



City of Saint Paul

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
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Minutes - Final

Legislative Hearings

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Tuesday, February 18, 2020

9:00 AM

Room 330 City Hall & Court House

- 2 [RLH TA 19-874](#) Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 552 KENT STREET. (File No. J2006A, Assessment No. 208505) (To be referred back to Legislative Hearing on February 18, 2020)

Sponsors: Thao

Recommendation forthcoming.

Seitu Kenneth Jones & Soyini Guyton, owners, appeared

Staff Report by Paula Seeley: Summary Abatement Order sent August 13, compliance date August 20, rechecked 20, work done August 26 for \$478. Mail sent to occupant and Seitu Kenneth Jones. No mail returned. Previous work done by Parks May 14, 2019 and April 3, 2019 for garbage and January 17, 2019 for garbage that was done by owner. Summary Abatement says please remove the discarded bedframe and other discarded materials on the property.

[video shown]

Guyton: you mentioned no returned mail. When I spoke with the office they had been sending mail to 552 Kent, I asked how you sent a notice to an empty lot.

Moermond: one is to 552 and one is 629 Kent.

Guyton: yes, that was fixed after I spoke with her.

Moermond: this order was sent to both.

Guyton: it's a moot point now, I just wanted to make it known.

Moermond: the vacant lot should have bounced back. Why are you appealing?

Jones: we have hired someone to maintain that lot for us. The walk is always shoveled, the grass is always mowed. You can see that in the photos. The videos, we couldn't download, we either didn't have the format and couldn't open them. We live just a few blocks away on Kent at 629. I drive up and down all the time, when there's something on the lot I throw it in the back of my truck. Those pieces I never saw, and we had problems getting the notification.

Guyton: I saw the video and I lived in Frogtown, those two pieces in the underbrush,

and a spindle, it feels as if they're targeting our property. We pay someone monthly to cut the grass, which is always done, and to shovel. I walk a lot on sidewalks, and there are a lot of ice and snow. It baffles me why we'd get a notice for a lot that never has stuff stay there, my husband picks things up.

Moermond: when did you hire them?

Jones: 2016. We are going to develop the lot soon, we pride ourselves on being good Frogtown neighbors and have always maintained our lawn and the areas. I just shoveled before I came down here. This was a real surprise and shock to receive.

Moermond: I'm needing to look at this in the context of other violations in 2019. There were four. In this situation, three out of the four were done by Parks, so they're saying the orders sent January 17 for dumping, that was gone on arrival, taken care of by you. An April one done by Parks and another one in May done by Parks and another in August. I'm trying to look in the context of all of this and struggling. It is obvious the lawn was taken care of, but you're also experiencing dumping. Is there something you can do to help make it difficult to dump there? It looks like there is volunteer growth along the fence?

Jones: it is, that's actually the property next door, creeping over the fence.

Moermond: what I'm looking for is for an understanding that this doesn't happen in 2020. When you have overgrowth, it is often what dumpers pick.

Guyton: it's the empty lot as a whole. Outside of spending money to put up a fence, there doesn't seem to be something economically feasible.

Jones: I'm surprised to hear about the 3 other orders.

Guyton: where do they get their orders from?

Moermond: we can check, was this a complaint? The May one was a complaint coming in. By and large it is complaint driven.

Guyton: the dumping is frustrating. It makes me wonder why people in Minneapolis don't deal with this, they have a system in place. The City is making private citizens pay for picking up other people's junk. We live 3 blocks away, but I don't go past every day. If I go by in the morning, there's a possibility there's something there by the afternoon.

Moermond: complaint comes in, inspector goes out, takes a photo, sends out orders. It's the fourth violation in 2019, so I'm struggling with this. Policy-wise switching to organized collection will help reduce this, since people get a certain number of bulky items with their service. I don't know how Minneapolis handles their vacant lots. I know people's homes get unlimited bulky items. As education happens and people realize they can do this it should improve, but we're a year and a half in and I don't think the culture has changed yet.

Jones: I will go back and cut that overbrush so we can see more readily from the street. I go past regularly and pick up a wide range of things.

Moermond: orders were mailed and the same items were still there almost 2 weeks later. It was bright pink.

Guyton: we were out of town.

Moermond: does the person who works for you live in the neighborhood too?

Jones: he just moved out, he lived a few blocks away on Charles.

Moermond: I'm going to pull the old records here, you seem to be surprised there was four and get that information together, I'd like to figure out a plan moving forward to work with you on the assessment. Let's get you that information on what has already happened. It will be on your 2020 taxes.

Guyton: we got a notice about some cleanup. What are you saying?

Moermond: I'd like to work with you on a resolution. A piece of that is going to be getting rid of the undergrowth. I'm not sure when you're looking at developing, but same or similar violations. I don't have an answer for you on this assessment yet.

FOLLOW-UP: Ms. Moermond reviewed the file and recommends approval of the assessment. There had been 3 related instances (which 2 went to worker orders and 1 gone upon arrival), City provided notice and did the clean up. MV

Referred to the City Council due back on 3/4/2020