

Letter to Legislative Hearing Officer regarding hearing set for February 9th, 2021

Regarding vacant building at 1816 Minnehaha Ave E., Saint Paul MN 55119

Background:

I have owned this home for approximately 26 years, and I lived there for almost 19 years. When I bought the home, I wanted to completely renovate it and fix it up to modern standards. Shortly after I bought the home, I got married and those plans had to wait for many many years. Eventually, my wife and I bought another home and my son-in-law lived there for a few years. Finally, I had an opportunity to fulfill my original vision for this home and I started the renovation.

Things have not gone smoothly. Almost immediately after starting, I was forced to list the home as a vacant building, which was a complete surprise to me. This caused a great deal of confusion on my part, because I was not able to obtain building permits. How can I bring the building into compliance without building permits; makes no sense. I lost a whole year because of this. I finally started talking to my councilmember and with her help I got a permit to continue the renovation. That was in the fall of 2019. I removed the second-floor structure, per the recommendation of the structural engineer I hired, but during that work an error was made in cutting off the wall members. I had to stop work until the structural engineer and I could figure out how to fix the error. I spent all of 2019 fixing the error and keeping the property maintained. By the late fall of 2019, I was ready to start constructing the second-floor walls. Since it was late fall, I decided to wait until the spring of 2020. Of course, the pandemic hit and once again I was shutdown. However, we were not completely stopped in our efforts; my wife and I spend most of the summer doing needed yard maintenance and cleaning up in the house. My plan is to continue with the second-floor work in the spring and summer of 2021.

That is when I received notification from the city for an "Order to Abate Nuisance Building(s)" on December 7th and that is where things stand as of now. I requested a code compliance report and I plan on using that to figure out the needed repairs. I still wish to complete the renovation and I am working to create a plan to finish major parts of the renovation in 2021.

My plan consists of three parts:

1. Obtain the Code Compliance Report (CCR).
2. Using the CCR, obtain quotes for contractors for the needed work/repairs.
3. Obtain evidence of sufficient financial resources to pay for the needed work/repairs.

I did obtain the report on 1/29/2021 but of course this is only 6 working days before the hearing, so I have not been able to get much done on my plan. Since I received the CCR so close to the hearing, I would like to request at least 12 weeks more time to prepare my plan. It takes a lot of time to find contractors and for them to provide quotes. In addition, after I have received quotes from a contractor that is acceptable; I will then start the process with my financial institution regarding a construction loan, which will take at least a few weeks.

I know this project is taking a lot of time, but I am close to making significant progress in 2021. I am not sure I can bring the home into complete compliance in 2021 but I think it will be very close. My vision is to have the home looking like a finished home from the outside even if there is still some work to be done on the inside. In addition, the plan is to have two of three major systems in place: electrical, mechanical by the end of 2021.

As a side note, I believe there is an error on the code compliance report, because it states the home is in a Heritage Preservation District, which it is not. Therefore, I am requesting the Code Compliance Report be corrected on this point.

In addition, there are two statements in the report that don't seem correct. On page 4 it is stated: "All electrical work must be done by a Minnesota-Licensed electrical contractor under an electrical permit" and "All plumbing must be done by a plumbing contractor licensed in the state of Minnesota and the city of St. Paul under an approved permit". It is my understanding as the homeowner, I am allowed to do both electrical and plumbing. I would like to clarify this point and if needed, I would like the code compliance report corrected.