



TOWN OF GRIFFITH

UNSAFE BUILDING COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 21, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

The Town of Griffith Unsafe Building Committee Meeting scheduled for September 21, 2023 was called to order by George Jerome at 3:43 PM.

THOSE IN ATTENDANCE

Town Councilman Rick Ryfa, Chairman – **Absent**
George Jerome, Vice-Chairman
Police Chief Greg Mance, Member
Fire Chief Roy Schoon, Member
Building Commissioner Steve McDermott
Attorney Alfredo Estrada

The Pledge of Allegiance was held.

1. APPROVAL OF JULY 20, 2023 MINUTES

Chief Mance made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 20, 2023 Unsafe Building Committee Meeting as presented.
Chief Schoon seconded the motion.
Motion carried 3 – 0.

Attorney Estrada swore in the following subjects who would be speaking at some point later in the meeting: Jennifer Pavelka, Darren McIntyre, and Raziudein Siddiqui.

2. UNSAFE BUILDING

a. 440 N. Indiana St., Griffith, IN (Estate of Catherine Osborne)

No subjects were present to represent this property.

Attorney Estrada presented the Committee with a packet reference the Estate of Catherine Osborne, 404 N. Indiana St., Griffith, Indiana. Said packet contained the Submission of Evidence for the Hearing on the Demolition Order issued by the Town of Griffith Building Commissioner and Enforcement Authority; specifically: Notice of Violation and Order to Demolish or Repair, Unsafe Building Inspection, Photos, Title Memorandum, Proof of Service and Proof of Publication.

Attorney Estrada called Building Commissioner Steve McDermott as a witness, who he then questioned regarding the 440 N. Indiana St., Griffith, Indiana property. Mr. McDermott stated he was familiar with this property, which was a residence. Regarding the home's condition, Mr. McDermott said it was in disrepair and is unkept. Mr. McDermott stated he had driven by the home and made an inspection, and he felt the home to be unsafe and a public nuisance. Mr. McDermott stated his recommendation to the Committee is to either demolish or repair



the property. Some discussion ensued regarding current photos of the property taken by Code Enforcement Officer Steven Stelk.

Mr. Jerome asked if the home was occupied, and Mr. McDermott advised it was not. As far as the utilities are concerned, Mr. McDermott did not believe they were turned on. Mr. Jerome suggested that Mr. McDermott check to make sure the water had been turned off.

Chief Mance made a motion to issue an order of demotion for this property.

Chief Schoon seconded the motion.

The motion carried (3-0).

b. 207 N Lafayette St., Griffith, IN

c. 231 N. Jay St., Griffith, IN

Attorney Benajmin Murphy appeared at this hearing to give an update on these two (2) properties on behalf of the property owners.

Reference 207 N. Lafayette St., Attorney Murphy stated he was not sure if the owner had the grass mowed and the bushes trimmed. Chief Mance stated the owner did hire a firm to cut the grass and take down the bushes.

Regarding 231 N. Jay St., Attorney Murphy stated another attorney was involved with this property regarding an insurance issue. Attorney Murphy was not aware of any timeline for resolving the insurance issue or for when renovations may be done at the property. Attorney Estrada felt some progress had been made since Attorney Murphy appeared on behalf of the property owner. Going forward, Attorney Estrada stated his office would be in contact with Attorney Murphy regarding updates on this property.

In response to Chief Mance's questions, Attorney Murphy stated he has not actually been retained by the property owner. He knew the property owner's father, and now he is trying to help her out. Mr. Jerome stated that unfortunately, every knew and liked the owner's father, and that is why this matter has been dragging on for over a year now. Some discussion ensued.

Chief Mance made a motion to defer this matter until the next meeting scheduled for October 19, 2023, at 3:30 P.M.

Chief Schoon seconded the motion.

The motion carried (3-0).

d. 140 N. Lindberg St., Griffith, IN

No subjects were present to represent this property.

Attorney Estrada advised this property was sold. The new owner is Preferred Homes LLC, which is the care of Alfred Perez. A letter was sent to the owner on August 1, 2023, and a continuance letter was sent on September 11, 2023, requesting their presence at today's meeting to discuss their plans with the property. There has been no communication from the new owner.

Commissioner McDermott advised the new owner pulled permits to do some work at the property. Commissioner McDermott stated he stopped by the property and saw they did a



vast amount of work, more than the permits specified, and a lot of the work was done incorrectly. A Stop Work Order was placed on the building. Commissioner McDermott stated a male subject came in today to talk about it, and he advised the home is possibly going to be the owner's daughter's house. Commissioner McDermott stated they did plumbing and electric work illegally. He stated the framing is terrible, and the house is in bad shape. The owner is claiming they are going to get a new general contractor because the other one did not do things right.

Vice-Chairman Jerome queried whether there are provisions for issuing fines and penalties for work performed without permits, and Attorney Estrada advised the Town Council does have those provisions. Vice-Chairman Jerome stated something needs to be done here regarding issuing fines and/or penalties. Attorney Estrada advised a request would need to be made to the Town Council, as the Unsafe Building Committee does not have the authority to do so.

Chief Mance stated it will be a year next month that this matter has been before the Unsafe Building Committee, and we are not much further along. Vice-Chairman Jerome stated we seem to be a little further behind. Attorney Estrada stated with a motion to defer, an instruction to speak with the Town Council about fines to the general contractor and the owner regarding the issues could be added. Attorney Estrada felt that action may get the owner's attention to come to these meetings.

Chief Mance made a motion to defer this matter, and to have a conversation with the Town Council reference action to be taken against both the owner and the general contractor.

Chief Schoon seconded the motion.

Attorney Alfredo stated he would send an email, with a strong recommendation regarding fines, to the Town Council requesting they add this matter to the agenda for their next Study Session. Some discussion ensued.

The motion carried (3-0).

e. 117 N. Raymond St., Griffith, IN

Subjects present representing this property: Jennifer Pavelka and Darren McIntyre

Ms. Pavelka stated she was still working on increasing her credit score so that she could get approved for the loan for the roof. She advised she talked to a financial consulting firm, but they wanted \$100 a month for their services. Ms. Pavelka stated she talked to the loan officer at the bank where she has her mortgage, and the loan officer told her not to hire the financial consulting firm as the loan officer would help her. The loan officer felt that a lot of financial consulting firms like to cut corners and make deals that could hurt Ms. Pavelka's credit score. The loan officer is now helping Ms. Pavelka do things the right way in order to increase her credit score. Ms. Pavelka stated she has paid off two accounts that were in collection. She hopes to have all collections paid off by next month, which should help increase her credit score to where she will qualify to get the loan for the roof.

In response to Chief Mance's question regarding estimates for the cost of the roof, Ms. Pavelka stated the last estimate she received for her roof is in the amount of \$26,000. This price includes tear off, replacement of wood, and shingles. Ms. Pavelka stated she cannot find a contractor who will do partial repair to her roof. Some discussion ensued. Ms. Pavelka stated she has multiple estimates for the roof, and they range from \$22,000 to \$26,000. She stated she also got an estimate for replacing the windows, and that estimate is \$6,000. The loan



officer did not recommend her getting a loan at this time for the windows as it would set her back on the roof loan. Some discussion ensued regarding the cost for the roof work. Commissioner McDermott suggested Ms. Pavelka contact his department for a list of licensed roofing contractors in Town who could possibly do the work for a reasonable amount. More discussion ensued. Ms. Pavelka stated she has owned the home for 20 years.

Chief Mance made a motion to continue this matter to the next meeting scheduled for October 19, 2023. Chief Mance encouraged Ms. Pavelka to contact the Building Department for a list of licensed roofing contractors to obtain additional quotes.

Chief Schoon seconded the motion.

The motion carried (3-0).

f. 715 W. Miller St., Griffith, IN – Status from Owner

Subject present representing this property: Raziudein Siddiqui and Contractor Timothy Vanderlaan

Attorney Estrada advised this property was placed on the agenda to get the current status on the property. Mr. Siddiqui stated they have the drawings from the architect, which had been submitted to the Building Department for permits. Mr. Siddiqui stated they needed State approval, so they went back to the architect and got that matter taken care of. They are now waiting for permits. Attorney Estrada asked if the work would be done before the weather turns, and Mr. Siddiqui stated yes.

Chief Mance addressed the gentleman standing next to Mr. Siddiqui by asking who he was and where he was from. The gentleman responded he was Tim Vanderlaan, of Vanderlaan Construction, out of St. John, Indiana. Mr. Vanderlaan stated he has inspected the property, and he would be working on demolition and the concrete decks. Mr. Vanderlaan advised he did have a signed contract with Mr. Siddiqui.

Chief Mance inquired about the soffits that are missing and where squirrels and birds are now building nests. Mr. Siddiqui stated the soffits have been taken care of. Chief Mance asked Mr. Siddiqui when was the last time he was at this property. Mr. Siddiqui stated it was a few days ago. In response to Chief Mance questions, Mr. Siddiqui stated he did know what a soffit is, and he did not see squirrels or birds or bird nests. Chief Mance stated he received pictures today from the Code Enforcement Officer that still show them (the soffits) in the same state that they have been in.

Chief Mance commented that Mr. Siddiqui comes here every time and every time, he finds Mr. Siddiqui not to be truthful. Chief Mance stated he has pictures showing the current condition of the soffits. Mr. Siddiqui then stated he did not look at the soffits, he just paid to get the work done. Chief Mance asked Mr. Vanderlaan, who is the contractor, if he did the work to the soffits. Mr. Vanderlaan replied he did not. Mr. Siddiqui stated this work was done previously and submitted.

Chief Mance stated the Code Enforcement Officer (COE) was present at this meeting. At this point in the meeting, Attorney Estrada swore in Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) Steven Stelk.

In response to Chief Mance's question, COE Stelk stated he did visit 715 W. Miller Street today. Chief Mance asked CEO Stelk what he found regarding the condition of the soffits. CEO Stelk stated the pictures Chief Mance referred to earlier were from the stairways by and



underneath the deckings and the porches, and there are just a lot of animals up in there. There are exposed holes allowing the animals to go in and out. There are nesting materials in the area, and the animals are nesting in it. It is not necessarily at the roof line, as it is in the stairways and decking areas. Mr. Vanderlaan stated the situation CEO Stelk was describing was going to be taken care of when the decking is demolished and then rebuilt. Some discussion ensued. Mr. Siddiqui stated this matter will be taken care of.

Chief Mance stated, for the record, this matter has not been taken care of, and it has been nine (9) weeks since we last met. Further, Mr. Siddiqui is going to want another extension. Meanwhile, the public health of all the tenants is at risk because Mr. Siddiqui is allowing animals to nest above their heads.

Chief Mance asked CEO Stelk if there were any other violations that he saw while he was at the property today. CEO Stelk stated yes, there were. He stated in the area where there is exposed wood and joist for the decking, there are open electrical boxes with exposed electrical wiring. CEO Stelk stated he had a picture of the open electrical boxes. CEO Stelk went on to say the wires cannot be exposed like that as it is a hazard. Mr. Vanderlaan stated he was not aware of the exposed electrical wiring. Chief Mance asked how long it would take to remedy this situation. Mr. Siddiqui responded that as soon as they get their permits, they would start. Commissioner McDermott stated they have applied for the permit, and they have gotten their release. Some discussion ensued. Commissioner McDermott stated Mr. Siddiqui is going to have to hire an electrician and will need to pull an electric permit. Commissioner McDermott said he is going to release the carpentry permit tonight. More discussion ensued.

Chief Mance asked Mr. Siddiqui if he had an opportunity to inspect the interior of the property, and Mr. Siddiqui stated he did not inspect the interior. Chief Mance stated Mr. Siddiqui's inspection of the interior of the property was one of the conditions that put a stay on the demolition of this property. Again, Mr. Siddiqui chose not to listen to this Board's recommendation or basically in this case, their order. Mr. Siddiqui stated he did not understand the order to conduct and bring proof of inspections of the interior of the property. Some discussion ensued regarding the requested inspections of the interior of the property.

Chief Mance asked Mr. Siddiqui if he could complete the work on this property by winter. It's been almost a year. Mr. Siddiqui stated he had to get permits and people were on vacation. Some discussion ensued that was inaudible. Mr. Vanderlaan stated they would get started in 7-10 days on the demolition to get rid of the unsafe conditions. All the nesting material would be removed.

Attorney Estrada advised the Notice of Demotion was sent to the property owner on February 20, 2023. The Order of Demolition was signed by this board on March 16, 2023, and that has been recorded with the Lake County Recorder's Office on this property.

Chief Mance asked CEO Stelk if he noticed any other violations on his visit to the property. CEO Stelk stated yes, there were all sorts of weeds, wild trees growing into the roof line creating a stairwell for raccoons and mice, a vehicle that has been sitting there for a year that has been red tagged and it is a breeding ground for mice, and a pickup truck with a snowplow, which that is also a breeding ground for mice and rats, that needs to be licensed.

Attorney Estrada asked Mr. Siddiqui if he has a landscaping contractor. Mr. Siddiqui replied that he did have a landscaping contractor, but he could not recall their name. Mr. Siddiqui



advised the contractor comes three (3) times a month, but it is only for contracted for grass cutting. The landscaping company does not address leaves, brush or trees.

At the recommendation of Attorney Estrada, Chief Schoon made a motion that Mr. Siddiqui's landscape contractor be instructed to take care of the leaves, brush and trees in addition to mowing the grass.

Chief Mance seconded the motion.

Discussion: Vice-Chairman Jerome asked if it would be possible to send something in writing to Mr. Siddiqui immediately after this meeting with specific instructions as to what the committee is looking to have accomplished so that there is no mistake of what is expected. Attorney Estrada advised his office generally sends notice of the next meeting, and they will include those instructions with that notice. Chief Mance asked if Chief Schoon would consider adding to his motion a property inspection of the interior apartments on the main floor (10 units) and providing a report for this Committee on said inspection at the next meeting. Chief Schoon's motion was amended to include Chief Mance's request.

The motion carried (3-0).

Vice-Chairman Jerome advised Mr. Siddiqui to please look carefully at the letter he will be receiving and be aware there will be a request for an inspection on the interior apartments.

Chief Mance made a motion to continue this matter until next month.

Chief Schoon seconded the motion.

Attorney Estrada advised Mr. Siddiqui they already have an Order for Demolition for this property, and he needs to start moving quickly on repairing the property. This matter has gone on long enough.

The motion carried (3-0).

3. OTHER BUSINESS

Chief Mance advised there were some other properties which they have Demolition Orders, and he would like them to get noted; specifically:

- a. 706 E. 40th Street
- b. 1075 N. Arbogast Street – Chief Mance would like a status update on this property at the next meeting.

Attorney Estrada stated Demolition Orders have been recorded on these properties, and they are waiting for final approval on the Unsafe Building Demolition Process (the bidding process). Attorney Estrada stated once they have the bidding process procedure in place, they will bring the matters up for bids. They have two (2) years from each order of Demolition to demolish the property. Some discussion ensued.

- c. 721 S. Indiana Street – Chief Mance stated this property was previously in front of this Committee, and he would like to start the process on this property again. The male party who inherited this property has basically done nothing to it. He barely mows the grass. Building Commissioner McDermott stated he recently was in the area of this property, and he noticed that it was in worse condition than before. Attorney Estrada stated they would send out a new notice and hopefully, it will be on the Agenda for the October 2023 meeting.



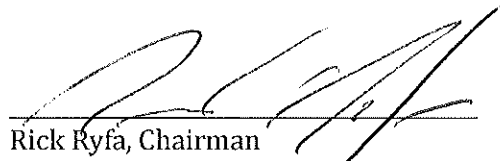
- d. 431 N. Broad Street
- e. Property in the 400 block of N. Arbogast – there is a sheet over it. This is the property where there was a fire and a male passed away. Attorney Estrada stated he would need an exact address to get this property on the agenda.

Some discussion ensued regarding the efficiency of the Committee and how improvements could be made.

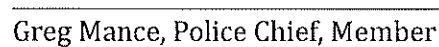
4. CLOSE

The meeting was adjourned at 4:23 P.M.

MEMBERS OF THE UNSAFE BUILDING COMMITTEE

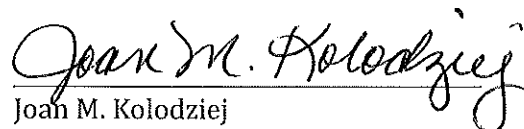

Rick Ryfa, Chairman


George Jerome, Vice-Chairman


Greg Mance, Police Chief, Member


Roy Schoon, Fire Chief, Member

Prepared by:


Joan M. Kolodziej