

Moermond, Marcia (CI-StPaul)

From: Cervantes, Ricardo (CI-StPaul)
Sent: Friday, July 27, 2018 2:54 PM
To: Tracy Young
Cc: Bistodeau, Travis (CI-StPaul); Magner, Steve (CI-StPaul); Carter, Melvin (CI-StPaul); Henningson, Samantha (CI-StPaul); Moermond, Marcia (CI-StPaul)
Subject: RE: Concerned Citizens of Desnoyer Park

Good Afternoon Mrs. Young,

Thank you for taking the time to share your concerns regarding these properties. The Saint Paul Department of Safety and Inspections takes these issues very seriously and is also concerned about these properties.

Below are my responses (in red) to your questions.

Also I would like to make you aware that DSI invited Mr. Olson into our offices last fall for an in-person meeting regarding these properties. In that meeting, we clearly expressed our concern about the owner's willingness to maintain these homes. We shared with him that if he continued to fail to maintain his properties as required, we would designate his unoccupied properties as Vacant Buildings and begin the process of demolishing several of the homes. I believe we have maintained our end of that agreement thus far. Since that discussion, we have designated five of his eight properties as Vacant Buildings. These designations bring within them a \$2,127 registration fee and an increased expectation that the property will be well maintained and secured. In addition, we have started the condemnation process on two of those five vacant buildings, again in the hopes that we could encourage Mr. Olson to bring the buildings into compliance and re-occupy the homes.

Our plan is to continue encouraging rehabilitation of these properties. However, if Mr. Olson continues to ignore our efforts, we will follow through and begin the demolition process on the next three Vacant Buildings in his portfolio. It is possible that DSI will eventually demolish all five of the Vacant Buildings if the situation does not change.

The owner is entitled to due process, and this plan will take time to execute. Thank you for your continued patience. In the meantime, please continue to file complaints as needed through our 266-8989 call center.

From: Tracy Young [mailto:trixie_curler@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, July 22, 2018 11:25 AM
To: Cervantes, Ricardo (CI-StPaul) <ricardo.cervantes@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Fw: Concerned Citizens of Desnoyer Park

Good morning, Mr. Cervantes ~

I'm sending you a copy of this letter, which I emailed to Steve Magner, Samantha Henningson, Mayor Carter, the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association, and some of our most directly affected neighbors on Friday. If there is any way you can help us resolve our growing problem, we would greatly appreciate it. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Tracy Young
(contact info below)

To: Steve Magner, Manager of Code Enforcement, City of St. Paul and Samantha Henningson, Ward 4 Councilmember

cc Mayor Melvin Carter, Desnoyer Park Improvement Association, and concerned neighbors of Desnoyer Park

Dear Mr. Wagner and Ms. Henningson,

We're writing on behalf of a group of about 20 property owners and taxpayers here in Desnoyer Park neighborhood, regarding multiple problems with properties associated with an absentee landlord, Jay Olson of Forest Lake. Our small group has met several times in the past year to communicate our concerns and work together and with the city of St Paul, in order to deal with the many issues related to his numerous rundown rental properties. Former Councilmember Russ Stark helped us when we first got organized last year, and now we call upon you, Councilmember Henningson, to hear us and help us.

We understand that one of Mr. Olson's properties is slated to come before a legislative hearing officer on July 31, and most of us plan on attending to air our concerns. Thank you, Councilmember Henningson, for getting this on the agenda. However in preparing our statements we have realized there is much we don't know about what's going on with Mr. Olson's property that we would like you to help us with. Can you please answer the questions below?

Regarding Legislative Hearings: We understand the purpose of the legislative hearing is to afford the property owner due process before the city takes action on a property. A number of us have attended previous hearings on an Olson property where Jay Olson was not present. Questions: Who has the right to speak on behalf or in defense of the property in question, if not the property owner? **These meetings are open to the public. The Legislative Hearing Officer dictates how the meetings proceed but allows anyone to be heard during these hearings.** What legal status or relationship to Jay Olson does Jeff Chermak have that allows him to speak on behalf of the property in question (521/523 Desnoyer Ave.) when Mr. Olson is not in attendance? **The City is not aware of any formal relationship between Mr. Olson and Mr. Chermak.** Is Mr. Olson himself not obligated to be there to speak for himself and his property? **No, Mr. Olson is not obligated to attend the hearing.**

Regarding the double bungalows having been declared vacant: Could you help us understand how vacancy is determined when one side of a bungalow or duplex is declared uninhabitable and is vacant (sometimes for years) while the other side is inhabited? **The Vacant Building program allows for the occupancy of individual units within the same building where another unit may have been declared vacant. This is common practice across a variety of property types.**

Regarding taxes: The Olson properties number twenty-one in the Desnoyer Park neighborhood. Twenty of them show delinquent property taxes to the sum total of \$185,817.62. (!!)

The only property to have taxes paid to date is 521/523 Desnoyer Avenue, the property that came before the hearing officer at three hearings earlier this year and was pushed to resolution under threat of demolition. Questions: At what point does the city and/or county move on a property owner to recoup taxes owed? **The city is not involved in the tax forfeiture process. That is a county function.** How is it possible that a single property owner is allowed to go so long and fail to pay so much with no apparent repercussions? **This could be better addressed by Ramsey County.** We citizens want to know what the city is going to do about Olson's unpaid taxes. Is he getting preferential treatment for some reason, as some have alleged? **Again, the city is not involved in the tax forfeiture process.**

Regarding 501/503 Desnoyer Avenue: This property is listed as vacant as of June 29, 2017, on the city's web page (<https://www.stpaul.gov/books/demolitions>) but is currently occupied on the 503 side. These tenants were recently given an eviction notice by the city and told to be out by July 26. Questions: Can you explain this discrepancy of information and clarify the process the city follows to determine vacancy/revocation of certificate of occupancy/eviction? **The Certificate of Occupancy for this property was revoked in 2017. Neither of these units should be occupied. We have informed the occupants that they must vacate the building, and we are working with the occupants to find other housing.** How much time are tenants given to vacate a condemned property? **This is highly dependent on each situation. Properties that pose a significant threat to the occupants (imminent collapse for example) are vacated immediately.** Is the city prepared to assist the tenants in finding suitable housing, as stated in the recent housing resolution? **In addition to providing a limited amount of time for the occupants to find alternative housing, the city has provided some resources to the occupants to assist in finding housing.**

Regarding 515/517 Desnoyer Avenue: This double bungalow is currently listed as vacant and we believe it is actually vacant. It is in deplorable condition. Question: Where is this property on the city's list of actionable problem properties and how can we be of assistance in expediting the process? **This will likely be the next property that enters the demolition process if Mr. Olson continues to be unresponsive.** How do we make sure we are notified of hearings so that we may attend? **Hearing dates are posted on the exterior of Vacant Buildings.**

Regarding 521/523 Desnoyer Avenue: After multiple legislative hearings and convoluted dealings, Mr. Chermak of Grand End LLC, has been renovating this two-story side-by-side duplex. Recently a new metal roof was put on the detached

garage. This metal roof was hastily tacked on over the rotten roof, with no repairs made to the garage roof that has a gigantic hole in it or to the sagging rafters. Question: Is this type of repair acceptable and up to code? **A building permit has been pulled for this work. A building inspector will determine if the repairs meet the requirements of the building code when the contractor calls for a final inspection. Occupancy will not be allowed until all repairs are corrected under this permit and approved by the building inspector.**

Regarding 604/606 Desnoyer Avenue: This property is also currently listed as vacant, however after doing a drive-by today, we must tell you there are tenants. Lights were on and there was movement inside. Question: Can you confirm that repairs were done and the appropriate inspections have given the green light to Mr. Olson to be collecting rent from tenants for this property since it was declared vacant? **Only one of the units has been designated as vacant. We are working with the owner/occupants to ensure that the other unit is safe to occupy. If not, the entire building will receive a Vacant Building designation.**

While we have many questions and complaints about Mr. Olson's dilapidated and dangerous rundown rental units, and his lack of management skills, we have no problem with having and keeping rental properties in our neighborhood. We have had good relationships with nearly all of the renters who have lived here over the years. In fact we fully support the resolution put forth by the city council at the Wednesday meeting delineating steps to improve housing options in our city. We would love Olson's properties to be part of the solution. It's shameful however, that other property owners in Desnoyer Park who take care of their properties above and beyond what's expected, improving and investing, have to put up with Mr. Olson's dereliction of duty and breaking of many laws where his properties are concerned. And it's infuriating that he's allowed to be delinquent on his property taxes to such an extreme degree.

What we ask is that Mr. Olson be held accountable for the condition of all of his properties in our fine city, according to the law, and we want his tenants to be safe and comfortable in their homes. The Olson family and its properties have been a scourge on our wonderful neighborhood for nearly two decades, so we truly appreciate your help and attention to these matters.

We invite you to visit Desnoyer Park. While you tour our neighborhood, make note of any run down and abandoned properties. We are confident you will find they are Olson properties that either are or will be in the city's pipeline. We also invite you to the next hearing on July 31, 9:00 a.m., to meet us. We're looking for resolution through the appropriate channels and that's why we're coming to you. Our next step is to go to the media, but we'll await your response.

Respectfully,

Bill and Tracy Young
526 Otis Avenue
612-245-1934
651-644-2256



Ricardo X. Cervantes

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The Most Livable
City in America



Making Saint Paul the Most Livable City in America

“DSI’s Mission: To preserve and improve the quality of life in Saint Paul by protecting and promoting public health and safety for all.”

From: Tracy Young [mailto:trixie_curler@yahoo.com]

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