



City of Saint Paul

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Minutes - Final

Legislative Hearings

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Tuesday, August 19, 2025

9:00 AM

Room 330 City Hall & Court House/Remote

10:00 a.m. Hearings

Special Tax Assessments

- 1 [RLH TA 25-260](#) Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 1654 JUNO AVENUE. (File No. J2518R, Assessment No. 258534) (Refer to August 5, 2025 Legislative Hearing)

Sponsors: Jost

Layover to LH 9/16 at 10 am (needs follow up with PW).

Moermond: we're laying this over to September 16 because we haven't got further follow up from Public Works on this one. We will give it a couple more weeks to get a response and review this again then.

Laid Over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 9/16/2025

Special Tax Assessments

- 2 **RLH AR 25-80** Ratifying the assessment for Rubbish and Garbage Clean Up services during May 28 to June 6, 2025 (File No. J2526R, Assessment No. 258570)

Sponsors: Noecker

Referred to the City Council due back on 10/1/2025

- 3 **RLH AR 25-81** Ratifying the assessment for Tall Grass and Weed Removal services during June 2 to 9, 2025 (File No. J2513TW, Assessment No. 258571)

Sponsors: Noecker

Referred to the City Council due back on 10/1/2025

11:00 a.m. Hearings

Summary & Vehicle Abatement Orders

- 4 [RLH SAO 25-51](#) Appeal of Jay Cherner to an Emergency Summary Abatement Order at 1603 and 1605 UNIVERSITY AVENUE WEST.

Sponsors: Privratsky

Grant to September 1, 2025 for compliance.

Mark Morrow, Union Park District Council Executive (UPDC) co-chair land use and economic development committee, appeared

Jane McClure, the villager, observed

Jay Cherner, owner, appeared via phone

Leah Timberlake -Sullivan, Union Park District Council Executive (UPDC) Director, appeared

[Moermond gives background of appeals process]

Staff report by Supervisor Lisa Martin: an emergency Summary Abatement Order went out August 7, 2025 to Mr. Cherner specifically to remove, paint covered canvas from both sides of billboard, paint over all graffiti from all parts including billboard frames and equipment. Compliance date of August 12. Approximate estimated cost of \$3,000 - \$5,000. Issued by

Martin: chapter 45 nuisance abatement. Our parks crew hired someone to try and abate the issue, they did some black paint but it didn't cover the entire area and didn't take care of many of the issues. That's why the emergency Summary Abatement Order was issued to address all areas including canvas billboard and frame.

Moermond: so this is round 2. A normal Summary Abatement Order first.

Martin: yes, and with the computers being down I can't look at how long the issue has been going on.

Cherner: this billboard issue started 4 years ago when it was vandalized by graffiti men. They were arrested and released. Since that time, I put a new billboard, covered what they did, then it happened again a month later. That was during the riots I believe. My entire building was vandalized and windows broken. I was trying to take care of as much as I could since my business was there. I made 100 phone calls to the police; it made no difference. I don't know how to protect my property. I know I pay property tax, but I have no help. I also had homeless people issues that extended to drug use and so on. I was told there was nothing they could do. I try to do the best I can, but what is the purpose of replacing and penalizing if 5 months from now it will be the same thing? I need help from the police that this is not going to happen, and then I will take care of the problem.

Moermond: what does that mean?

Cherner: it is a waste of money and effort.

Moermond: what are you looking for specifically today in your appeal?

Cherner: for 3 years I wasn't able to use my billboard due to the graffiti issues, then I was given the notice to fix in 3 days. It isn't physically possible. The company I used to hire is no longer in business. I don't know where to go at this point. That's a secondary issue though, the primary issue is I have no protection. As soon as it is replaced it will be vandalized again.

Moermond: I hear you want more time, I hear you feel kind of hopeless about the situation due to the repeated vandalism, and you also want the police to protect the billboards as opposed to fixing them repeatedly.

Cherner: that's correct. It is the same people doing it. One time they were caught and let go.

Moermond: I can't speak to that, I am not the criminal justice system.

Cherner: I saw the orders from the City came and I saw them in the letter on the roofs, they told me they were going to cover it. I said no, remove the canvas. They insisted on painting the black over it.

Morrow: this matter was brought to our attention July 21 when our Executive Director Leah brought the matter from Spruce Tree because they've been trying to have something done about the billboards and graffiti. I used Google Streetview when preparing the letter and it goes back 4 years. Looking at St. Paul's sign ordinance, it does look to me that it could be considered an unsightly sign and quite possibly since it hasn't changed for 4 years, an abandoned sign and the City's instructions in those circumstances are to provide a 15 day notice for repair or removal. For abandoned signs notice it will be removed. Your neighbors, the DC, would like the signs removed. They aren't contributing to the neighborhood. You have a several million-dollar loon looking right at your billboards. People visiting see both, it is a neighborhood quality issue. We're trying to get that corner to come back and your billboards are a negative rather than a positive.

Leah Timberlake-Sullivan: I office in the Spruce Tree Center. I'm here on behalf of them and the many champion businesses at Snelling and University. United Village, Hot Works, the bookstore. So many businesses acting as a team for the corridor. A corridor succeeds when you have heavy lifters pulling momentum up and declines when you have inactive bad faith operators. My concern is for the whole of the corridor. 4 years later to negotiate how to remediate when all the neighbors also suffer graffiti. We can't have this type of lag in the system. I agree there are areas for the City to improve, but I can't condone the weight it puts on follow businesses to allow this to go on for 4 years. I know its difficult but the only way to move forward is to band together and hold standards together. They operate in good faith in the best of their capacity. It isn't fair to the people trying to build a corridor to allow this to go on any further. It is an injustice to them. I regret to say, but I haven't heard today anything that makes me think there's a commitment to the area that things would be different in the future. I ask you to consider the area businesses putting in the work. They would like this removed.

Moermond: as the District Council do you facilitate conversation around the area businesses and police, how can Mr. Cherner be part of that and benefit from his neighbors' experience.

Leah Timberlake-Sullivan: the police are coming tonight to speak about the neighborhood safe and strong initiative. UPDC will be launching surveys to the area

businesses about their feeling about relationships with the City. Today we're talking about the sign and it does need to be addressed. You can feel the sense of unfairness in the letter by Spruce Tree. We're giving standards and under the rule system. What is going on here? This really gets down to if 4 years isn't enough for the City to intervene, what is? Decisive response is what brings momentum to the project. This doesn't appear to be a complicated situation. You have a champion of the corridor asking for relief. I want to bring that Spruce Tree voice forward, that's why I'm here. I'd love to meet with Mr. Cherner, his experience is very important. He has some valid complaints. But what are we going to say, no one has to fix anything until it is easy? I can't say that's ok when I see what even small businesses in the area are doing. It is one of the easier things to deal with, in my view.

Morrow: one advocate would be the Midway Chamber; we also hear your pain on what you've experienced. As a community org by ourselves weren't able to get enough movement at Snelling and University, so we've combined with Hamline Midway and the Midway Chamber. We're all putting efforts together to work on this intersection in particular. If I were you I would knock on the door of Midway Chamber so they can advocate for you.

Moermond: Ms. Martin, locations where we have people vandalizing or dumping and creating nuisance conditions, what kinds of advice does the City give?

Martin: put up signage, motion-sensored lights, camera systems can all be helpful. Even fake cameras help.

Cherner: I have signs, cameras, all of that.

Moermond: good. Although I'm sympathetic of your position to some extent, but I also know if I live next to McDonalds and their wrappers blow in my yard, I'm responsible to clean it up. It is more serious than average in this case because this has been a long-standing problem. If a car is burning on the sidewalk and hull remains there for 2 weeks that is something people can sustain and move forward from. It gets harder the more time that passes. Famously, the broken windows theory, still applies here. We're talking about a visual symbol there is emotional and financial disinvestment in the area. I think that is what is triggering to the folks who ARE doing that investment into the area. I do take this seriously. Surely a Google search would help you find someone who can work on this for you. The Parks' folks did appear to have some trouble doing an adequate job abating the nuisance. Is it something Department of Safety & Inspections would be looking into hiring an outside crew for this work now?

Martin: correct.

Moermond: first, I'm going to put this on Council's agenda next Wednesday at 3:30. My recommendation is Council grant compliance to September 1 for compliance. After that Department of Safety & Inspections can pursue a contract to resolve the matter. In the event it is somehow cleaned up between the deadline and when the contractor is hired, it would become a nuisance abatement assessment. Again, the Council may look at this differently than I do. I do think this is important. You could alternatively come up with a proposal to remove the signs, but we really need the cleanup to happen pending a long-term decision.

Referred to the City Council due back on 8/27/2025

1:00 p.m. Hearings

Vacant Building Registrations

- 5 [RLH VBR 25-21](#) Appeal of Gladys Igbo to a Vacant Building Registration Fee Warning Letter at 385 UNIVERSITY AVENUE WEST. (To refer back to August 19, 2025 Legislative Hearing)

Sponsors: Bowie

Layover to LH 9/9 at 1 pm to see if last warm-air permit is finaled. (STAMPS/Amanda system unavailable due to cyber security incident)

Moermond: the mechanical permit has been finaled, which leaves one warm-air permit. Amanda continues to be down so it is hard to check on progress. We'll lay this over to September 9 and hopefully we'll have that permit finaled and can close at that time.

Laid Over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 9/9/2025