



City of Saint Paul

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Minutes - Final

Legislative Hearings

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Tuesday, June 24, 2025

9:00 AM

Room 330 City Hall & Court House

9:00 a.m. Hearings

Remove/Repair Orders

- 1 **RLH RR 25-18** Ordering the rehabilitation or razing and removal of the structures at 1510 LAUREL AVENUE within fifteen (15) days after the July 16, 2025, City Council Public Hearing.

Sponsors: Bowie

Remove within 5 days with no option to repair.

Alexa Marsh, attorney o/b/o US Bank, appeared via phone
Joanne Backer, owner, appeared
Dan Fowlds, realtor / friend, appeared
Carolyn Brown, CSP, appeared

Moermond: we're following up on the previous hearing to get an update on what is happening with the building. Tell me more about how you want to proceed Ms. Backer.

Backer: I've had people interested. I did speak with a couple of individuals. I told them it was a Category 3. They made offers I wasn't willing to accept. I thought it was in my best interest to allow the City to demolish and sell the land as a lot. I did seek advise and that was the consensus was that was the best course for everyone ultimately.

Moermond: I was just made aware Ms. Carolyn Brown is present to testify on this today. She's with Community Stabilization Project. Ms. Brown did you want to share anything?

Brown: I tried to call you this morning.

Backer: I didn't recognize the number, I would have called you back if you left a Voicemail.

Brown: you met with Craig Cooper last week, so I'm just here to try and support you so you don't incur the demolition cost so he can rehab and we can get costs down and assist with the cleanout.

Moermond: right now she's balancing the value of the lot which is significantly higher

than the value of the house itself. The thinking was to absolutely make it a vacant lot and recoup more than what a demo or rehab would bring. That information can play a role in her decision-making and if it sways you, you can certainly talk more.

I will go where you were heading with demolition. The City is looking for the nuisance condition to be abated. That can happen either by rehab and being fixed up, or it can be demolished. The Code requires that one of those two things happen before title can transfer. The City likes to work with people if you have a development partner we could review their information and you wouldn't be putting their information out to do the rehab. Title doesn't transfer until it is all done, that is an option available to you. When we last spoke we wanted you to consult on a path forward that's best for you. Typically, with houses like this, the property value is a lot lower. Your calculation is different than many others. There's not a question in my mind you would be able you'd be able to recoup the demolition cost with the sale price of the parcel. Investment in the building versus what you'd gain by selling the parcel minus the cost of the demo. From your statement your people are telling you to knock it down. If that happens, the Council will order it removed on July 16. If you fail to get it removed on your, which is fine, the City initiates the demolition process.

Typically, the City does get competitive bids for demolitions because we do it frequently and we pay our bills. One the 15 days have passed; Mr. Humphrey can speak to the project.

Humphrey: it takes about 4 to 6 weeks and then a demolition permit to be pulled. Takes a bit of time to cut utilities and things like that.

Moermond: City gets a handful of bids from contractors and they take the lowest qualified bid. They have to have it assessed for hazardous materials, typically lead and asbestos. That takes a minimum of 10 days. The building comes down pretty quickly after that. Depending on the amount of hazardous materials removed, it typically runs \$20,000 to \$30,000 dollars. This is a smaller house.

Fowlds: to clarify, the title could potentially transfer prior to demolition if the assessment is certified?

Moermond: assessment doesn't happen until the building is down and contractor has been paid.

Fowlds: if the funds are escrowed could title transfer prior to the demo?

Moermond: we want to see the building down. That doesn't mean we have the assessment all processed, but as soon as the building is down. The other things have to do with closing demo permits and other administrative things. Once it is two-dimensional that can happen.

Humphrey: once it is listed in our system as wrecked, we don't have a Vacant Building status on vacant land. From a permitting perspective, build a new house and do whatever you'd like.

Backer: when they do the excavation do they grade the land and seed it?

Humphrey: they remove the foundation and re-grade and seed before we pay.

Backer: also the garage?

Humphrey: correct no secondary structure is allowed without a primary structure in St. Paul.

Moermond: house is primary structure, garages and sheds are accessories. You can't have accessory buildings without a primary building. Everything on the parcel goes.

Backer: the fence is removed?

Moermond: typically, yes.

Fowlds: if there's unwanted personal property in the home can that remain?

Moermond: they will do a junk out yes, but it does have a cost associated with it. You can pull what you want out, it may cost less for you to hire someone to do a junk-out. Plenty of companies do this work.

Backer: good question, because I've been making contact with different places to help me. That's good to know.

Moermond: when the City issues the order, as soon as the number of days expire the property is really in the custody of the City, which includes personal property in the building. At minimum you want anything you want to keep gone by then.

Backer: is the junk out part of their process to donate things? Reduce landfill waste?

Moermond: no. If they did it would be a significant added cost.

We talk about this July 16th and I'd like to send this forward with a minimum number of days if you want the City to take action. I'll prep this to say 5 days. If you don't take action, which you aren't intending to, then the City takes over. Knowing you're in that position the Department can submit that requestion to get the whole process started. That's 5 days from when the Mayor signs it, which is typically the Thursday after the Council Public Hearing.

Are you definitely in the City does the demo place?

Backer: yeah, I think that letting the City do it may be in my best interested in terms of getting a reasonable price and a trusted contractor.

Moermond: the timing won't work out to comparison shop on this, since we don't get bids until you've already punted. We'd have them about 3 weeks after Council decision.

Backer: what about the assessment on the taxes?

[assessment process explained]

Moermond: we probably won't pay the bill on the whole thing until November or December. Once the City pays that bill it becomes a pending assessment on the property, which will appear immediately online once it happens. We can show you the bids prior so you could show them to any purchaser to put in escrow and deal with that in your purchase agreement. The actual assessment would come forward in early spring, maybe February. [further explanation of ratification of taxes, payments, and

interest]

Ms. Marsh, any thoughts?

Marsh: nothing to add, just wanted to observe and hear the plan.

Moermond: you also reach out with any questions along the way. Let me know if you want more time than the 5 days we can deal with that, that would be if you want to hire someone. Right now, we have this on a short leave so we can move quickly so you can transact it quickly.

Backer: how does that impact listing the property?

Fowlds: we can't close until it is demoed.

Moermond: right, it would need to be a purchase agreement we'd have to approve. Same thing we do if it was going to be rehabilitated.

Referred to the City Council due back on 7/16/2025

10:00 a.m. Hearings

Making Finding on Nuisance Abatements

- 2 [RLH RR 25-20](#) Making finding on the appealed substantial abatement ordered for 674 MAGNOLIA AVENUE EAST in Council File RLH RR 24-34.

Sponsors: Yang

Layover to LH July 15, 2025 at 10 am to review updated work plan/schedule, financing and PO must post additional \$5,000 PD.

Dao Hoang, partner with Kevin Vu, appeared

Moermond: the Council did a six-month grant of time six months ago, that time has ended. Where are we at with plans, money, those types of things. There's a \$5,000 Performance Deposit in question. That's what we work out today so I can go back to the Council and report the findings and give my recommendation. That is a Council Public Hearing so you can talk to the Council if you're looking for something different than my recommendation.

Staff report by Supervisor Robert Humphrey: one electrical permit was just pulled June 13th. Several open permits. Clint Zane was out yesterday and he indicates it was 35% complete.

Moermond: tell me a bit about where you are at with the rehab.

Hoang: so far what is holding us back was the rough in. We finally got our last one, electrical, on Friday. The permits were all pulled in February and it is going slower than anticipated. They kept saying it was too cold to come work. Before we close dup I wanted to make sure the rough ins were done so we could do the framing, and then have the framing and insulation inspected. I was out of the country the beginning of May, I planned it out before I left and I came back and it wasn't done after the whole month. Finally they came and got the last piece in. I'm sorry, I did send an email asking for an extension. I wasn't sure if I had to come to this. The first time we didn't

have to, I didn't hear back on my email. I called Clint and gave him an update on the project over the phone and did ask if he had to go to the hearing. HE said he wasn't sure, you should call Mai Vang. I saw Mai was out so he gave me Joanna's number. That's when Joanna was asking me if Inspector Clint came out, I said no but he granted me 90 days. She told me I had to have him come back.

Moermond: if I may, Mr. Vu got this letter which quite plainly explains you need to have Clint come do a progress inspection and there is a hearing today. I understand you were confused, but it was in the letter.

Hoang: there's nothing wrong with the letter, I was just confused. I'm not blaming anyone. It was my confusion.

Moermond: it was Clint's confusion as well.

Hoang: he did come yesterday. The rough-ins have all been done. We're framing and insulating so hopefully he can come back the end of the week to inspect that. Then I believe the process will move quickly.

Moermond: it does look like the building permit was pulled and a fair bit of time elapsed and there's been no inspection. Two mechanicals mid-March. They have the rough ins done the same time.

Hoang: there were two because it is a duplex.

Moermond: you were saying what through you off was you were having trouble getting rough-ins?

Hoang: the electrical was taking the longest because they wanted the plumbing done first. I didn't realize they didn't pull a permit until June, I was expecting that in May before I left.

Moermond: I don't see a plumbing permit pulled?

Humphrey: It was pulled. Paul Zellmer was out May 13th to do rough-in.

Moermond: when will this be done?

Hoang: I'm trying to push for 90 days. If you could extend the Code Compliance by 180 days, we'll try to be done in 90.

Moermond: first thing I have to deal with is the work plan he submitted. Start date was January 25 and done June 25th. That didn't happen, but that's what he committed. I need a revised work plan with a fair bit of detail to get this thing done. It isn't enough to say, "here's a bid". Spell out what will happen until it is finalized. My trust goes down at this point. I know Mr. Vu has done this before. About the Performance Deposit, there's a rule in the Code that if you are 50% or more done the Performance Deposit can be extended another 180 days. You aren't at 50% which means the Council has to make that decision of what to do. You're pretty short of being 50%. I'm going to ask the Council to give another 180 days, extend the original \$5,000, but ask that another \$5,000 posted. \$10,000 held to go back to you when you finish.

Talk to me more about the money. Have the contractors been paid whole or in part?

Hoang: they get progress payments. At rough-in I give half. HVAC has only \$1,000 left to pay. We paid half of plumbing. As of now, I don't owe anyone for the progress they've done.

Moermond: what I would like is for a summary of what's left to pay and evidence the money is still available. I was told \$85,800 worth of work and a letter from the bank saying he had \$300,000 in a line of credit. I want confirmation that this won't be held up because you are out of money. I don't think you are, but I need the proof.

This has a Council Public Hearing July 23. I'd like that information well in advance of that so I can properly review. Let's have that by July 8th?

Hoang: yes. Mr. Vu will be back by July 1, but he should be able to do it from there.

Laid Over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 7/15/2025

- 3 RLH RR 25-21** Second Making finding on the appealed substantial abatement ordered for 1117 JENKS AVENUE in Council File RLH RR 25-11.

Sponsors: Yang

The nuisance is abated and the matter resolved.

No one appeared

Moermond: the nuisance has been abated and the matter resolved. No discussion needed.

Referred to the City Council due back on 7/9/2025

- 4 RLH RR 25-19** Third Making finding on the appealed substantial abatement ordered for 401 ROSE AVENUE EAST in Council File RLH RR 25-14.

Sponsors: Privratsky

Layover to LH July 15, 2025 to see CC certificate has been issued (CPH July 16).

Jay Mitchell, contractor o/b/o owner, appeared

Moermond: we're pretty deep into this one now.

Staff Update by Supervisor Robert Humphrey: in the last 45 days there haven't been any violations. Secure, vacant and maintained.

Moermond: how much is there in Performance Deposit? \$10,000 right? And we're 1 year 7 and a half months in on this. We need to get this thing done. No follow up inspection from Mr. Zane?

Humphrey: correct, no progress inspection was scheduled.

Moermond: that's just Mr. Zane giving me a percent. Where are you at?

Mitchell: I called Mr. Zane to schedule and every permit has been finalized except for the plumbing, it has a rough-in. We had someone break in and steal copper, so we had to redo it. I let the City know and had to pull another permit. Mr. Zane told me that he wouldn't schedule the final until that is done. That's the only reason why, I did call him.

That's why. Paul Zellmer said he'd look around, that inspection is Thursday. I expect it to pass, then I'll call Clint to do the final.

Moermond: that's great. Council Public Hearing is July 16th. Three weeks from now, it sounds like you may be done. Four weeks we can work with. If its any longer we should have a backup plan. Let's look at this on July 15th and see what's going on. We won't touch the Performance Deposit for now.

Referred to the City Council due back on 7/16/2025

11:00 a.m. Hearings

Summary & Vehicle Abatement Orders

**5 RLH SAO
25-46**

Appeal of North Seelinger to a Summary Abatement Order at 790 SHERBURNE AVENUE.

Sponsors: Bowie

Deny the appeal (noting property is now in compliance).

Sarah Grace (North) Seelinger, owner, appeared via phone

[Moermond gives background of appeals process]

Staff report by Supervisor Robert Humphrey: June 3 we received a complaint about trash at the property. June 5 Inspector Kedrowski found barrel and contents, scrap wood, and miscellaneous debris on the property. Issued a Summary Abatement Order to comply before June 12. June 11 the appeal was filed.

Moermond: unapproved plastic barrel, as I look at the photos I think it is unapproved because it lacks a lid?

Humphrey: that is correct.

Seelinger: I do not dispute any of those findings. My wife and I were working on construction around the house and we hadn't removed it yet. That's on us. My primary issue was the appeal was sent to us on the 7th, we received it at 5 pm on the 10th which gave us 2 days to rectify the issue. I didn't feel that was enough time since we both worked the next two days and also talk to my tenants about their items. I tried 3 times to talk to the inspector, unsuccessfully. After 3 attempts, I filed the appeal on the 11th because I didn't see any other way to get an extension. That's all we needed was an extension to the 16th to have time over the weekend. Since then we've removed all the objects, we'll get rid of any barrels without lids. I wasn't aware of the issues with that, which you've now explained. I just wanted to know next steps and make sure I'm not getting penalized for anything.

Moermond: this sounds fantastic. What I'd like to do is send this to Council saying the matter has been resolved and no action is necessary. I'll ask Mr. Humphrey to coordinate an inspection and confirm and if there are any issues whatsoever we'll let you know, but I don't expect that. I apologize you didn't get your call back. It does happen from time to time and that's regrettable. You can always call our office and we can connect with the inspector as well if it happens again.

Seelinger: I will confirm with my wife tonight about the barrels and make sure everything is done. We did trim some branches over the weekend too.

Referred to the City Council due back on 7/9/2025

1:30 p.m. Hearings

Orders To Vacate - Fire Certificate of Occupancy

- 6 **RLH VO 25-13** Appeal of Terrance F. Fahey, Tenant, to a Correction Notice-Reinspection Complaint (which includes condemnation of Unit 3) at 1771 REANEY AVENUE.

Sponsors: Johnson

Deny the appeal and grant to August 4, 2025 to vacate (or achieve compliance).

Gary Blair, owner, appeared

Terrance Fahey, tenant, appeared via phone

Staff report by Supervisor Der Vue: this is a partial revocation of the Fire Certificate of Occupancy, only for unit 3, for failure to comply with the Legislative Hearing Officer's recommendation and Council vote to grant compliance to September 1 with the exception that a structural engineer's report was submitted to our office no later than April 28, 2025. No report was submitted, and Monday April 28, 2025 instead property owner Gary Blair stated the repairs were made to the post. An exterior inspection was done May 30 by Building Inspector Steve Maki and the Fire Inspector. Inspector says: today I met with Steve Maki onsite to review the repairs and provide opinion and assessment. No permit was pulled as required in orders and he was unwilling to sign off on stairs as they were. Several missing components and building inspector was not certain if the concrete blocks were resting on footings or just a slab in the rear of the house. He also stated that several other parts of the stairs were done incorrectly as well and were not code compliant, though some of the issues may be old enough to fall into legal non-conforming territory. Mr. Maki did state that the post was focus of the orders, wasn't repaired properly, and he wouldn't sign off on the work in this condition, even if a permit had been pulled. Due to failure to comply with the Council's orders, and the building inspector's concerns about the integrity of the post, a partial revocation of the Fire Certificate of Occupancy with orders to vacate was issued for unit 3 only. That is the top level of the property and only has one entry/exit from the rear of the property and up these exterior stairs.

Moermond: you took enforcement action. April 28 was deadline for that. Reinspection was done May 30th, and the new orders June 9th with this being revoked and ordered vacated unless corrected by July 10th. Mr. Fahey, tell me about your appeal.

Fahey: I'm not appealing the repairs that are needed. It is obvious the need to be done. I have a 2.5-year-old daughter I have over half the time, I am appealing to get more time. I have a place lined up but it isn't available until August 1. That's only 20 days past July 10th. I understand the repairs are needed but at this point I feel like it is safer than my daughter and I being out on the street. I am simply asking until August 1 when the new place is available. All of the repairs that are needed and that the City is requesting are no fault of my own. I haven't damaged anything or anything of the nature. Unfortunately, this is what it has come too. I just need safe housing for now.

Moermond: Mr. Blair?

Blair: I don't agree with everything Terry said. His daughter, when he was renting, was told she was making occasional visits. However, Terry has expressed he'd like to stay if he could under the right conditions. He's felt safe since this started a few months ago. There are two staircases up to the third floor, not one. Terry chooses to use the one with the post. That post has been inspected the past 3 decades.

Moermond: which was determined to be inadequate.

Blair: they didn't have an engineer available, and it was expensive, and we were up against the deadline. Rather than waiting on the inspection we decided to fix it. It was an inexpensive fix. Its in better condition than when it was built. We did call to get it taken care of. I have the inspection report.

Moermond: you're mixing the term inspection and engineer review. When I hear inspector I think Ms. Vue or Inspector Maki.

Blair: I have something from an engineer saying its safe for him.

Moermond: and I can't make a finding on that. A different finding was made. You say it is. You need to pull ap ermit and submit that.

Blair: this is from an engineer. I haven't received anything saying an engineer looked at the property.

Moermond: I didn't say a City engineer did.

Blair: his child doesn't stay on a full-time basis.

Moermond: that's not germane to this conversation.

Blair: I guess if you want to kick him out, you can. I'm not sure why.

Moermond: the thing is you haven't done the repairs. The repairs weren't done and it wasn't safe. That engineer's review has to pass muster. It doesn't mean just because one looked at it that it will be accepted. As discussed previously we have a violation of the building code and only the building inspector can say you are in compliance. I just have a finding that you were not, and were not on deadline. You saying it is safe, I disagree. You haven't passed the finish line at this point. We have a vacate order for the one unit, not the entire building. I know the orders say what I decided, but it is up to the Council, not me.

I'll recommend the vacate is extended to August 4 so the weekend is included for any stragglng items. That will have a Council Public Hearing July 9th.

Blair: if the City inspector, it was his opinion, if that is cleared up is that deadline void? Can he stay if he wants too?

Moermond: I only have the existing condition. If you come into compliance and the Fire Certificate of Occupancy say it is in compliance they can lift the order to vacate. I won't be doing that. You can have an appeal, get an extension, and they could lift it next week if the building inspector says it is safe.

You need to file a building permit for the repairs done, and then the building inspector can look at your engineer's statement and make a decision about whether he would sign off on it.

Blair: who is Steve Maki?

Moermond: Building inspector. He has engineers he can consult with if needed. You are responsible for providing an engineering analysis for the City to review. The Inspector found that the repairs weren't sufficient. I won't make a determination about that. That's all down to the purview of the building inspector and engineer if needed. The way to do that is by pulling a building permit. I don't do interpretation of the building code.

Referred to the City Council due back on 7/9/2025

2:00 p.m. Hearings

Fire Certificates of Occupancy

- 7 [RLH FCO 25-46](#) Appeal of Tom Linnell to a Fire Certificate of Occupancy Correction Notice at 594 GERANIUM AVENUE EAST. (Order withdrawn)

Sponsors: Yang

Moermond: we had an appeal filed and within minutes of that filing we learned Department of Safety & Inspections withdrew the order in question. We will archive this case.

Withdrawn