranted.

Laid Over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 5/14/2024

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