

The special regular meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on Tuesday, April 6, 2021, live streamed. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 4:58p.m.

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Council Member Charles H. Cuthbert, Jr.
Council Member Treska Wilson-Smith
Council Member W. Howard Myers
Council Member Darrin Hill
Mayor Samuel Parham

Absent: Council Member John A. Hart, Sr.
Vice Mayor Annette Smith-Lee

Present from City Administration:

Interim City Manager Kenneth Miller
City Attorney Anthony C. Williams
Clerk of Council Nykesha D. Jackson

2. OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- a. A public hearing and consideration of an ordinance to declare the property located at 380 E. Washington Street a blighted property and a public nuisance to the community and authorizing the abatement of such nuisance.

BACKGROUND: On March 5, 2021, the Property Maintenance Official issued a Report in accordance with 106.2 of the Virginia Property Maintenance Code referencing a document prepared by Mosely Architects and based upon on site surveys conducted by professionals from Moseley Architects, the Petersburg Property Maintenance Official, and other City personnel.

In the Maintenance Report, the Maintenance Official makes the determination that the property is unsafe, and unfit for human habitation. This ordinance authorizes and supports the abatement of these conditions upon the property.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the ordinance.

Anthony Williams, City Attorney, gave an overview on the consideration of an ordinance to declare the property located at 380 E. Washington Street a blighted property and a public nuisance to the community, and authorizing the abatement of such nuisance.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Barbara Rudolph, 1675 Mt. Vernon Street, stated, "I appreciate Mr. Williams presentation. He did answer some of the questions that I had. But what would really be helpful is to almost have a timeline or process chart to show all of the possibilities going forward. I realize that you do not know how long until you have a court date and there is a lot of variables that cannot be predicted accurately now. But just to get more of a view of how all of these pieces fit together. Because that part is still kind of confusing. So, if I jump around because I feel like some of this jumped around too. One thing that I wanted to ask that if we are talking about recovering money from Chris Harrison from his company that owns the property. How much does he owe? Because if you place a lien on him, I do not know how it works. I think a lot of it depends on if he is owing a lot

*Audio available upon request.

of money to the City or is he not. I also want to comment on one thing that Mr. Williams said about Senator Morrissey and putting some of the concrete in the remaining cell at the landfill. I much prefer what Mr. Myers brought up which is recycling. I remember when the building downtown that was a part of the Department of General Services was taken down by the state every bit of that concrete building was recycled. You need to look into it very much and not just putting stuff in the land fill. I hope whatever you do that you will act swiftly. I am not sure why there has been so much faith put in Harrison, but I am glad that everyone is coming to their senses and wanting to get this thing done and take this eyesore from our City. I wonder with all of the problems that he has how is he going to be chased down to get him into court. I would suggest maybe there is someone in Richmond that would help that City. Because he was there in November on a video with Richmond Times Dispatch talking about the model tobacco building and all of the great things that he is going to do. So, when he wants to talk on his projects he shows up. I hope you have a lot of luck with that and that it will not take two or three years. I think that is the message that I am getting that it is going to take at least a year that something may happen. Thank you.”

Jeffrey Fleming, 1819 Chuckatuck Avenue, stated, “I understand that you are looking at the cost of recovery and you are looking at \$1.4 million dollars to demolish the building. I do not know if there is a way to not attach it to the property but attach it to the individual himself. When you get to certain point you cannot build on the footprint of the building. So, I do not know whether that piece of land or property will be worth that \$1.4 million. If at all possible, Mr. Williams can find a way to attach it to Mr. Harrison and his company. I think that it would be better. Because if you tear it down then he is going to walk away and pay a little bit of money and he is not in the loss. Whereas the City would be holding the bag for \$1.4 million dollars. That is just my question. Thank you.”

Patrick Ingram, 836 S. Gillfield Street, stated, “So, I just wanted to thank Mr. Williams on his presentation. My only ask is a couple of things. I hope that we can continually have updates to the public regarding the process and maybe even a presentation that can be uploaded to the website in regard to what the different processes will look like in terms on how we navigate the court. And the final determination of how we will proceed with this. I do think that outside of this opportunity what other opportunities have been leveraged to engage constituents who may not have been able to attend a noon meeting in the past but even a meeting today that started around 4:30pm. I am interested in knowing what other opportunities was leveraged to engage constituents. I am all for an expedited process, but I do think that it must be environmentally conscience. That is because we do not want to do damage to our environment just in a race to get this building tore down. In some cases, I think that we must set aside cost effectiveness and make sure that we can restore civic pride and just get on with it. But ultimately, I think that the owner should be responsible for the cost that has been endured to go through the process. Thank you.”

Bob Rodgers, 207 Marshall Street, stated, “I appreciate the presentation by Mr. Williams. As a resident and a fairly new resident to the City, where I live, I actually look into the back of this blighted property. And when we moved to Petersburg, I was impressed by a sign that was in front of this blighted property that says coming soon. And it is a beautiful hotel. So, I would urge that the sign be taken down. And I have also been disappointed over the two years that we have been here that nothing has come in except the continued blighted property. So, I urge council to adopt the ordinance that Mr. Williams presented and get on with getting rid of this property. It is an eyesore and frankly me and my neighbors are tired of looking at the back of it. And I would assume that you will do everything you can to get Mr. Williams to flip the bill for this. Thank you so much for your time.”

Marcus Omar Squires, 1701 Monticello Street, stated, “We can all see that this is the premier piece of blight in the City of Petersburg. But we also have to think of the potential tax revenue that maybe lost if this structure is demolished. Nothing will every be able to be built on that site quite like that again. So, we can obviously see that the façade of the building is a public safety issue but what about the steel frame skeleton and what about the foundation of that building. That is what is really important. The facade may look bad, and it

*Audio available upon request.

is a public safety issue but what about the steel frame skeleton and the foundation and the footings of that building. If those are still valuable, then this is still an asset. Thank you for your time and consideration.”

Seeing no further hands, Mayor Parham closed the public hearing.

There was discussion among City Council Members and staff.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to adopt the ordinance as proposed. The motion was seconded by Council Member Myers. The motion was approved on roll call. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Wilson-Smith, Myers, Hart, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Smith-Lee

21-ORD-19 AN ORDINANCE TO DECLARE THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 380 EAST WASHINGTON STREET A BLIGHTED PROPERTY AND A PUBLIC NUISANCE TO THE COMMUNITY AND AUTHORIZING THE ABATEMENT OF SUCH NUISANCE.

3. ADJOURNMENT:

City Council adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Clerk of City Council

APPROVED:

Mayor