



City of Saint Paul

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Minutes - Final

Legislative Hearings

Marcia Moermond, Chief Legislative Hearing Officer
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Tuesday, July 21, 2026

9:00 AM

In-person Room To be Determined; Remote

9:00 a.m. Hearings

Special Tax Assessments-ROLL

- 1 **RLH AR 26-52** Ratifying the assessment for Emergency Sewer Repair at 777 OHIO STREET, fees billed during the month of April 2026. (File No. J2602A, Assessment No. 268503)

Sponsors: Noecker

Referred to the City Council due back on 9/2/2026

11:00 a.m. Hearings

Summary & Vehicle Abatement Orders

- 2 [RLH SAO 26-54](#) Appeal of Jane Foster to a Summary Abatement Order at 1312 SCHEFFER AVENUE. (Public hearing continued to August 5, 2026)

Sponsors: Jost

Continue CPH to August 5, 2026 (July 28 LH).

Recommendation forthcoming.

Voicemail for Jane Foster at 11:17 am: this is Marcia Moermond from St. Paul City Council calling you about 1312 Scheffer and your work plan. Feeling really well about the thought you put into it. The only remaining item I see is the taller plants in the boulevard, and what I am thinking is deadlines on this. I'm confused on what "current state" is, we need to maybe adjust around that. That would be my question. Let's try and talk about this. It is on the Council agenda tomorrow, but let's put this on August 5 Council agenda and talk to you next week between 11 and 11:30 and wrap up those questions.

Referred to the City Council due back on 7/22/2026

- 3 **RLH SAO 26-59** Appeal of Mark Puchala II to a Summary Abatement Order at 2016 FREMONT AVENUE.

Sponsors: Johnson

The nuisance is partially abated. Grant to August 7, 2026 for full compliance with orders.

Mark Puchala, owner, appeared via phone

[Moermond gives background of appeals process]

Staff report by Supervisor Lisa Martin: I do see he's been working really hard on getting pavers down and creating a path. We have a lot of tall grass and weeds again, boulevard is getting high, and the "compost bin" isn't really a compost bin. It is an old planter in disrepair, and it cannot be used as compost.

Moermond: there is no tall grass and weeds note in the order, so that is an FYI. This talks about the brush pile, rock pile, food pile, miscellaneous debris. You said the rock pile is well under way to being addressed. I'm inclined to say that has been abated, understanding you'll be continuing to work on it so it isn't a trip hazard, is that fair?

Puchala: Do you have the most recent photos I sent? The rock pile is gone.

Moermond: yes, and converted to a walkway, it just looks like there's a lot of space between the stones so a foot at a bad angle could be an ankle breaker. As time goes on you'd be doing it so it wouldn't be a trip hazard.

Puchala: I do plan on keeping working on it and making it more elegant. May I ask, why do I have to make sure my rocks are perfectly formed within my back yard where others shouldn't be going?

Moermond: I'm giving a heads up. I'm not looking for perfect. I'm just looking at it the same way I would if someone had a spike in their yard, I'd say that's kind of hazardous.

Puchala: just a recommendation.

Moermond: I'm going to say this is addressed and I trust you're going to finish the project. It looks like it is almost there. In the fullness of time I'd like to see it made more solid and less of a trip hazard.

Puchala: yeah, ok. I just wanted to make sure there wasn't code that I don't know about. I want to keep within code, I just thought I could put my rocks down and didn't think it would be a code thing.

Moermond: no, no, I don't know if I'd classify it as a hazard, but I wanted to discuss before I cleared the books on it.

The brush pile, I'd like to find out what happened. That was a bit of a story. All the trees in the alley were chopped down by someone. I called the police because the pile was thrown in my driveway. I considered that an illegal pile. It happened to my neighbors as well the same weekend. Police said their records show it was the Department of Safety and Inspections who did it. When I tried to confirm it sounded like it wasn't literally Department of Safety and Inspections but an energy company under approval of Department of Safety and Inspections. I am wondering who chopped

down all my trees and threw them in my driveway.

Moermond: Xcel has the right to do that, because they have easements on people's properties. I don't know if they're responsible for removing the branches. But, yes, they have the authority to do that, to trim around the power lines.

Puchala: they were 10 feet below the power line. That's so strange. Nowhere near them. Do we know how I can reach them to know this in advance?

Moermond: I have no idea.

Puchala: that brush pile was me moving those to the side to get them out of the way. I was breaking them down. I assumed when you said brush pile you meant the ones next to the garage, right?

Martin: I'm looking at the photos and see brush by the shed by a pallet, a bunch of stuff. That's the one we're looking at.

Puchala: that is grass, leaves and dirt from when I chopped down my lawn and when the contractors came and destroyed my native planting. Am I not allowed to have grass and dirt next to my shed?

Martin: in the second set of photos that were sent this morning you will see a pallet, a bucket of rocks he's still working on, and then branches and dried up brush. Most people do take that to the yard waste site.

Puchala: I'm trying to break it down into the ground. I currently have grass spiders and earwigs working through it. It is essentially mulch. I don't have these photos from this morning, can I get that sent so I can look at this too?

Moermond: absolutely. Ms. Vang will send them now.

Puchala: that is supposed to be mulch that I'm having the insects break down. There are next to no branches there anymore. Also, the pallet I thought you instructed me to make sure anything I put there needs to be raised off the ground, and the pallet was an acceptable way to do that. Are you just noting that it is there, or are you saying it needs to be moved?

Moermond: when we were talking about that before we were talking about firewood and that the firewood would be what pertained to getting it off the ground. That big log and how it could be kept. I remember it in that context. With respect to just a pallet laying there. Leaves and stuff don't need to be raised up. Will that stuff break down? Yes. I'd think of that more for composting or taking to compost site. They are really good at making compost from items like that. I guess personally—

Puchala: are you saying I can take compost off and then take it back? I drop it off, they compost, then I can take some back to my yard?

Moermond: for food waste you can take it to that site or have a compost bin on your own property. That also applies to yard waste.

Puchala: so really you want me to take all my grass and finish my compost bin expansion and have them in a designated spot, not spread out near shed and tree.

Moermond: yeah. It has to be enclosed. I know people buy compost bins, some people build them. Ms. Martin, can you summarize code on this?

Martin: usually the compost bins are kept away from property lines, you can't use plastic bags, it has to be contained, you can't have certain things in the bins like dog feces, plastic bags, that kind of stuff.

Puchala: I have put egg cartons into mine. Is that permissible?

Moermond: I don't know. I assume so. I know they can't be recycled as paper products, but I can't answer that.

Puchala: I've been bringing the insect population back with my own compost pile. There's a black hornet I'm trying to identify, and I finally just got dragonflies. It does have me wondering, Lisa, you said my compost bin looks like a planter in disrepair. It is actually old patio wood I've been building into a compost bin from scratch. Is there a way we can lead me to a resource on how exactly I should make my compost bin look to make it qualify.

Moermond: we can send you the part of the code that talks about compost and what the city requirement is. The main thing is to double check location and I think you need a lid.

Puchala: yeah I will definitely need the code because I know that if you seal it with a lid it poisons the soil. I was thinking it had to be four walls and not three.

Moermond: I know most people's compost bins are enclosed. They do get air. There is balance.

Puchala: my inevitable plan is to have three compost bins in different sites and then I turn them. I also want them to be four feet high, but I have been taking it slow to keep up with all the other abatements. I thin we're at the point where I can get this one high enough, do you think a slotted lid is ok?

Martin: I'd have to look at that. The concern is animals getting into it. I know you can buy them on amazon. Lots of different options.

Puchala: are they the oval ones?

Martin: large 80 gallon and obviously have venting.

Puchala: when I say poison I'm talking about lack of venting. I'm just trying to make it myself as my own personal recycling. I'm using wood because it is biodegradable and gives me an excuse to build the same thing 10 times just to bolster my experience. When I expand my compost bin I can make sure the brush under the pine tree is all put into it, I can also get it relocated easy once I understand the guidelines about a proper location. That would be the food AND brush pile. The stone pile is gone. Does that sound like I understand what I need to do?

Moermond: I would like you to review code. It sounds like you are on the right track, but site unseen and a proposal it is hard to say? You could model yours after looking at how others are done. We're on our way.

Puchala: I just worry then about getting surprised at the next hearing again about

something working and then not finding out it was wrong until the next hearing and then running out of time. Is it ok for me to send photos of my concept and plans as I make them, rather than waiting for the next hearing? So I can get verification what I am doing is right, earlier?

Martin: yes. Send it to all of us and we'll all look at it.

Puchala: ok, I'll send updates and then if it isn't right progress you just let me know and I'll get to work right away.

Moermond: I was just pulling up code on this. 357.08. We will send that section to you.

Puchala: when it comes to the tall grass and weeds and everything, I did have a big issue with when the order was done. They sent a police officer to threaten me and try and arrest me if I "speak with the team too much." I actually asked him to call Lisa with me to confirm the rules and she told them the 8" and 18" on the boulevard and they just shredded up my native planting anyway. I mean, I sprained my ankle from the police officer trying to corral me around and threatening to arrest me. They LOPPED my milk weed and ran over the other milk weed with a lawn mower, almost all my plants were destroyed. I'm wondering what I can I do to make sure they only chop everything above 8 inches and also they don't chop down the natives. Is that just something no one can do anything about?

Moermond: If they were organized more in sections, garden areas---you are admittedly in a space where you are transitioning in real time. Trading grass for these plants, I think that's where the problem comes about. Where would it begin and end for them?

Puchala: they just saw milkweed and they said that looks like a weed so they started destroying all of it. It was the front boulevard too, no grass, just barren, and they took it down anyway.

Moermond: the Department of Safety and Inspections oversees the crews that do that work. I know we talked exhaustively about what that would be and I don't know why EXACTLY the police were there. I don't know how past events were interpreted and if that required St. Paul Police Department to be there. That isn't something a work crew could handle.

Puchala: I do want to ask why is suicidal ideation regarded as threatening suicide?

Moermond: you have said the threat and you're clearly ideating.

Puchala: I never made the threat.

Moermond: you said "I am going to."

Puchala: I never said that.

Moermond: here's the thing. It isn't an issue that the work crew can deal with and I'm sorry but it does elicit a more prescriptive approach by staff. They get to make a decision about who they bring with them. I'd rather focus on what we have going on today.

Puchala: I just want to know where I can go to get that corrected because being threatened by an officer on my own property is a fourth amendment violation. I want to

make sure where I can go to get that matter resolved. When I was sent to the district court and tried to file, then they told me to provide I had done so when that was out of my hands. It looks like someone deleted my filing to the district court.

Moermond: I don't know anything about that.

Puchala: who is the person to reach out to when the homeowner feels the tall grass order was mishandled I guess.

Moermond: you've got here, Council and then appeals court. I don't know about other courts. You'd need legal advice that I can't give or advise you on. It is going to depend on what the question is exactly. You can throw the spaghetti against the wall and see what sticks, but what is actually right would be an attorney helping you through your questions and figuring out the right path to deal with it.

Puchala: I am sorry for the frustration. Everyone has told me they're not the one to go to and I'm just struggling to find who is. I think I need to contact appeals court and leave it at that for now.

Moermond: whatever you think is best for you. That isn't something I can help with. The brush pile shouldn't just be a pile. [reads out city code re: composting] We will get that exact language to you.

Puchala: and all of that needs to be IN the bin, not spread on the ground.

Martin: we did mention the grass, there is a grass order out there for boulevard and yard. Make sure the grass and weeds are maintained under 8".

Puchala: are you saying I have ANOTHER grass order?

Martin: correct. It was issued sometime last week.

Puchala: everything is under 8" and the boulevard is under 18". Why am I getting another order when it is within jurisdiction?

Martin: is the boulevard all plants? Or is a mix of weeds, grass, and a couple plants?

Puchala: there is no grass on the front boulevard. The side boulevard on the east I have been trying to supplant the grass with sedge, but sedge doesn't grow past 6". The highest it can get is 8" and that's not the whole plant. I keep the grass down to 3" and try to let the sedge grow, but that's only the side. Everything else is native planting. I would love to send you a diagram I was working on of every plant that is there and willing to go over what is and isn't allowed and should and shouldn't be protected.

Moermond: I don't have those in front of me as part of this appeal. I'm not ready to talk about a new tall grass and weeds file I don't have. I can't legally do that. If you want to appeal it, of course, but it isn't in front of me today. Besides appealing the only other way to deal with it is speak to Ms. Martin and her team and arrive at an understanding.

Puchala: the stone pile in the current orders I wanted to discuss. I was ordered to take care of that pile in the middle of an extreme heat warning and in the middle of air quality problems. Is there a way I can file a complaint about being forced to work on all of that during a dangerous situation?

Moermond: when you file an appeal enforcement on the order is stayed until the appeal is resolved. So you didn't NEED to be doing that once you filed the appeal. No action can be taken by the Department of Safety and Inspections until we finish this here.

Puchala: ok. I'll just have to consult my own legal advice on that matter as well.

Moermond: if you file an appeal they can't do enforcement on that order. They have to wait until the order is resolved. You don't have to be doing the work unless it is by your own choice once that appeal is filed.

Puchala: I understand that, but I still have complaints I want to make about it because of everything all of this has put me through.

Moermond: if you want to go a legal route, then yes, seeking legal advice. In terms of operating within City government, you've already gone through this process, other things would be reaching out to the Department head, mayor, your Councilmember and writing a letter about your concerns. That's another way to deal with it and see if you can get a response that addresses some of your concerns.

Puchala: yeah, alright.

Referred to the City Council due back on 8/5/2026

1:00 p.m. Hearings

Vacant Building Registrations

- 4 RLH VBR** Appeal of Degen Goitom, ACMN Properties LLC, to a Vacant Building
26-14 Registration Renewal Requirement at 1047 ARCADE STREET.

Sponsors: Yang

Waive VB fee for 90 days (to October 7, 2026).

Degen Goitom, ACMN Properties, appeared via phone

Staff report by Supervisor Matt Dornfeld : Made a Category 1 Vacant Building July 2022. We currently have trades permits on file and rehab is ongoing. I assume he is appealing the Vacant Building registration.

Goitom: I started working for them December 2024, I inherited all of this and didn't know the history on Arcade. We figured out McQuillan did furnace and AC and didn't pull a permit because it was during Covid. That landed us in some hot water, so now we have inspections going on. I did get letter about the 2025 Vacant Building fee. That's why I was calling initialing. I have a receipt from July 2025. We're all done, we just have the electrical and HVAC inspection to do.

Moermond: you said July 15, 2025?

Goitom: yes.

Moermond: That's July 2025 through 2026. This fee today covers July 2026 through 2027. I'm happy you got permits pulled and are close to being done. What's your estimate for wrapping things up?

Goitom: we have recessed light covers we need to install, then that will be it. The HVAC is just a bathroom fan install, I need to check in with him.

Moermond: I'm going to recommend the Council gives you a 90 day fee waiver, which would last until October 7th. I'm thinking you'll have everything done by then and you won't have any fee at all for the upcoming year. If it takes longer than that we can talk again, because they will rebill you and we'll sort it out then. Otherwise, if you're good to go by then you won't have a 2026-2027 fee.

Goitom: thank you so much.

Referred to the City Council due back on 8/5/2026

1:30 p.m. Hearings

Orders To Vacate - Fire Certificate of Occupancy

- 5 **RLH VO 26-26** Appeal of Wyatt Partridge of Hellmuth & Johnson, Representing Brendon Smith, to a Fire Certificate of Occupancy Correction Notice which includes Condemnation at 74 CONGRESS STREET WEST.

Sponsors: Noecker

Grant the appeal.

Referred to the City Council due back on 8/5/2026

- 6 **RLH VO 26-30** Appeal of Obsa Tahir to a Fire Inspection Report, which includes condemnation, at 507 UNIVERSITY AVENUE WEST and 509 UNIVERSITY AVENUE WEST.

Sponsors: Bowie

Grant to November 6, 2026 for compliance with the July 21, 2026 Fire Correction orders.

Called at 1:58 pm at x7224: unable to leave message. Voicemail box full.

Called at 2:02 x7224: unable to leave message. Voicemailbox full.

Staff update by Fire Manager AJ Neis: exposed electrical, newer staircase built to 2nd floor and doesn't appear to be built to code. In addition, one of the primary concerns was the structure of the building---there is significant "stair cracking" in the CMU block mortar. You could see daylight through the cracks from inside the building. Potential water infiltration, shifting of blocks, many other things.

Moermond: we don't have the appellant on the line, his voicemail was full. We tried calling him twice. I'm going to recommend the Council grant 90 days to address these issues, it can be used as S1 storage in the meantime, but after those 90 days the Department of Safety and Inspections can move forward with revocation. The Department of Safety and Inspections can do inspections after November 1.

Referred to the City Council due back on 8/5/2026