



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, October 10, 2023

9:00 AM

Room 330 City Hall & Court House & Remote

10 [SR 23-215](#)

Review Request of Wamoua and Sheng Lee for the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for Property at 1236 ROSS AVENUE. (File No. VB2310, Assessment No. 238813). (Adopted by Council September 13, 2023).

Sponsors: Yang

Delete the assessment.

No one appeared

Moermond: we have a Vacant Building fee ratified as an assessment and the owner brought this to attention that he had his Certificate of Occupancy and the reason for the condemnation was addressed immediately. So we had some things to untangle to figure out how we fix this.

Staff report by Supervisor Imbertson: it started as a complaint February 6 of no water in the building, which led to it being condemned and to the Vacant Building program. The inspector was out there again to follow up and approve the property May 23, 2023. The Certificate of Occupancy was approved then. It isn't clear there was any communication with Vacant Building staff. It was long enough ago it is difficult to run on memory on who spoke to who. Inspector Thomas said he was under the impression his approval would have notified Vacant Building staff but that doesn't happen automatically. If it was reoccupied right away we'd assume that would show up as the Vacant Building checks, but sometimes they may not reoccupy right away which leads to the potential of keeping the Vacant Building folder open even though it was approved on our end.

Moermond: the note says no water, it doesn't say SPRWS shut off. Any idea there?

Imbertson: it wasn't referred from the standard shut off list. Inspector's recollection was it may have been shut off by owner due to plumbing issues. I wasn't able to determine the exact issue. It does appear the tenant was without water in the unit.

Moermond: so the inspector writes an order that you need to provide water and I see no follow up by the inspector to verify water or unit vacated.

Imbertson: I assume it was vacated.

Moermond: it is a big assumption since there are no notes.

Imbertson: it may have been voluntarily since it was immediately referred to the Vacant Building program. If the tenant was still occupying we'd set a timeline to comply or vacate before referring it.

Moermond: but no documentation at all about what happened in the file.

Imbertson: that is correct. My best speculation is the property was likely already vacant at the time it was referred to the Vacant Building program.

Moermond: that doesn't make sense a tenant would call in for no water. The owner certainly wouldn't call.

Imbertson: right; there are limited notes.

Moermond: there are no notes. None. That I can see.

Imbertson: it is standard practice to notify Vacant Building staff via email but the inspector was under the impression they also received a note from the Automated Amanda notification. That was a misunderstanding at the time of approval.

Moermond: this is not a new inspector.

Imbertson: no.

Moermond: so Vacant Building has had a file open since February and have visiting every couple of weeks. It looks like from Hoffman's notes it appeared vacant when he visited.

Dornfeld: that's what James claims as of this morning. It looked nice and tight.

Moermond: nice and tight with its Certificate of Occupancy as of May. As a Category 1 that is all he needs until it is empty for a year. It is a waste of City services that Vacant Buildings has made 15 trips to the property because of this mistake. If you would kindly close the Vacant Building file. I'll recommend the Council delete this ratified assessment as incorrectly handled by the Department.

Received and Filed