

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

PROCEEDINGS AT COMMITTEE ON URBAN REDEVELOPMENT,
RENEWAL AND PLANNING

IN RE: An Ordinance in Amendment of and in addition to
Chapter 1983-4, entitled An Ordinance Approving and
Adopting the Official Redevelopment Plan for Silver Lake
Revitalization Project, acquisition of Lot 285, Plat 107,
20 Ralph Street.

DATE: OCTOBER 23, 2003
TIME: 6:00 P.M.
PLACE: PROVIDENCE CITY HALL
25 DORRANCE STREET
PROVIDENCE, RI

PRESENT:

BALBINA YOUNG
BRUCE TODESCO
ANNA STETSON

CHAIRWOMAN
DEPUTY CITY SOLICITOR
DEPUTY CITY CLERK

ORIGINAL

ALLIED COURT REPORTERS, INC.
115 PHENIX AVENUE
CRANSTON, RI 02920
(401) 946-5500

(HEARING COMMENCED AT 6:03 P.M.)

1
2 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: This public hearing
3 will now come to order. This is a Committee on Urban
4 Redevelopment, Renewal and Planning. My name is
5 Balbina Young, I'm the councilperson and the
6 chairperson of this committee. To my left is the city
7 solicitor, Mr. Bruce Todesco, and he will be here
8 giving us any advice we may need. We have only one
9 item on the agenda.

10 We do have sign-up sheets in the front for people
11 who want to make comment on this one matter. Is there
12 anybody else who would like to sign up? (No response)
13 The item we're discussing is an ordinance in the
14 amendment in addition to Chapter 1983-4 of the
15 Ordinance of the City of Providence approved February
16 18, 1983 and entitled, an ordinance approving and
17 adopting the official redevelopment plan for the
18 Silver Lake Revitalization Project for the acquisition
19 of Lot 285 on Plat 107, 20 Ralph Street.

20 We have asked Councilman Igliazzi, because this
21 is in his ward, to give us a brief presentation of
22 what is planned and is going to be used for and what
23 the acquisition will be. It's going to the PRA, I
24 believe?

1 MR. IGLIOZZI: Yes, Madam Chair. Thank
2 you, Madam Chair, I'm Councilman John J. Igliazzi, I
3 represent this area. I'm here making a presentation
4 for the advocacy of the condemnation of 20 Ralph
5 Street, Plat 107, Lot 285. Quickly, some brief
6 history. This house, actually five or six years ago
7 was -- the tenants left and then it exchanged hands
8 numerous times through numerous owners. It has
9 progressively gone from actually one of the nicest
10 houses on the street about five or six years ago to
11 unfortunately one of the worst houses on the street.
12 It's boarded up several times, the building department
13 has gone there numerous times, no one is living there,
14 all the windows are broken from top to bottom. It's
15 been a fire hazard, it's been, unfortunately, a
16 location where illegal activity has occurred, we are
17 consistently boarding it up because of that type of
18 activity. It has all sorts of graffiti on it and it
19 has been a major problem in that area.

20 The houses surrounding it, people are living
21 there, they're either single-family houses or
22 owner-occupied tenement houses and they've pretty much
23 had it. It's been a draw for unfortunately pests,
24 rodents, illegal activity and the neighborhood is

1 pretty much at a point where, since the new owners and
2 all the prior owners and the prior owners to that have
3 consistently ignored this house and just have let it
4 go down the tubes, we're now at the point where we
5 would like to have the city move forward, condemn it,
6 and then a couple of things may happen, Madam Chair.
7 Depending on the status of the building itself,
8 meaning how bad the structure is, or the
9 infrastructure of the building is we will either, if
10 it's too far gone we will either raze the building and
11 then resell the empty lot to a developer, or look
12 towards trying to rehab the building and putting it
13 back into some kind of working condition for
14 low-income housing.

15 We're at that point because the building has been
16 neglected for so many years. I will urge, of course,
17 my colleagues to join us. This is something that is a
18 positive thing for the neighborhood. Presently, this
19 building poses a threat to public health, safety and
20 welfare of the neighborhood, like I said, from the
21 rodent problems to the illegal activities to also kids
22 in the neighborhood going into the house, breaking,
23 going into the house and using it for different means
24 and different reasons.

1 So, at this point in time we're looking to move
2 forward to acquire the building and to help make the
3 neighborhood a better place to live and also to
4 enhance it. The owners and the prior owners have
5 no -- clearly by their own inaction, have shown that
6 they do not care about this neighborhood, do not care
7 about this house. And whether they come forward with
8 some kind of plan, Madam Chair, this has been in this
9 state for almost five years, it hasn't changed. So
10 it's not like it's been a couple of months or six
11 months or a year. This house has been this way for
12 over five years with the city consistently boarding
13 it, reboarding it, and numerous violations, police
14 calls. So it's one of those houses that unfortunately
15 whoever owns it does not seem to take that extra step
16 to make it a livable, habitable facility. That's what
17 it's about.

18 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you, Councilman.

19 MR. IGLIOZZI: Thank you, Madam Chair.

20 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Councilman Igliazzi
21 was a proponent for that on the record. We have one
22 opponent, but before that person comes up I wanted to
23 ask Michael Lepore from the Planning Department to do
24 a little presentation on this parcel.

1 MR. LEPORE: My name is Michael Lepore
2 from the Planning Department. We received a request
3 from Councilman Igliazzi for the condemnation for 20
4 Ralph Street. Upon inspection of the property I found
5 it had serious structural problems. We consulted with
6 the code enforcement, they had numerous violations on
7 the property, it met our criteria for blighted and
8 substandard properties. We then filed an ordinance
9 for condemnation of the property. We feel that the
10 property is a detriment to the surrounding
11 neighborhood and represents a fire hazard, and we feel
12 that as Councilman Igliazzi stated, if we could rehab
13 the property, we will. If not, we'll demolish the
14 property and sell the vacant lot to the abutting
15 property owners.

16 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Our next speaker is
17 John Sheehan.

18 MR. SHEEHAN: Thank you. My name is John
19 Sheehan, 34 Bayside Avenue, Newport, Rhode Island. I
20 represent the owner of the property, Ralph 20
21 Associates, and I'm one of the principals which owns
22 the real estate. I would agree with most of the
23 comments that the councilman indicated, this house has
24 been in deplorable condition for the last five years.

1 I acquired the interest in this house after a tax
2 sale in April of this year, 2003. At that time we
3 paid, besides the purchase price to acquire it at the
4 tax sale from the owner, clearing the title at the
5 Superior Court, we paid a total of about \$9,000 in
6 back taxes, about \$1,400 to Narragansett Bay
7 Commission, about \$2,000 to Providence Water, and just
8 within the last month in September of another \$4,500
9 in real estate taxes on the property. We have paid
10 over \$16,000 in encumbrances within the last six
11 months on the property. This house is scheduled to
12 be -- permits to be pulled on this house probably the
13 first week of November. There is a crew that's
14 working on a house on Bergen Street that we own, and
15 upon the completion of that house they're moving over
16 to this house. I do agree that the house has been in
17 tough shape for four, five years, but we have owned
18 the property only the last six or seven months.

19 I would dispute the fact that it's in structural
20 disrepair. It is in disrepair on the inside, there is
21 no heating system, the heating system has been
22 vandalized and the baseboard heating has been pulled
23 out. The windows are all out of the property, they
24 are boarded up, however, and the property is secure, I

1 checked it today. We have secured the property on
2 numerous occasions. I did speak with someone from the
3 city about a month and a half ago about the trash. We
4 did remove some trash, apparently there was more trash
5 placed there afterwards and the city removed that
6 trash. There is a significant amount of money that's
7 in this house.

8 It's a two-family house, the construction
9 contract has been given, it's been executed with
10 Garcia Construction Company of the City of Providence.
11 As I indicated, this construction is supposed to be
12 starting the first week of November. I think that the
13 financial commitment to this house is significant,
14 it's the acquisition price which is over \$35,000, it's
15 an additional 16 to \$17,000 in taxes, there is about
16 \$50,000 invested in this house in the last nine months
17 in hard cash. I would suggest strongly and recommend
18 strongly that we be allowed to complete the
19 renovations to the house. I have renovated probably
20 20 to 25 houses in the City of Providence. I've taken
21 houses similar to this and put them back in service
22 and they have been an asset to the neighborhoods once
23 I get through with them. I didn't cause the problem
24 with this house being the way it is for the last five

1 years, I intend to remedy it, and I only ask the
2 cooperation of the city to allow me to do that. There
3 has been a significant financial outlay towards this
4 house to date and I got notice of this hearing
5 probably three or four days ago. That's the first I
6 heard that this was on the docket and there was a
7 concern.

8 I had two offers by this house in the last three
9 or four months, I responded no, it was going to be
10 renovated.

11 I wish I had received a telephone call from
12 someone, whomever that may be, with the city to
13 indicate what the plan was for the house because I
14 would have explained to them what the plan was.

15 At this point in time we're ready to move
16 forward, it's starting the first week of November, I
17 anticipate the construction will take about two or two
18 and a half months. This house, contrary to Councilman
19 Igliazzi, is not that bad. This house had been
20 renovated about five or six years ago with new walls,
21 wiring and plumbing. The walls are in good shape, the
22 interior partitions are in good shape, and it is not
23 the kind of house that needs to be demolished, it
24 needs to be renovated. I would ask for consideration

1 from the city to allow me to continue with the
2 process.

3 With that, I would suggest strongly that the
4 petition be denied and certainly if my discussions
5 here do not bear fruit in the next several months I'm
6 sure the city can come back and have this on the
7 condemnation list, but the money invested to this date
8 in this house, that won't happen. This house will be
9 renovated and I have two inquiries to buy this house
10 once it's renovated. I'm entertaining one at the
11 present time and it's worth a significant amount of
12 money once it's completed. Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you. I have one
14 question. You said there is a construction contract
15 that you have already?

16 MR. SHEEHAN: Yes.

17 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Do you have a copy of
18 that for the record?

19 MR. SHEEHAN: I can provide that. It's
20 with Garcia Construction Company, on Broad Street in
21 Providence.

22 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: That would be helpful
23 to see. You acquired this through tax sale?

24 MR. SHEEHAN: I acquired this from

1 Patrick Conley. At that time we paid three or four
2 years of taxes, of liens totaling about \$9,000 at the
3 acquisition date. I have copies of checks in the
4 event if you would like to see them. We have copies
5 of checks to the Narragansett Bay Commission, and
6 copies of checks to Providence Water. That's hard
7 cash paid out in the last six or seven months.

8 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: We're very familiar
9 with Mr. Conley.

10 MR. SHEEHAN: These are disbursements we
11 made on this property to date. So it has not,
12 contrary to the Councilman's suggestion, it has not
13 been just abandoned, nothing's been done. We have
14 cleaned out the interior of the house. All the trash
15 inside is now gone, it's now boarded up waiting for
16 the renovation to start.

17 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: You owned this house
18 for how long?

19 MR. SHEEHAN: April of 2003.

20 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: This was advertised in
21 the Providence Journal, when we do a condemnation it
22 is according to whatever city records we have.

23 MR. SHEEHAN: I did receive notice, but
24 it was three or four days ago. I unfortunately don't

1 get the Providence section of the Providence Journal.

2 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: That's on record.

3 Thank you for your comments. Anyone else who would
4 like to provide any comment either for or against this
5 proposal?

6 MR. IGLIOZZI: May I?

7 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Councilman Igliazzi,
8 certainly.

9 MR. IGLIOZZI: I would like to state for
10 the record, Madam Chair, that the gentleman mentioned
11 about garbage and blight at the location. I don't
12 know when he cleaned it up but I can tell you this,
13 that I had to have the city clean it up numerous times
14 just in the past few months. It's been a consistent
15 problem and I know there is, I believe there is
16 additional cleaning liens on that property. The city
17 has to clean and it liens it later on. We have all
18 these liens on the property, we have all these
19 violations on the property, and it is a fire hazard,
20 it is a health hazard, and it's been a major blight
21 issue for the neighborhood. I want you to know that
22 the city has been, as well as the neighborhood, has
23 gone out and cleaned this property as recently as two
24 months ago. With all due respect to whatever they're

1 presenting we have been constantly dealing with this
2 house, this problem house in the neighborhood for over
3 five years. I want to put that on the record.

4 CHAIRWOMAN YOUNG: Thank you. If there
5 is no further comment this public hearing is ending
6 and the time is 6:20 p.m. It's adjourned.

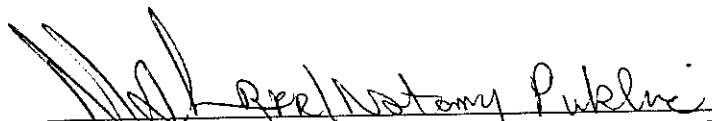
7 (HEARING CLOSED AT 6:17 P.M.)
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CERTIFICATE

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I, MELANIE M. CHACE, RPR, Notary Public, do hereby
certify that the foregoing is a true, accurate, and
complete transcript of my notes taken at the
above-entitled proceeding.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I hereunto set my hand this
27th day of October, 2003.


MELANIE M. CHACE, RPR, NOTARY PUBLIC
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES 04/07/07

IN RE: 20 RALPH STREET