

Mai Vang

From: Brad C. Eggen <beggenlaw@goldengate.net>
Sent: Monday, June 3, 2024 4:25 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_LegislativeHearings
Subject: File No. VB2409

I am representing Mike Mortimer in an effort to provide meaningful information to your organization concerning an alleged “collection of vacant building registration fee” as Mr. Mortimer attempts to restore the property which is the subject of this action.

I believe your organization is aware of some of the horrifying history that required this prolonged restoration project, and also aware of the extensive delays outside of Mike’s control obtaining a building permit. To refresh your memory, the 144-year-old building at 1762 Englewood Avenue in Saint Paul has been a decades-long project for Mr. Mortimer, with numerous improvements over time. Mr. Mortimer is quite experienced with the construction trade having been a Union electrician for 35 years, a truck driver for three years, and an employee for a local company for several years. On December 22, 2021, Mike’s stepson Art was killed in the fire which devastated the building. Shortly afterward, Mike’s daughter Stacy, a former social worker and graduate of the University of Minnesota, received a lung transplant but passed away on Thanksgiving Day of the following year in 2022.

Restoration Professionals presented Mike a restoration contract while the cinders were still hot on the day of the fire, and ResPro then gutted the building, destroying portions that were not damaged in the fire and which had historic value; this building was built in 1880. When Mike pushed ResPro out of the project, and paid them off with the assistance of a private attorney, he was left to complete the work on his own - - a labor of love in the context of his tremendous grief. Nevertheless, he had difficulty getting the city to approve a building permit until February of 2023, some 15 months after the fire incident. I understand it was the presiding jurist who recognized the problem and pressured that permit to be issued.

The project was then delayed by difficulty obtaining funding from the insurer, which was precipitated in part by a confusing set of criteria from the mortgage company. The delay of the project, largely due to the lack of funding, resulted in a misunderstanding – this property is occupied throughout the day and long into the night by contractors completing the work under Mr. Mortimer’s supervision and has never been a “vacant property.” It is important for you to recognize, however, that Mr. Mortimer had significant heart issues in the last few months, which required a heart monitor and two surgical procedures. He credits his wife for taking him promptly to assistance at a city fire station which he believes saved his life. The retained subcontractors have come and gone, but the project is now on target for completion. Mr. Mortimer confidently believes this entire project can be completed by the end of July of this year, in part because Farmers just released funding (on its way but not yet received so that Mr. Mortimer would not have to continue using funds out of his retirement account. He recently

paid a large deposit to a heating and air conditioning contractor, a large deposit to a plumbing services contractor, and purchased new windows, doors, water heaters, furnaces, toilets, shower surrounds, and miscellaneous other items.

Respectfully,

Brad C. Eggen

*Brad C. Eggen
Law Office of Brad C. Eggen
330 S Second Avenue, Ste. 350
Minneapolis, MN 55401
Tel No.: (612)630-3227
Fax No.: (612)-630-3207*

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