

Moermond, Marcia (CI-StPaul)

From: Michael Roessle <michael.roessle@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 11, 2019 4:14 PM
To: Vang, Mai (CI-StPaul); *CI-StPaul_LegislativeHearings; Moermond, Marcia (CI-StPaul); Tincher, Jaime (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Appeal of Fire Inspection Correction Notice at 705 Summit Avenue.

Ms. Vang and Ms. Moermond,

This letter is in regard to the upcoming legislative hearing on Tuesday May 14th for File # RLH FCO 19-53 - the Appeal of Fire Inspection Correction Notice at 705 Summit Avenue.

For some background, myself and many neighbors have had numerous meetings with the St. Paul DSI staff, St. Paul Police Department, Councilman Thao and Deputy Mayor Tincher regarding the continual problems at this property. I was then dismayed to see this appeal.

I strongly urge the City to deny the appeal of the Fire Inspection Correction Notice at 705 Summit Avenue. The owner of this property has been a habitual offender, who clearly has no regard for the law, the safety of his tenants, the safety of the neighborhood or the responsibility that comes with ownership and maintenance of a historic Cass Gilbert home, which has become a stark embarrassment to the city and state.

According to a renowned local architect who is an expert in Cass Gilbert buildings, 705 Summit Avenue is likely the second-most dilapidated Cass Gilbert structure in the entire United States; the only one in worse condition is a hospital in Connecticut that was abandoned more than 50 years ago. Perhaps that can be added to the city's official tourist literature – "Visit historic Summit Avenue, home to the second-most run-down Cass Gilbert structure in the nation." Maybe leave out the part that the city allows humans and animals to live there in perpetual danger.

Against the strong appeals by the neighborhood, the City reinstated the certificate of Occupancy in 2017 despite the owner having never shown an interest in repairing and maintaining the building. Unsurprisingly, the horrific conditions have returned. Actually, they never went away. The city has consistently bent the rules to the point of breaking to protect the owner's perverse profiteering, time and time and time again.

Along the way, the owner has shown no interest in following city regulations and seemingly takes smug enjoyment in the fact that the City has given, and continues to grant, excessive leniency in exchange for non-compliance. Meanwhile, the owner uses his tenants as a human shield to protect his own greed. "If you enforced the law, my poor tenants wouldn't have a place to stay." I am confident in saying that St. Paul has no shortage of rental properties in terrible condition, though better than this one. In fact, their quality of life and safety would improve if they went elsewhere, which may explain the constant turnover at 705 Summit.

The photos and report from the 2017 inspection were horrific, and those from the recent 2019 inspection were no better. Nobody should have to live in these conditions in the "the most livable city in America." The fact that the building was given a "C" grade in 2017 is suspect, at best. This most recent inspection saw the grade come in at a "D." Many of the issues found in the 2019 inspection would have taken far longer than a year and a half to crop up, so I wonder why they weren't noted then as well.

Myself and my neighbors have spoken with several members of the St. Paul DSI staff regarding this property, and they have confided that the owner employs stall tactics and does the minimum repairs to get it to a "D-minus" condition for the purposes of retaining the C of O, but it immediately deteriorates into a worse state following the approval of the C of

O. Additionally, it was relayed that they believe the owner is fully aware that what he is doing is wrong, and simply does not care, but he is skilled at outsmarting the City, so it is allowed to persist.

The time for leniency is over. I noticed in the appeal filing that the reason given was “some of the work is time consuming.” I’m sure the Mayor did not have these conditions in mind in his push for housing in the city. The tenants living in such dangerous, disgusting conditions with numerous life-safety issues surely do not want to hear, “we’ll get to it....eventually. We’re busy.” The owner has a decades-long history of malfeasance, where profit above human life and decency is the only concern. Continuing to allow him to play the city administration for fools is no longer the answer.

From the fire in 2011 that was attributed to the lack of maintenance of the electrical system that sent brave members of the St. Paul Fire Department to the hospital, to the shooting three years ago, to having bounty hunter raids on the property trying to capture a violent felon with a staggering 100% rate of recidivism over the past 20 years being harbored there, to constant garbage littered around the property – this building and the owner are a danger to the tenants and the neighborhood. It is a living hell being next to this property, and the City is 100% responsible for allowing this nightmare to return to the neighborhood.

This is the time for action rather than leniency. This is the time for the City to put the safety and lives of the tenants and neighborhood above protecting the wallet of a habitual bad-actor. Do not allow the owner to, yet again, stall, obfuscate, misdirect and continue to treat life and safety, as well as city officials, as a joke. Unequivocally deny the appeal. Demand compliance in the generous time-frame that was provided and remove the ability to continue to prey upon and profit from the vulnerable if full compliance is not met.

Sincerely,

Michael Roessle

715 Summit Avenue