

BOARD OF REVIEW - DANGEROUS BUILDINGS MINUTES  
Wednesday, September 25, 2019, 5:00 PM

Committee members present: Chair Gary Schnip, Tucker Braddock, James Heist and James Quarto (left at 6:17)

Committee members absent: Alderwoman Stacy Gould and Darryl Wickham

Others Present: Building Official James Troeger and Blight Officer Brittany Williams

1. Call to Order: Chair Gary Schnip called the meeting to order at 5:26 PM.
2. Determination of a Quorum: It was determined that a quorum was present.
3. Acceptance of Minutes: On a motion by Jim Heist, seconded by Jim Quarto, the minutes of the August 28, 2019 meeting of the Board of Review (BOR) were unanimously approved as presented.
4. Public Comment: None
5. Communications: None presented
6. Dangerous Buildings and Blight Concerns:

Blight Officer Brittany Williams presented several informational articles for the committee members' reference. The term 'Blight' can be used carelessly. Blighted properties have extensive property maintenance issues. There are properties that have a lack of maintenance that are not blighted. She explained the importance of having a clear definition of blight in the city.

Some municipalities apply blight liens/fines or add fees these homes. By Connecticut state law, those funds are supposed to be used to combat blight in the municipality. In Norwich, collected blight fees are put into the General Fund. Municipalities that impose a blight tax or fee, and that put the money into a blight fund, use this revenue to combat blight and take proactive steps to prevent it from occurring.

Ms. Williams spoke to the complicated blight lien assessment process currently followed in the city. She feels the process could be streamlined. She also spoke to the fact that many blighted properties are also vacant. Some communities add a vacant property fee or tax.

She referenced the rental housing inspection program which used to be followed in the city. Now there is a lack of manpower to operate the inspections. The program helped to hold landlords to a certain standard. The program charged fees that may be capable of sustaining the program. The goal was to improve the quality of the housing. The system could allow less periodic inspections for landlords that had repeated good inspections. The housing inspections would be a proactive measure to prevent blight from starting.

Another topic Ms. Williams discussed was the idea of diminishing blight from the 'outside in' referring to research that targeting blighted properties in the outskirts first, to preserve property values where highest, and progressively working in toward the center of the town, work well over the long term.

Discussed was held on which city officials should have input during the discussion of alternate methods of handling blight in the city. Mayor Peter Nystrom, Bob Mills of NCDC, City Planner Deanna Rhodes and legal counsel were all suggested.

Ms. Williams noted that Huntington, NY is an example she wanted committee members to focus on.

Ms. Williams presented a Blight List of properties that show up often in her daily work. While it is not an exhaustive list of blighted properties in the city, it represents the properties on which she spends the most time. She presented a Power Point which included a map of these properties which are centralized in downtown areas.

Discussion ensued on the state laws around the city cleaning up blighted properties which do not belong to the city.

After extensive discussion, it was decided that Ms. Williams will continue to gather data around the blight issue and its costs to the city. BOR members will research these issues and bring information to the next meeting.

7. Foreclosures: Not addressed.

8. Other:

a) Public Works Committee (PWC) Report: Not addressed.

b) Committee Priorities and Format: Not addressed.

9. Next meeting: The next regular meeting will be Wednesday, October 23, 2019 at 5 PM.

10. Adjournment: On a motion by Tucker Braddock, seconded by Jim Heist, the Board of Review unanimously adjourned at 6:28 PM.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Melinda Wilson  
Recording Secretary*