

Abington Township Vacancy Property Review Board

Thursday, April 6, 2017
Commencing at 4:02 PM
Township Building Board Room

A. Start of Meeting:

In Attendance: John Spiegelman, Shaun Littlefield, Cathy Gauthier, Toby True, Lora Lehmann, Bob Greaves, Lorena Trujillo, Larry Matteo, Van Strother
Excused: Mike Narcowich, Jerry Nugent

B. Minutes of the February 2 meeting were approved.

C. John Spiegelman opened nominations for the next Vacancy Property Review Board Chair. Cathy Gauthier nominated Bob Greaves for Chair, and John seconded. Nominations were then closed, with Bob unanimously being voted in as the next Chair.

D. John brought up a new vacant property at 1715 Old York Rd that was discovered through the Old York Rd corridor walk-through. This property is located 100% within the floodplain, so redevelopment would be difficult. Shaun Littlefield received a registration form from the owners marking the property as vacant.

E. Lora Lehmann questioned the status of 1933 Old York Rd. Shaun stated that the property owner paid the registration fee due of \$1,500.00 in February. John wondered if a meeting could be set up with the owner of 1933 Old York Rd to discuss the property's future. Larry Matteo and Shaun responded that they have met with the owner, Ms. Braccia, in the past and that she is stubbornly refusing to do anything to fix issues with the buildings.

F. John said he needed to follow up with the Solicitor's office to get a ruling on whether a commercial property could theoretically be used as storage and not be considered vacant. One particular property in question is 1356 Easton Road; the owner, Mr. Dellaguardia, has stated in the past that the building is being used as storage for his other carpet and flooring business. Lora asked that Code look into two dumpsters that have been stored in the rear of Mr. Dellaguardia's property.

G. John & Shaun announced that the property at 1180 Easton Rd, known as the Patane property, has an agreement of sale in place. The company involved with the purchase had previously developed DaVita Dialysis, located at 1849 Davisville Road in Willow Grove.

H. 397 Stewart Ave, formerly known as Switchville, was approved for a Zoning variance to allow for the conversion of the property to a duplex. This use was approved by the Zoning Hearing Board on March 21st. The property owner, Mr. Guevara, also owns 1106 Old York Road. He has agreed to sell this property to the Township so that the Old York Road & Susquehanna Road project can move forward.

I. John brought up the properties owned by the Massino family known as 2602 Jenkintown Road & 490 Tyson Ave. John stated that as the railroad tracks abut these lots, SEPTA inquired about possibly purchasing one or more of these lots. John believes Simone Collins, with SEPTA, is involved in this process and he will follow up with her.

- J.** Cathy and John brought up the building located on 2106 Rubicam Avenue. This building is utilized by Greenskeeper Lawn Care as storage for their landscaping equipment. Also, there are signs in disrepair on the property at 1706 Old York Road; it was originally thought that this property and the one on Rubicam were in the same ownership. Shaun confirmed that the two properties are separately owned and operated. Code will look into the state of the signs.
- K.** Van Strother was called on to speak about HUD's owner-occupied rehabilitation program. As there is a backlog of other properties wishing to utilize this program, any owner that wishes to participate would need to wait approximately 2-3 years.
- L.** Larry asked how much money HUD receives yearly. Van said they have about \$700,000 to work with; however, 20% of that goes towards administrative costs. The money received is federally funded. Each year, this money can be used towards the owner-occupied rehabilitation program, or it may be used towards larger Township projects. This money can be utilized to install new concrete curbing and sidewalks, for instance. Larry asked how many residential properties have been renovated under HUD. Van responded that there are on average 10 homes a year that get work done through HUD.
- M.** Lora asked who decides what happens with HUD money; if the money is utilized towards a Township project or if it is utilized towards the owner-rehabilitation program. Van said that Township HUD ultimately where the money goes.
- N.** Cathy inquired if Code and HUD work together if there is an emergency repair needed for a resident within the Township. Van said that the purpose of HUD is not to perform emergency work as there is no money budgeted for this kind of work.
- O.** Lorena Trujilo provided information on a program called Keystone-Help, which is a state-run organization helping residents obtain affordable loans to bring their homes up to today's energy efficiency standards. Cathy suggested that a list of programs and services are compiled to provide to residents who wish to affordably renovate their homes.
- P.** John would like to talk about the idea of conservatorship relating to vacant properties; however, the discussion will be tabled until after a new Township Manager has been hired. Lora does not agree with the idea of conservatorship. John said conservatorship would only be looked at for vacant residential properties.

The next meeting will be held on May 4th, 2017 at 4:00 pm.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:22 PM.