

**CITY OF DERBY
BLIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING**

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2014 – 6:00 P.M.

JOAN WILLIAMSON ALDERMANIC CHAMBERS

MINUTES

Carmen DiCenso called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. All rose and pledged allegiance to the flag.

Roll Call

Present: Carmen DiCenso, Felicia Monaco, David Anroman

Also Present: The Honorable Mayor Anita Dugatto
Carlo Sarmiento, Building Official, City of Derby
Kevin M. Blake, Corporation Counsel

ADDITIONS, DELETIONS, CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

Mr. DiCenso said he would like to add 67 Minerva Street – Discussion & Possible Action to the agenda.

A MOTION was made by Ms. Monaco with a second by Mr. Anroman to add 67 Minerva Street – Discussion & Possible Action to the agenda. **Motion carried.**

PUBLIC PORTION

Mr. DiCenso asked if anyone wished to speak during the Public Portion.

Mr. Sarmiento inquired about the letter that Robert Vontell had sent in. He told the committee members that Mr. Vontell is here this evening. Ms. Finn said the letter is in everyone's packets.

Mr. DiCenso reopened Additions, Deletions, Corrections to the Agenda

A MOTION was made by Mr. DiCenso with a second by Ms. Monaco to add 26 & 32 Bank Street, 4 Jennings Street, and 27 & 31 Derby Avenue – Discussion & Possible Action to the agenda. **Motion carried.**

PUBLIC PORTION

Mr. DiCenso asked two more times if anyone wished to speak during Public Portion. Hearing no response the Public Portion was closed.

APPROVE MINUTES OF THE MAY 13, 2014 MEETING

A MOTION was made by Mr. Anroman with a second by Ms. Monaco to approve the Minutes of the May 13, 2014 as presented. **Motion carried.**

105 HAWKINS STREET – / 350 DERBY AVENUE / 33 E. 9TH STREET – DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION (EXECUTIVE SESSION IF NECESSARY)

105 Hawkins Street – Mr. DiCenso informed the committee that he, Andy Cota, and Carlo Sarmiento went to the site last week along with a Public Health Official from the Naugatuck Valley Health Department. The property is not only violated outside but also inside with an abundance of mold. Mr. Sarmiento said he has received the report from the Naugatuck Valley Health Department. Mr. DiCenso said he would suggest utilizing our new Ordinance and direct the Building Inspector to send a letter out to the property owners.

350 Derby Avenue – Mr. DiCenso said there was a meeting with the principals last week. As everyone knows from our last meeting the owner made an offer where the City would give them \$16,000 and then they would pay the taxes of \$16,000, which of course we voted against. Mr. DiCenso said one thing that the City offered to them at the meeting was for them to give the City the Deed to the property, pay their taxes and then the City would let them walk away free of all liens. They refused this offer. Mr. DiCenso said in the meeting he made them another offer, which was knock down the building, pay their taxes and keep the property. They also refused this offer. Mr. DiCenso said they want money.

Mr. DiCenso noted that the house is unsellable. The foundation is cracked and falling apart. It is an illegal foundation – it's only 24" below grade. Mr. DiCenso said they informed him that they would have Channel 8 come to Derby to cover this.

Mr. Sarmiento said he drafted a letter as instructed by this committee. This would be the first one that they will be sending out. Corporation Counsel has approved the letter. He will send it out tomorrow and the owners will have thirty days either to appeal or act on it.

33 East 9th Street – Mr. DiCenso said he doesn't believe that Mr. Carrubba is here this evening. He noted that the structure definitely needs to be repainted – there is also wood that needs to be replaced. He said he knows that Mr. Carrubba has been here a few times arguing with the former and present Building Inspector. Mr. Sarmiento said he believes the homeowner has also approached the Mayor about this situation. Mr. DiCenso said that Mr. Carrubba told them that he has spent so much money inside the house that he doesn't have any money for the outside. He stated last year the City encouraged Mr. Carrubba to apply for a Small Cities Residential Rehabilitation Loan in order to rectify the blight at this property. Mr. Sarmiento said he was at the meeting where Ms. O'Malley (the City's former Economic Development Director) explained the program and offered to have him participate. Mr. Carrubba declined that offer. In his letter to the City Mr. Carrubba wrote "we are in a near economic depression and we do not intend to go into debt for the City of Derby. Also, you can tell the person who is complaining about our property that if they do not like the way the property looks...get a brush and paint it themselves." Mr. DiCenso said he would recommend to the full Board of Aldermen that a letter also be sent to Mr. Carrubba regarding the new Ordinance.

67 Minerva Street – Mr. DiCenso said this is where Lombardi Engineering used to be located. Part of the front of the building collapsed – they took it down and they left the back of the shell wide open. He stressed his concern about kids getting into the

building. The roof on both sides of the building is collapsing. There are bricks missing from the chimney. Mr. DiCenso said we came up with idea of having a construction fence installed from one end of the building to the other end in a horseshoe shape. Mr. Guedes has put up a stockade fence but that is also in violation as to how it was erected – it is on the sidewalk, which is no help in keeping people out.

A MOTION was made by Mr. DiCenso with a second by Mr. Anroman to take a five minute recess at 6:15 p.m. **Motion carried.**

A MOTION was made by Mr. DiCenso with a second by Mr. Anroman to resume the meeting at 6:22 p.m. **Motion carried.**

Mr. Sarmiento said he met with the perspective buyers. They're proposing a granite shop and a cabinet shop and one other type shop. He said he explained the issues at hand – the fence, zoning permit, etc...the buyer is willing to do the construction fence and he will also board up the loose brick to the inside wall. Mr. DiCenso said the buyer has reports that the building is sound. He said they are expecting to start construction in about 2 ½ months. Currently they are in a Level 2 environmental study. They have asked for some time and Mr. Sarmiento told the perspective buyers that he would approach this committee. He said they have already agreed to move the fence.

Mr. Anroman said this is the problem right from the get go. There has never been any notification. They just put up the fence with no permits, nothing. Also he has been talking about selling the property, refurbishing the property, about businesses coming into the property. Mr. Anroman said back in 2009 he had a company there illegally for six months until the neighbors complained. He was selling boats, cars – all done illegally. Now he wants another extension. This has been going on since 2009. The property is an eyesore.

Kevin Blake noted that the Valley Council of Government (VCOG) on behalf of the City of Derby is currently conducting environmental studies on the property. He said it is his recommendation not to do anything until the environmental studies are completed. If we were to get involved then we would have to complete the studies.

Mr. DiCenso and Mr. Anroman questioned how much longer it is going to take to complete the studies. Mr. Blake said he isn't sure - it could be a month, two months – he doesn't know. He said he would get in touch with Rick Dunne, Executive Director of the VCOG. Mr. Blake told the committee he met with the owner and explained the problems with the fence. He also informed him that the back would need to be closed up.

Mr. DiCenso said he would like to recommend to the full Board of Aldermen that Mr. Sarmiento send a letter to Mr. Guedes advising him to redo the fence, close up the back wall, and fix the chimney so it doesn't fall on someone. He suggested giving him a ninety day period – if nobody buys in 90 days then the City will move forward with demolition. Mr. Anroman said with the demolition – we're talking the front and side – we're not talking the whole building. Mr. Sarmiento said we did implement Code 115, which is Unsafe Structures and Buildings – he said he would recommend turning it over to the State and have them push it to the next level.

Mr. Anroman said he just wants to be clear – he's not trying to deter them from putting a business at this location. It's just that this has been going on for over six years and nothing has changed. Mr. Blake said his concern is whether or not there are environmental problems on the site. He said he would rather be cautious – because if the City has to tear down the structure we will have to deal with the environmental issues. Mr. DiCenso said that is why we're giving the three month period. Hopefully by then VCOG will come back with the environmental. He said his concern isn't the environmental – his concern is the building falling on a kid.

The properties were reviewed:

105 Hawkins Street – Letter to be sent out. Atty. Blake said they did pay off their WPCA Taxes, which were approximately \$9,000. The Blight Lien is still active.

350 Derby Avenue – Atty. Blake is conducting a Title Search prior to the Foreclosure. Mr. DiCenso said he would recommend to the full Board of Aldermen that the Designation of Buildings or Structures as Hazardous or Sanitary letter be sent to the property owner(s.)

33 E. 9th Street – The \$100.00 per day Blight Lien letter to be sent.

Mr. DiCenso asked if we could send information regarding the Small Cities Grant to the property owner. Mr. Sarmiento said he has the information in his office. Patty Finn, from the Office of Economic & Community Development, informed the committee that the Small Cities Residential Rehab money has been fully expended. She explained that the City has applied for another grant; however it will be a few months before the State announces the awards.

ROBERT VONTELL – DERBY FIVE STAR, LLC – 26 BANK STREET; 32 BANK STREET; 4 JENNINGS STREET; 27 DERBY AVENUE; 31 DERBY AVENUE – DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE FULL BOARD OF ALDERMEN

Mr. Sarmiento said that Bob Vontell came into his office to ask for an extension. He said he has been working with him for the past couple of months. The properties do need a lot of attention. Mr. Sarmiento said he feels that Mr. Vontell is doing a great job and granting one more month would not be unreasonable.

Mr. Vontell said that part of the blight notices were issues about the porches and in particular the columns. He said he needs to get a structural engineering to do an inspection of the porches. Just getting a company out to do an initial evaluation is taking a couple of weeks.

Mr. DiCenso suggested that Mr. Vontell write up a plan and submit it to Mr. Sarmiento who can then inform the committee of the progress that is being made.

COORDINATE RECORDING OF BLIGHT LIENS TO LAND RECORDS

Mr. DiCenso said there are concerns that the liens are being properly recorded so that they can in fact be enforced and collected. Atty. Blake said he has explained to Mr. Sarmiento that when a blight lien is going to be imposed everyone with an interest on the property must be notified. The information would be given to the Town & City Clerk

to be recorded. Once it is recorded it should be sent to everyone that has an interest on that property.

Mr. DiCenso said we can then recommend to the full Board of Aldermen that the Blight Department will work hand-in-hand with the Town & City Clerk to put the blight fines on the Land Records.

Ms. Monaco asked about the liens that have already been filed. Are we going to check to make sure that they were done correctly? Mr. Sarmiento said they are going to re-check them all.

ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Mr. DiCenso with a second by Ms. Monaco to adjourn the meeting at 6:35 p.m. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Finn
Recording Secretary