



City of Saint Paul

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Minutes - Final

Legislative Hearings

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Thursday, February 20, 2025

9:00 AM

Room 330 City Hall & Court House/Remote

9:00 a.m. Hearings

Special Tax Assessments

1 **RLH TA 25-82** Ratifying theAppealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 1114 MARGARET STREET. (File No. J2511T, Assessment No. 258523)

Sponsors: Johnson

Delete the assessment.

Tiana Danforth, owner, appeared via phone

[Moermond gives background of appeals process]

Staff report by Supervisor Lisa Martin: a tall grass and weeds notice went out October 8, 2024 to owner and occupant. Reinspected October 21 and work was not done. Work order done October 24. No returned mail. Total assessment of \$451.50.

Danforth: I got the letter—first I thought it was the back of the house, so I did that right away. Then in the front what is on the boulevard is a rain garden I got a grant from with Metro Blooms. I planted pollinator friendly plants in there. Since it was October it was dying and wasn't looking great. It isn't supposed to the first year. It comes back in the spring and the native plants should be there and look better. Being it was October it wasn't looking great, but I expected them to die and kind of mulch to make itself stronger next year. That's the front. I guess the part closer to the house, that looks mainly like it was leaves in the street.

Moermond: looking at the photos, it does look like the boulevard isn't excessively tall?

Martin: it is definitely over 8".

Moermond: for what's close to the driveway the height limit is 18", and then as you get further from the driveway and corners the height can be as high as 36". I can see where the inspector was coming from it looking at this with the dead leaves and looking kind of scraggly. Some plastic bags with grasses or twigs in it. It all lends to the perception it is an unmaintained boulevard. I see that, and now I hear where you are coming from. Moving forward, do you think that you could do some sort of sign or a stepping stone that signifies it as a rain or pollinator garden?

Danforth: yes, definitely. They did offer one, I just didn't grab it. The plastic bags were just put there the day I got the notice. That is everything from the back of the house, the clearing out I did. Those were taken right after when those photos were taken.

Moermond: it is hard to know if they were there when the orders were written October 8. It is just an automatically generated letter so they don't have photos. Then the inspector goes and checks. I think you made a good faith effort to address this, but I'd also like you to take a step to put a stepping stone to mark it as a garden area. That's a better idea than something sticking up on the boulevard. Then it appears to the neighbors it is intentional. I'll recommend it is deleted and you put that stone in?

Danforth: no problem at all.

Moermond: this has a Council Public Hearing April 2, have it in by then and I'll recommend it is deleted. We'll do this on a handshake.

Referred to the City Council due back on 4/2/2025

2 [RLH TA 25-88](#) Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 125 WINTER STREET. (File No. J2512R, Assessment No. 258522)

Sponsors: Bowie

Layover to LH March 4, 2025 at 9 am (unable to reach PO).

Voicemail left at 9:48 am: this is Marcia Moermond from St. Paul City Council calling Crystal McClure about an appealed tax assessment. for 125 Winter street. We'll try you again in a little bit.

Voicemail left at 10:16 am: this is Marcia Moermond from St. Paul City Council calling you again. We'll reschedule this to March 4 and try and catch you between 10 and 11:30 that morning. Hopefully we'll talk to you then.

Laid Over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 3/4/2025

3 [RLH TA 25-110](#) Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 1112 KINGSFORD STREET. (File No. J2511R, Assessment No. 258519)

Sponsors: Yang

Approve the assessment.

Chris Schwartz, occupant, appeared

[Moermond gives background of appeals process]

Staff report by Supervisor Lisa Martin: September 20, 2024 a Summary Abatement Order was issued to Sydney Schwartz to remove furniture, household items, trash and miscellaneous debris from the boulevard, utility trailers, driveway area from from entire yard. Compliance date of October 2. Rechecked October 3, not done, rechecked again October 17 still not done. Work was done October 23. No returned mail. No appeal filed. Total assessment of \$716. Long history at this property.

Schwartz: no, there isn't a long history.

Moermond: why are you appealing?

Schwartz: *the only reason there's even been a history at this property is because the inspector has a bias against City employees and that was pointed out to his Supervisor in an email which was ignored and within days of that email I received a retaliation when we were not in violation by this inspector. He fined us \$200 for a shed we'd built that was in compliance.*

Moermond: *I only have this particular cleanup in front of me.*

Schwartz: *this particular thing was 21 days after the fact with no warning. We may or may not have met that date. I don't know for sure. But it was 21 days with no warning. That's crazy. Why would you show up 21 days after the fact and then cleanup? It wasn't even the same items in the photos. The photos from that day are completely different things in the trailer from the photos. It had been loaded and unloaded several times since then.*

[Moermond reviews photos]

Moermond: *it looks pretty bad to tell you the truth.*

Schwartz: *I understand that. I had a PCA that was taking care of my mother before she passed. She was unbelievable how she would just pile stuff up. I tried several times to get it cleaned up. As soon as I would she would pile more stuff here.*

Moermond: *when did your mother pass? Your email says you're the executor?*

Schwartz: *correct, a little over a year now.*

Moermond: *maybe closer to two?*

Schwartz: *possibly. It took some time to get the PCA out of the house.*

Moermond: *oh, that's unfortunate. You are saying different stuff in the trailers and it shouldn't count?*

Schwartz: *we should have had warning. 21 days after we supposedly didn't meet their thing they show up with no notice and start taking things. They don't even leave a note on the door when they do that.*

Moermond: *they consider the order to clean it up the warning because it does say if the owner doesn't clean it up the City will. That's considered legal notice.*

Schwartz: *why is a month later ok?*

Moermond: *if it still exists a month later, then it still exists. The order doesn't expire.*

Schwartz: *it isn't the same stuff.*

Moermond: *it is hard to tell aside from the top layer because of how deep it is.*

Schwartz: *it was on the curb waiting for that week's garbage pickup. It was three days away from garbage pickup.*

Moermond: *I can tell you for sure the garbage hauling program wouldn't pick up the loose items in that boulevard.*

Schwartz: *ok.*

Moermond: *what's with moving the trailer into the street?*

Schwartz: *the trailer belongs to someone else. It isn't registered to me or the property. It belonged to my brother I believe.*

Moermond: *so, it is in your driveway then moved it to the street, what's up with that?*

Schwartz: *I told him to get it the hell out of here after receiving notice, excuse my language, and he moved it to the street.*

Moermond: *besides the general language, which covers a lot of things, it does say in all caps to "Please remove and properly dispose of all furniture, household items, trash, miscellaneous debris from the boulevard, utility trailers, driveway area and entire yard". When the crew shows up again, I do see those kinds of items still there. In particular on the boulevard.*

Schwartz: *I don't see anything in those photos dated after the 9th one.*

Moermond: *I see a photo taken October 24 that has a fair bit in the boulevard by a telephone pole.*

Schwartz: *it was waiting for the garbage service. I've basically been fined every month for the last 8 months by this inspector. Even when we're not in violation.*

Moermond: *this isn't a fine, it is a fee for the cost of removing the items.*

Schwartz: *in this case, yes, I understand that. But if you look you will see repeated fines by this inspector. Six or seven of them.*

Moermond: *is your name on the property?*

Schwartz: *not yet. Still in the process of taking care of that.*

Moermond: *I think moving items to the boulevard isn't removing them. It is simply moving them. Ms. Martin, Mr. Schwartz mentioned a lot of enforcement there. Can you tell me more about the nature of that? Looks like you have information from 2023 and 2024?*

Martin: *we have complaints from neighbors with ongoing issues, running a business, scrapping, there's a trailer on the street full of items. There are cameras on the boulevard trees we will be removing because you can't attach things to the boulevard trees.*

Schwartz: *the cameras on the trees are at the neighbor's trees, not mine.*

Moermond: *they're the neighbor's cameras?*

Schwartz: *yes, they are. That's because we have repeated thefts in the area.*

Moermond: I don't believe a good faith effort was made to address this. You can talk to the Council about it. As it stands right now, I'm going to recommend this assessment is approved.

Schwartz: what about the fines and violations for nothing? I've sent several emails to Supervisors and HR, nothing gets done.

Moermond: that isn't in front of me.

Schwartz: and nothing was done, it was ignored.

Moermond: I don't know what is done or what wasn't. I just have this in front of me. I don't work in that area.

Schwartz: this inspector has a personal bias that is completely ridiculous. I think we're going to see this in course. You've been here 54 times in the last 12 months. 54 times! That's more than twice a week. That's harassment. Show me another property where that's happened in the City.

Moermond: I could easily do that sir.

Schwartz: tell me how that's not harassment—coming twice a week!?

Moermond: again, I can't speak or theorize about that. All I have is what is in front of me. If you want to appeal other assessments I'm happy to look at those individual.

Schwartz: I want to file an appeal on everything he's done against me and this property.

Moermond: and you're welcome to file an appeal on anything appealable and discuss other things in that context. Right now, I can't.

Schwartz: it is pretty ridiculous that when we complain we end up getting retaliated against and there's nothing you can do about it. That's pretty ridiculous. But that's fine, we'll have to deal with this another way.

Moermond: I wish you a good rest of your day sir, goodbye.

Referred to the City Council due back on 4/2/2025

4 [RLH TA 25-106](#) Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 900 LAUREL AVENUE. (File No. J2511R, Assessment No. 258519)

Sponsors: Bowie

Layover to LH March 4, 2025 at 9 am. PO to submit videos/photos for review.

Josiah Overfors, owner, appeared via phone

[Moermond gives background of appeals process]

Staff report by Supervisor Lisa Martin: October 3, 2024 a Summary Abatement Order was issued to remove and dispose of the tile and other miscellaneous trash from the rear of the property near the alley. It looks like a wood structure in the alley. Reinspection on the 10th and 15th, wasn't done. Work order done by crew October 25. Total assessment of \$440. No history at this property.

Overfors: I did make an effort to clean up the area. I have photos from around that time. There were a bunch of storms during that time that caused down trees. I went with a pole saw and cut down a bunch of branches to the yard waste site. Made a couple of trips. That structure in the photo has been at the property 15 years since I purchased the home. It has never been mentioned. That's why I find it kind of strange and surprising. I've also experienced a couple situations where people dump stuff in the alley. I've never had complaints before, also it was a hard time with my family. I have 3 kids under the age of 10 and I tried my best to get it cleaned up. I'm just asking for a little leniency. I will continue to do my best to keep it up, I've lived here 15 years and haven't had any issues.

Moermond: tell me about the tiles on the bench structure?

Overfors: I'm not sure what those are from. There was a remodel done and basically I got rid of all of them. There were a lot more and I moved a lot and I thought I did it sufficiently. I did dispose of that. I guess there was some broken tile. I took it and paid the fee to have it disposed of. I was a little surprised to get this after I went and cleaned everything up.

Moermond: what I suggest is you send in the evidence you have and that would be super helpful. What I have to compare right now is the before and after photos from the contractor. It looks almost like there are more materials there between October 3 and October 25, but it is of the same nature. Those tiles. I'm not sure what to make of that. If you have photos that would help us come to a conclusion it would help. I'll continue this 2 weeks and I'll review those and then we'll come to a conclusion.

Overfors: I will do that. Why now though? Was there a complaint? Is the City just trying to collect revenue?

Moermond: I'm not seeing that but it may be that there was a complaint on a neighboring property and the inspector will typically write orders on any neighboring properties with issues. They try to treat all neighboring properties the same. I know that's cold comfort now.

Laid Over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 3/4/2025

5 RLH TA 25-107 Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 686 LEXINGTON PARKWAY SOUTH. (File No. J2512R, Assessment No. 258522)

Sponsors: Jost

Approve the assessment.

Moermond: looks like the renter, Michelle Smith, appealed the assessment. It looks like he must have shared the cleanup assessment with his tenant. She did call back again and say that she was not appealing anymore, that it was not her concern, it was the owner's. Not sure what is going on with their communication but we don't have an appeal from the owner, and no longer have an appeal from the tenant. We'll send this to Council with a recommendation for approval.

Referred to the City Council due back on 4/2/2025

6 RLH TA 25-109 Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 716

ROSE AVENUE EAST. (File No. VB2506, Assessment No. 258805)

Sponsors: Yang

Approve the assessment, noting the assessment has already been paid.

Chang Vang, purchaser, appeared via phone

[Moermond gives background of appeals process]

Moermond: you aren't an owner, but representing one, it says here? Tell me more.

Vang: the owner will be deeding it to me.

Moermond: so you're a future owner.

Staff report by Supervisor James Hoffman: opened as a Category 1 fire due to a fire within the home. There was work being done without permit, so our building inspector went to the site and determined there was work being done. Red tagged it and recommended it be changed to a Category 2. There is a Code Compliance Inspection Report generated February 7, 2025. Substantial list of work to be done.

Vang: we didn't know this was scheduled for appearing. Why was it changed from Category 1 to 2? What's the reason?

Hoffman: our inspector determined there was a large amount of work being done without permits. Changed to a Category 2, everything on the Code Compliance Inspection Report list is required to be done under permit. Any work needs being done, and there wasn't, which is why it was changed to a Category 2.

Vang: it wasn't the work done under permit, it is confusing between City inspector and us because when we did work on roof and siding because we worried about rain. We worked on the garage. We made a mistake not doing that under permit. We did a quit claim deed from the original owner to the sister. That's what triggered Robert, he didn't know the house was sold. The only change was ownership was within the family. Robert also said if we changed it back to the original owner would it be changed to a cat 1? He said yes, but I have to speak to my boss. Robert said he couldn't change it back since we already have work done and the ownership changed.

Moermond: first, we're looking at fee for the Vacant Building program that covers the costs that applies to Category 1 and Category 2 Vacant Buildings in the same way. Either way you'd still have this fee. With respect to Category 1 or 2, a Category 1 means basically it is turnkey and can be moved into tomorrow. If it is a fire, then the City knows insurance companies always are heavily involved and very careful about pulling permits. The City would say it is ok to consider it a Category 1 because we know insurance abides by laws making them pull permits. In your situation significant work was done without permits being pulled which tells the City those safety obligations aren't being met. So, they required the Code Compliance Inspection Report and made it a Category 2. The biggest difference is addressing all the items on the Code Compliance list before reoccupancy. This is a fee for \$2,618. I need to hear why the owner, not you, would be appealing that fee.

Vang: the money is already paid to the City. Will we get the money back? What's the reason for appealing if we already paid the money if we don't get it back?

Moermond: *it does appear there is no Vacant Building pending assessment. It must have been paid, which means by paying it the owner is agreeing with it. There is no refund in paying for it because there wasn't an error in its issuance. You want the money back but tell me what the mistake would have been in issuing it?*

Vang: *we didn't know this is appealing for the vacant fee. We thought the City regulation, the fee we paid was to register as a Vacant Property.*

Moermond: *there is no reason to appeal if it is paid for, yes. So no, you don't have a reason to appeal.*

Vang: *yeah. But if we're here to appeal for other reasons but if the City says it is nonrefundable there's nothing to say.*

Moermond: *if you wanted to appeal it shouldn't have been paid.*

Vang: *how long do we get to finish? 2 years? A year?*

Moermond: *how long it takes is up to you. The fee is annual, so you'll see another fee in August of 2025. That can be appealed if you look like you're close. The permits are what governs how long it takes.*

Referred to the City Council due back on 3/19/2025

7 **RLH TA 25-108** Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 502 THOMAS AVENUE. (File No. J2512R, Assessment No. 258522)

Sponsors: Bowie

Approve the assessment and make payable over 3 years.

Teshite Wako, owner, appeared via phone

[Moermond gives background of appeals process]

Staff report by Supervisor Lisa Martin: October 29, 2024 a Summary Abatement Order was issued to owner and occupant to remove and dispose of sofa chairs, mattress and miscellaneous debris from backyard and property. Compliance date of November 5. Rechecked November 6 and work was not done. No returned mail. Work done by crew November 8, 2024. Total assessment of \$587.50. Extensive history at this property.

Wako: the tenant I had did a lot of damage to the property so we got a rehab loan from the City. We had a lot of onsite construction going on. I had to replace all the windows and it cost me \$50,000. The adjacent property is a nightmare, some of the things aren't mine but I have to remove them. We had some leftover from my crew who was supposed to take it. The window of notices themselves are short and created an undue burden in terms of covering costs and returning this back to a functional property. I've paid others. That's why I feel this is a bit hard because it was during construction time.

Moermond: tell me about how the construction required living room furniture to be in the back yard?

Wako: we took it out because we had to change the tile both up and downstairs. This is a two-unit building. We removed them and planned the construction crew to get a trailer and throw it, that didn't happen on time obviously. It was almost finished at that

time. We painted in October, I believe.

Moermond: it doesn't seem like a big deal to get those couple of items stored at least. I'm not sure why it wasn't done. It isn't that much stuff. Orders were mailed October 29 and the crew showed up November 8. That's definitely a couple of weeks. I don't understand why action wasn't taken. It seems like it was garbage. You can't have a mattress and upholstered furniture sitting outside. It seems like it is more on you and your contractor as opposed to the City's not giving notice. I think that a sufficient window was given to get things done.

Wako: I understand it should have been picked up. I'm fine with whatever your decision is.

Moermond: you are welcome to talk to Council as well, but I'm going to recommend approval. Did want to flag as well that you have past due taxes to be aware of for \$6,742.

Referred to the City Council due back on 4/2/2025