



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

310 CITY HALL
15 WEST KELLOGG BOULEVARD
SAINT PAUL, MN 55102-1615
Marcia Moermond, Legislative Hearing Officer
EMAIL: legislativehearings@ci.stpaul.mn.us
PHONE: (651) 266-8585 FAX: (651) 266-8574

November 13, 2020

Jonathan Lopez
Herrod LLC
977 Payne Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55130

VIA EMAIL: jonlopez1@outlook.com

Re: Appeal for Property at 2272 Seventh Street West

Dear Mr. Lopez:

This is to confirm that on November 10, 2020 at the Legislative Hearing, Marcia Moermond, the Legislative Hearing Officer recommended the Council deny the appeal on the condemnation and order to vacate, deny the appeal to be released from the Vacant Building program as a Category 2, and grant a 90 day extension on the vacant building fee (to February 19, 2021).

The City Council Public Hearing is scheduled for December 2, 2020 at 3:30 p.m. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, **we will not be holding public hearings in person.** If you are contesting Ms. Moermond's recommendation, you may send written testimony to be added to the record to legislativehearings@ci.stpaul.mn.us or CouncilHearing@ci.stpaul.mn.us or by voicemail at 651-266-6805. If you don't wish to contest, no further action is needed. If you have any questions, please contact me at 651-266-8585.

Sincerely,
/s/

Joanna Zimny
Executive Assistant, Legislative Hearings

c: Vacant Building Staff
Fire Supervisors

Jonathan Lopez

Date: 11/30/2020

977 Payne Ave

St. Paul, MN 55130

To:

City Council of the City of St. Paul

Council members I first want to thank you for your service to our great City of St. Paul. These are very difficult times for our community as COVID-19 has brought many of us difficult situations and in worse cases death to family members. I know that it's a very difficult to be in the position of city council as you must make decisions based on the law but at the same time maintain a humane position during these times. As a former United States Marine Corps Sergeant I understand the responsibility that falls on the decision that are made by the council members as service to our city and our citizens comes first. When I deployed in Iraq I always remember that I was serving my country and protecting my fellow Americans.

I write to the council today as a former Marine, St. Paul citizen, and victim to COVID-19 at many levels. COVID-19 has truly hit my family and our business hard. My father and I own and manage many properties in the Eastside St. Paul. Most of my family has been infected by COVID-19 but by the grace of God most of them have come out on top and defeated the virus. We have lost a cousin that died a couple weeks ago to the virus after weeks of battling with it. COVID-19 has presented many challenges to our business as well. We have helped many our tenants by waiving late fees and providing extension and payment plans to pay their rent.

COVID-19 has provided opportunity to some to tenants to take advantage of the current pandemic. It's the reason I'm writing today concerning the property located at 2272 7th St W. My father and I have a great relationship with the Department of Safety and Inspection of the City of St. Paul. We take pride on complying with inspectors orders and passing inspections. We understand that safety is number one and to maintain that standard at all times. As a former Marine structure and being organize was crucial to our mission readiness and I apply that same mindset to our properties and business.

When the pandemic started the tenants that used to occupy 2272 7th St W. knew that we couldn't evict them because of the evict ban. They started to rent out rooms of the home to strangers and started to accumulate a large amount of belongings outside of the property. We visited the property to speak with the lease holder Javier Marquez but he didn't let us inside the property as we later discovered why. We asked him to clean the outside of the home and he always said he would do it as he was going to store most of it in a storage unit as they were valuables to him. We asked if we could go inside but he always said no and that we couldn't force him or try to evict him because of the pandemic. He became a troubled and problematic tenant the entire summer and towards the end of his stay at the home.

There was an incident that occurred at the beginning of November that lead the police to search the home and realized how much of a mess it was. I have attached pictures of how the home used to look like before we started the clean up process. The police contacted the department of safety and inspection and that's when we were finally able to see the mess inside the home. The home seemed like it belonged to a hoarder and we finally understood why he didn't let inside the premises. As I mention before we take pride in maintaining our properties and in this situation the tenant was hiding this from us because he knew it wasn't acceptable. We

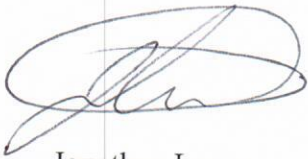
got a good grade in the last inspection of this property as the inspector pointed it out so as he was surprised on what he saw. We worked with many inspectors in the past and have a great relationship with them. These are some inspectors that can say the type of owners we are as we worked with them in many inspections Inspector James Thomas, George Nieymeyer, Brian Schmidt, and Efrayn Franquiz.

After the department of safety and inspection finished their inspection they immediately condemned the property and we understand why. The amount of belongings made the home a fire hazard. I agree with the inspector with his decision and the items that needed to be addressed. We have no problem on complying with the inspectors order and bringing up to code. The only item we want to appeal is that it was categorized as a CAT-2 property. When the property is CAT-2 property it makes the process of bringing up to code much more time consuming and very expensive. This category exists for property owners that abandon their properties and don't want to deal with them anymore. This is not the case with us as we want to make things right with the neighbors and the community. We are already short on budget as the tenant that was there didn't pay rent for months and have spent thousands of dollars on clean up. We have started working on the list the inspector gave us and are already 50% done with the list. We have also cleaned 90% of the items that were left in the property.

It's not that we abandoned the property we were taken the opportunity away to maintain the property by the tenant. He took advantage of the pandemic and would still be there if the police didn't kick them out after the condemned sign was posted. We aren't asking not to do the work because the property needs it we are just asking for help to make the process a bit easier during these hard times. I have also attached pictures of the work he have completed on the property and we expect to finish by January if the property isn't categorized as a CAT-2 property

as it makes much more difficult to pull permits. The property has running water, trash service, electricity and heat. All the utilities are up to date as I personally pay those invoices every month.

I wish I could be pleading my case in person as I'm a strong believer of phasing things in person and taking responsibility. Thank you very much for your service to our city and I only ask for an opportunity that was taken away from us because of this pandemic.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Lopez', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Jonathan Lopez