

HPC File #16-004

767 Fourth Street East, Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District, by the Saint Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority, for a demolition permit to raze the Peterson-Burke house

HPC staff presented the staff report and based on the findings staff recommended approval of the demolition permit application provided the following conditions is met:

1. Prior to demolition, the applicant shall remove non-original siding and wrap to reveal the historic exterior of the residence and the building shall be documented following the Minnesota Historic Property Record (MHPR) archival photo documentation standards prior to demolition, at the owner's expense. Two copies of the 2012 HPC reviewed plans in 11" x 17" format will be accepted in lieu of as-built drawings. Two copies of the documentation shall be forwarded to the HPC in both printed form and as TIFF files on an archival quality CD (one copy of the documentation to be delivered to the Ramsey County Historically Society.)

Commissioner Trimble questioned why the HRA would leave a hole in the roof, after the chimney fell, knowing it could do further damage to the house unless it was their intention to have it torn down.

Ms. Boulware stated that the hole in the roof was the one visual point that she observed. She did not inspect the roof and didn't know if there were any other issues contributing to the water damage. She said it was best to ask HRA staff regarding demolition of the chimney last year and subsequently what happened or what measures were taken during that time.

Chair Dana requested that everyone present be careful not to make inferences or be inflammatory in the way comments are made or questions are asked. There are people who are involved in this work and these properties who could be personally offended by inferences about personal behavior.

Ms. Boulware stated she has preliminary plans that were submitted for the property in 2012 so the layout of the property is available as well as the photographs. She also added that the property next door (763) was demolished a little over a year ago. It was a Vacant Category 3 building and was reviewed at Legislative Hearings. Ramsey County acquired it through tax forfeiture and the property was removed. The HPC did not review the demolition of 763 Fourth Street.

Ms. Spong added that there is an exception in City Ordinance for all designated districts. If there is property that is declared a nuisance property, the City Council does not need HPC review, and can make the decision for demolition.

Joe Musolf, HRA staff, stated HRA staff believes a decision to allow demolition is warranted considering the structural condition of the building and the lacking economic viability of the

building. The structural condition review that they included with their application cited numerous structural deficiencies. The structural engineer concluded that the building is in poor structural condition and repairs would likely be costly. They have worked diligently to find an economically viable rehabilitation proposal for the building. They received one proposal in 2012 requesting a subsidy of \$310,000 and determined that this proposal was not economically viable. They offered the property via request for proposals two times in 2013 and 2014. These requests did not result in any proposals. In the spring of 2015 they requested assistance from HPC staff to identify any other interested developers and three new developers emerged, but no proposals came of those conversations.

Commissioner Hill questioned what steps the HRA takes to keep these properties safe and secure in the neighborhood.

Mr. Musolf stated they try very hard to keep these buildings secure and to make sure that they don't present any safety issues. This is an unusual situation where the chimney fell. Stabilization of chimneys for properties that the HRA owns has never been something they considered, but they do now as a result of what happened at this property. They have not addressed the hole in the roof, but they will.

Tom Dimond, 2119 Skyway Dr., testified it's really important that we save these structures. The neighborhood and the City will be well rewarded if the community is allowed to bring imaginative suggestions to the table.

Sage Holben, 705 Fourth Street East, testified that in regards to transparency between the City and Dayton's Bluff Community Council and its residents she is requesting denial of demolition of this property.

Jean Comstock, 729 Sixth Street East, testified there is a group of neighbors who are very interested and concerned about these properties. They would like the opportunity to meet and come up with some other solutions. She requests that the application for demolition is denied.

Kirstin Scanlon Madore, 326 Maria Avenue, testified she believes it's very important to the fabric of our City and their neighborhood that they are allowed to try as hard as they can to preserve these properties. She is requesting that this application for demolition be denied.

Aron Thomas, 742 Plum Street, wanted to thank the HRA for the work they have done. He helped out with a couple of the houses on Fourth Street. He completely understands that the HRA may feel like after holding onto these houses for 10 years that they would rather not incur the ongoing maintenance costs. He wonders if maybe there is a way that they get more involved with the District Councils in order to take the properties, that the HRA would consider for demolition, and transfer these to the neighbors.

Sheila Fricke, 310 Maple Street, testified she came to this meeting because she thought it was about one property up for demolition, but then she saw in the paper all of the properties up for

demolition. This house is an eyesore and the City did not take responsibility to take care of its maintenance. She had called on the chimney several times and it wasn't until the chimney fell that the City came out to clean it up. Her main concern was safety. It's unfortunate that it has come to this where these places are so bad. It could have been prevented if maintenance was done in a timely manner with some of these houses. When the City or County has ownership there is no reason why some of this stuff couldn't have been taken care of or fixed beforehand. This home sat for so long. The community at this point is so frustrated by how long things take to get done and now they say the only option is for demolition. If the community and neighbors knew more about these homes and knew there was some type of financial help maybe they could have done something. At this point she just wants to see something done with these properties. Whether they are rehabbed or torn down they have sat too long. The regular citizen wouldn't be able to handle their property like the City handled these properties. They would not have been allowed to have their homes in this condition. She wants to see something done.

HPC staff read written testimony into the record requesting that the items pertaining to the demolition of HRA owned properties in the Dayton's Bluff Heritage Preservation District be withdrawn from the October 8, 2015, Heritage Preservation Commission agenda pending a community meeting to consider the impacts and/or opportunities that the properties in question represent to the Dayton's Bluff community. The letter includes sixteen names of people in support of this request: Lou Ann Norquist, Barry Madore, Benjamin Mason, Jennifer Mason, Karin DuPaul, Erica Schneekloth, Aron Thomas, Casie Radford, Carla Riehle, Carrie Obry, Sage Holben, Cliff Carey, Carol Carey, Bob Parker, David Durant, and Tammy Durant. The public hearing was closed.

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Commissioner Trimble moved for denial of the demolition. Commissioner Riehle seconded the motion.

Commissioner Trimble stated that this is a contributing property to the historic district. He said that he is astounded that the HRA has never gone in front of the Dayton's Bluff District Council on any of these properties. The people who live there should be the first people they contact.

The motion passed by a vote of 8-0.