



# **TOWN OF GRIFFITH UNSAFE BUILDING COMMITTEE**

## **JUNE 20, 2024 MEETING MINUTES**

The Town of Griffith Unsafe Building Committee Meeting scheduled for June 20, 2024 was called to order by Chairman Rick Ryfa at 3:32 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was held.

Chairman Ryfa requested roll call attendance be taken. The minutes will reflect the following:

Town Councilman Rick Ryfa, Chairman - Present  
George Jerome, Vice-Chairman - Present  
Police Chief Greg Mance, Member - Present  
Fire Chief Roy Schoon, Member - Present

Also Present:

Attorney Christian Bartholomew  
Steven Stelk, Code Enforcement Officer & Fire Marshal

### **1. APPROVAL OF APRIL 18, 2024 MINUTES**

Chief Mance made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 18 2024 Unsafe Building Committee Meeting as presented.

Chief Schoon seconded the motion.

Motion carried 4 – 0.

Chairman Ryfa advised the committee was going to jump ahead on the agenda and go directly to "Other Business."

### **2. OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **a. Bids for Demolition – Property at 705 N. Arbogast St., Griffith, IN**

Chairman Ryfa advised at the last meeting, the Committee reviewed bids for demolition for the property on (705) N. Arbogast Street. There is a demolition order for that property, and the Committee awarded the bid to ACTIN Contracting LLC.

Chairman Ryfa state at this time, he would like to entertain a motion to give the Building Department notice to proceed with the demolition of that building. Vice-Chairman Jerome made the motion.

Chief Schoon seconded the motion.

Motion carried 4 – 0.

### **3. UNSAFE BUILDING**

#### **a. 231 N. Jay St., Griffith, IN**

There was no one present in the audience to represent this property.



Attorney Bartholomew advised they were informed the property has been sold; however, they do not have any information from the new owner via direct contact. It was the law firm's understanding that permits have been pulled for work at the property.

Chief Mance made a motion to continue this matter until the next meeting.  
Vice-Chairman Jerome seconded the motion.  
Motion carried 4 – 0.

**b. 140 N. Lindberg St., Griffith, IN**

Vivianne Sama (nee Tartareanu) was in attendance to represent this property.

Vivianne Sama advised they have been making big progress, and everything is going great. They had their final plumbing inspection earlier today, and they passed. The electric should be done by Monday, and HVAC should also be done at the same time next week. Mrs. Sama advised that in about two (2) weeks, maybe less, everything should be done and ready for final inspection.

Chief Mance stated there is scaffolding on the North side of the building, and he was wondering if the scaffolding would be coming down. Mrs. Sama stated she would have it removed. Chief Mance commented the scaffolding has been up for a couple of years, and Mrs. Sama apologized for that.

Chief Mance stated if all the permits pass inspection, he does not see a reason to continue this matter. Chairman Ryfa stated before this matter is dismissed, he wanted to make sure all the inspections are done. Attorney Bartholomew recommended continuing this matter till the next meeting and if everything is clear at that time, the matter can be dismissed. Chairman Ryfa stated the matter could be dismissed at that time per the attorney's recommendation and through the Building Department, and without Mrs. Sama's presence at the meeting.

Vice-Chairman Jerome made a motion to continue this matter till the next meeting and if the work is done and all the inspections have passed, with confirmation through the Building Department and the attorney, then this matter will be dismissed at that next meeting.

Chief Mance seconded the motion.

Motion carried 4 – 0.

**c. 117 N. Raymond St., Griffith, IN**

Darren McIntyre was in attendance to represent this property.

Mr. McIntyre advised Jennifer (Jenny) Pavelka was currently in Montana, but she sent him with a vast number of quotes. Mr. McIntyre requested that the Committee not ask him any questions about the quotes, as he did not have knowledge about them. Mr. McIntyre commented there were approximately five (5) quotes with him, and Jenny had more quotes in her email. Chairman Ryfa asked Mr. McIntyre if he could leave the quotes with the Committee. Mr. McIntyre replied he had to keep the quotes, but the Committee could copy them and then return them. Mr. McIntyre stated one of the contractor's bids was for \$9,000, which is exciting, and they might go with him. Some discussion ensued.



Chief Mance asked Mr. McIntyre if he was present the last time by himself, or was Jennifer Pavelka present with him, and Mr. McIntyre responded it was the time before last. Chief Mance stated, "So you were supposed to be in touch with our attorneys."

At this point, Mr. Boris Saney, of the Law Firm of Burke, Costanza and Carberry, advised Mr. McIntyre he would give him again an address where he could send the quotes by email.

Mr. McIntyre then asked Chief Mance when he said "you," do you mean you or do you mean Jennifer? Chief Mance responded, "You or Jennifer, whoever. I mean you're here, so I guess for today you." Mr. McIntyre said, "She's in Montana. I'm the idiot she sent. Sorry." Chief Mance advised that someone needs to be in touch with the attorneys. Mr. McIntyre then asked Chief Mance if he wanted him to go get Jennifer, who is in Montana. Then Mr. McIntyre said he could not go get her (Jenny). Chief Mance advised that however they get here, they need to get here." Mr. McIntyre then asked, "They who?" Chief Mance replied, "The documents." Mr. McIntyre replied, "They are right here in my hand, boss. Why are you talking to me like this?" Chief Mance replied, "Because I'm tired of having to talk to you every month." Mr. McIntyre replied, "Then don't talk to me anymore, dude. Let someone else talk." Chief Mance advised Mr. McIntyre he would be getting citations for his backyard as it has not been mowed this year. Chief Mance asked Mr. McIntyre if he wanted to continue.

Mr. McIntyre stated he had quotes here, and he was very sorry for his behavior. Mr. McIntyre stated he did not know what Jenny owes. He stated she has owned this place for 20 years, and he just lives with her. He stated Jenny is his wife, his partner, his fiancée, and he does not have the answers the Committee wants. Mr. McIntyre stated the Committee scheduled this meeting for this time, and Jenny is in Montana right now, so she can't be here. Jenny is prepared to talk to the Committee about all this stuff. Chief Schoon stated he believed that Mr. McIntyre was advised to get the attorneys the information. Chief Schoon said when that doesn't happen, then it keeps going and going. Mr. McIntyre said he could text Jenny the number and have her call the Committee's attorney, or email him, or do whatever the Committee wants her to do. Attorney Bartholomew asked if they could see the quotes so that copies could be made. Mr. McIntyre provided the quotes to Attorney Bartholomew. Attorney Bartholomew asked Mr. McIntyre if everything was here, and he said yes.

Chairman Ryfa advised Mr. McIntyre if there are any ongoing issues of ordinance violations, he will be cited aside from this Committee. Mr. McIntyre stated he had a manual mower that he thinks he can make work. He also stated they have lawn mower that he cannot fix. Mr. McIntyre stated he is doing the best he can, and he is sorry. Chairman Ryfa stated he was aware, but this is a violation. Some discussion ensued.

Chairman Ryfa asked Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) Steven Stelk if he had inspected the property recently. CEO Stelk advised he found nothing outstanding, just the grass. Chairman Ryfa advised Mr. McIntyre to be on notice that in the next week or so, if the grass is not mowed, he was subject to a citation at any time. Chief Mance stated to Mr. McIntyre, "You are mowing the front yard, correct?" Mr. McIntyre responded that "No, my neighbor does that for me." Chief Mance suggested to Mr. McIntyre that he should see if the neighbor could mow the backyard too, because he is going to get citations. Chief Mance asked Mr. McIntyre to listen and said, "I'm not going to preach to you, but I'm going to tell you straight." Mr. McIntyre began speaking, and Chief Mance suggested that he be quiet. Mr. McIntyre continued talking and said, "You know, boss, the first time I was here, you looked my wife in the eye, and you said, 'not everyone is meant to own property' and ever since then, I just really don't want to hear from you." Chief Mance replied, "Unfortunately, you don't have that option." Mr. McIntyre



stated, "That's the worst thing anyone has ever said to anyone ever." Chief Mance replied, "Well, I'm sorry that the truth sometimes is difficult to hear." Mr. McIntyre replied, "That's just foul. That's just foul. Ok?" Chief Mance stated, "I'm sorry you feel that way, but it does not matter." Mr. McIntyre stated, "She's lived there for 20 years. She's meant to own that property, thank you." Chief Mance stated, "If she cannot maintain it, she should sell it, or she is going to start getting citations for everything." Mr. McIntyre commented, "Great. Thank you." Chief Mance asked Mr. McIntyre, "Are we clear?" Mr. McIntyre did not respond.

Chief Schoon stated this matter started in 2022, and we are still here talking about this. Mr. McIntyre stated a lot of stuff has happened, and they are doing the best they can. Chairman Ryfa stated simple things, like cutting the grass, needed to get done.

Chief Mance asked Mr. McIntyre, "How it is fair to your neighbors when their home values are lesser because you are not taking care of your property? How do I look them in the eyes?" Mr. McIntyre responded, "I don't have anything more for you, sir, but I appreciate your input." Chief Mance replied, "Great."

Chairman Ryfa stated he would entertain a motion to continue. Chief Mance made a motion to continue this matter till the next meeting.

Chief Schoon seconded the motion.

Discussion: Chairman Ryfa stated any other outside violations or other citations will not be a part of this particular Committee right now but are subject to being included later if things do not get corrected. Mr. McIntyre responded, "Yes, sir."

Motion carried 4 - 0.

**d. 715 W. Miller St., Griffith, IN**

Raziuddin Siddiqui was in attendance to represent this property.

Attorney Bartholomew advised they have not had any further communications with the owner of this property. Attorney Bartholomew stated they understand certain work has been performed, but there are continuing deficiencies on the property.

Raziuddin Siddiqui advised a lot of work has been done; namely, the roofing, the decking, and the stairs. The parking lot is done; it has been redone and stripped. The Fire Department wanted three (3) handicap parking spaces, and that has been done. The light in the exit sign has been replaced. There were a couple of windows that needed work, and that has been done. There are new fire extinguishers, and they have been checked. Mr. Siddiqui stated there are still a couple of things that should be done soon. Chairman Ryfa asked Mr. Siddiqui what is his definition of soon? Mr. Siddiqui responded there is a hole in the attic that needs to be fixed. Chairman Ryfa then asked Mr. Siddiqui what his timeframe for the repairs is to be complete. Mr. Siddiqui responded it should take a couple of weeks to finish the work.

Chief Schoon asked Fire Marshal Steve Stelk what day they did the Fire Inspection of this property. Fire Marshall Stelk was not sure of the exact date. Vice-Chairman Jerome thought the inspection was done right after the April meeting. Chief Schoon stated he believes they gave the property owner 30 days to get all the work accomplished. In response to Chief Schoon's question, Mr. Siddiqui confirmed he did receive a copy of the Fire Inspection on this property. Fire Marshal Stelk advised the firewall in the attic needs to be maintained and doubled up. Mr. Siddiqui stated everybody he has spoken with has told him he does not need a firewall. Mr. Siddiqui stated he could patch it up with drywall. Fire Marshal Stelk advised



drywall is a firewall. Fire Marshal Stelk advised the material that is up there right now has voids (holes) in it. Mr. Siddiqui stated he could patch those holes up with drywall. Fire Marshall Stelk advised if there were to be a fire that made its way up into the attic, it would take out the whole attic, and this type of fire is one of the hardest fires to fight.

Fire Marshal Stelk advised the other issue he had on the Fire side is that all the new decking needs the joists covered up. Currently, all the joists are exposed. The decking needs to be covered up like it was originally so that fire does not get under there and take out the decking. Mr. Siddiqui stated the original decking was concrete, and they changed it to this new material. He said no one has told him the joists need to be covered. Mr. Siddiqui then asked which code specifies this requirement, because he has found no one who is familiar with this requirement.

Vice-Chairman Jerome asked if there was a copy of the Fire Inspection Report available. Fire Marshal Stelk stated he failed to bring a copy with him. Some discussion ensued. Chairman Ryfa then suggested they get a copy of the Fire Inspection, as well as get a more recent Fire Inspection of the property conducted to see where we are at with everything at this property. If there are any serious outstanding violations, Chairman Ryfa stated he felt the Committee will be ready to recommend a Demolition Order for this property if things are not fixed. Chairman Ryfa stated he wanted Mr. Siddiqui to know that as soon as that order is entered, it goes on the property.

Mr. Siddiqui stated what he is trying to explain is regarding the decking, there is nobody saying that it needs anything further done to it. Chairman Ryfa reiterated that he is saying if there are any other violations, then they would recommend a demo order. Mr. Siddiqui stated he is working with the Committee, and he has spent so much money.

Vice Chairman Jerome stated he was going to interrupt Mr. Siddiqui for a moment. Vice Chairman Jerome stated he knows more about this building than he has ever wanted to know in the 45-50 years he has lived in Griffith, and he does not want to know more about that building. There was a Fire Inspection, and a written report was provided to Mr. Siddiqui, or his representative, two (2) months ago. Everything should be done and/or there should be building permits pulled for the work with firm deadlines of when it is going to be completed. Vice Chairman Jerome stated he recommends Mr. Siddiqui be provided with a copy of the Fire Inspection Report before he leaves today, and have an additional inspection done this week, or as soon as possible, to determine whether any work has been done towards completion, answer any questions Mr. Siddiqui has regarding what code requires him to cover the joists, and let's put this thing to bed or tear the building down. Vice Chairman Jerome stated he is getting tired of this matter, and this could be considered in the form of a motion.

Chairman Ryfa advised Mr. Siddiqui he was being very serious and as Mr. Siddiqui saw earlier in this meeting, the Committee is moving forward with the demolition of another property, and his property will not be exempt. Chairman Ryfa stated that no matter how much money Mr. Siddiqui has spent, the property is still in violation, and he has renters living in poor conditions because of violations. Mr. Siddiqui stated the property is not in poor condition anymore, and that is what he is trying to tell the Committee. Chairman Ryfa advised Mr. Siddiqui the Committee will find out the condition of the property through another inspection. Vice Chairman Jerome stated the Committee will be the judge of the condition of the property. Chief Mance stated if the property is a fire hazard, then it is in poor condition. Chairman Ryfa advised Mr. Siddiqui the Committee will not be messing around in 30 days.



Mr. Siddiqui stated he is trying to find out which Code he is in violation of, and how to take care of it. Vice Chairman Jerome stated to Mr. Siddiqui that he will have that information within a week. Chairman Ryfa again stated that once a demo order issued, it gets attached to the property record, and the fees and the costs to Mr. Siddiqui will go up exponentially.

Attorney Bartholomew stated they wanted to bring up the electrical inspection and the status of that inspection, as well. Veronica Horka, of the Building Department, stated there was an electrical inspection that was performed on April 8<sup>th</sup>, and that inspection failed. It was for exterior lighting. Since it did fail, it needs re-inspection. Attorney Bartholomew asked Mr. Siddiqui if he was aware of the failed electrical inspection. Mr. Siddiqui stated he thought the re-inspection was done already. Ms. Horka advised the inspection was done and it failed. Chairman Ryfa stated that inspection was done 10 weeks ago. Mr. Siddiqui again stated everything is done as far as that goes. Ms. Horka again stated on April 8<sup>th</sup> the inspection failed. Mr. Siddiqui responded by stating, "Ok, so now what do I do? The work is done already, so?" Mr. Horka advised the issues need to be corrected, pay for a re-inspection fee, and then the Town will need to go back out and re-inspect the electrical. Chairman Ryfa explained that the work was done incorrectly. Chairman Ryfa suggested if Mr. Siddiqui would be willing to work with the attorneys, the Town would schedule a re-inspection date within the next week or so. Attorney Bartholomew asked Mr. Siddiqui if he had their contact information, and Mr. Siddiqui stated he believed so. Attorney Bartholomew provided Mr. Siddiqui with his contact information. Chairman Ryfa asked if the property could be inspected by the Fire Department within the next week, and Fire Marshal Stelk agreed it could be done.

Chief Mance advised Mr. Siddiqui that if he has questions, he needs to ask prior to these meetings. The Committee needs to have answers at these meetings – not questions. Chief Mance stated he was not going to lecture Mr. Siddiqui again, but there are still some other violations on his property. Chief Mance stated the property does look better, but Mr. Siddiqui is stockpiling brush in the southeast corner of the property which came from trees that had been trimmed. Instead of throwing the trimmings away, Mr. Siddiqui is just piling them up, which is against the Town code. There is some plywood that was taken off the property that has been leaning against the stairs on the north section of the building. These violations are easy to fix and inexcusable. Chief Mance asked Mr. Siddiqui to have the property cleaned up by mid-next week. Mr. Siddiqui agreed the property would be cleaned up by mid-next week, but the fire hazard correction and enclosing the deck cannot be done within a week. Mr. Siddiqui also stated he was not sure what the Town wanted done to the decking to make it meet code. Fire Marshal Stelk advised the structural members for the stairs and the decking are all exposed. He said it would be very easy for a fire, that is in an apartment, to go out the window, hit the decking, and then burn it off. Those structural members must be protected in order to give occupants some time to escape the building if there is a problem. Fire Inspector Stelk continued saying the structural members on the stairs, and the joist that are coming out from the top deck, need to be covered ideally with plywood. Some discussion ensued.

Vice Chairman Jerome motioned to continue this matter until the next meeting.  
Chief Mance seconded the motion.  
Motion carried 4-0.



### 3. ADDITIONAL OTHER BUSINESS

Vice Chairman Jerome stated a couple of months ago, they talked about developing a process for getting items brought before this Committee. Vice Chairman Jerome advised they have been dealing with the same properties for a year and a half, and there are a lot of other properties that could, and should, be brought before this Committee. Further, there are many properties that do not need to be brought before this Committee, but they are in violation of numerous codes. Vice Chairman Jerome presented the Committee with a draft of a Code Violation Process that he prepared (see attached copy). He stated he would like to see the Committee using something that is codified so that there is a process that we all follow, and it will get these properties corrected in the least intrusive way, which is talking to our customers, or if necessary, bring them into this meeting, or when necessary, tear the building down. Chairman Ryfa stated he felt it would be good to use this draft and work with the attorneys to see how it fits in with the Town's current ordinance. Attorney Bartholomew advised they will review the draft for compliance. Vice Chairman Jerome suggested that Fire Marshall Stelk also review the draft and provide input on the timelines for progress.

Oscar Flores, of 715 W. Miller St., Apt. 8, Griffith, was in the audience. Chairman Ryfa asked Mr. Flores if there was anything he would like to share with the Committee. Mr. Flores advised there is someone staying in the upstairs apartment with the busted window, which still has not been repaired. Mr. Flores asked if the apartment was supposed to have been inspected before it could be occupied. Chairman Ryfa stated he thought Mr. Siddiqui stated no one was living on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Mr. Flores confirmed that there was someone now living in that apartment. Mr. Flores stated he believed it was Apartment #20. Chairman Ryfa stated if this is the case, then there are some real issues here. Attorney Bartholomew stated no one is supposed to be living in that apartment if there are unsafe violations. Chairman Ryfa stated the Committee was assured several meetings ago there would be no one living upstairs. In response to Chief Mance's question, Mr. Flores confirmed that the apartment in question was #20.

Mr. Flores also commented that the parking lot was repaved, but the roadway coming into the parking lot still has some rough patches. Mr. Flores stated he thought the roadway was going to be repaired as well. Chief Mance stated if Mr. Siddiqui has added patches, the Committee can add that to the next conversation they have with him. Chief Mance stated of all the issues regarding this property, he is glad some of the bigger ones are getting addressed first.

### 4. CLOSE

The meeting was adjourned at 3:56 P.M.

### MEMBERS OF THE UNSAFE BUILDING COMMITTEE

Rick Ryfa, Chairman

George Jerome, Vice-Chairman



A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Greg Mance".

Greg Mance, Police Chief, Member

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Roy Schoon".

Roy Schoon, Fire Chief, Member

Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joan M. Kolodziej".

Joan M. Kolodziej

Attachment (1) – Proposed Code Violation Process



## CODE VIOLATION PROCESS

- 1) IDENTIFY VIOLATION
  - 2) REPORTED BY: (CODE ENFORCEMENT, PD, FD, CITIZEN COMPLAINT)
  - 3) VIEW PROPERTY
    - a) MAKE PERSONAL CONTACT IF POSSIBLE & EXPLAIN VIOLATION
    - b) AGREE ON TIMELINE FOR CORRECTION
    - c) CREATE TRACKING RECORD
  - 4) FOLLOW-UP BY MONITORING PROGRESS
  - 5) IF PROGRESS IS INSUFFICIENT OR TIMELINE LAPSES:
    - a) ISSUE WRITTEN NOTICE WITH EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE
    - b) DELIVER WRITTEN NOTICE IN PERSON OR BY CERTIFIED MAIL
    - c) CREATE PHOTO RECORD
  - 6) IF TIMELINE PASSES OR PROGRESS IS INSUFFICIENT:
    - a) ISSUE TICKET
    - b) NOTIFY ATTORNEY
    - b) ADD TO UNSAFE BUILDING SCHEDULE
- IF UNOCCUPIED ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE OWNERSHIP
- a) WHO PAYS WATER/UTILITY BILLS (IF ANYONE)
  - b) IF LISTED FOR SALE, CONTACT LISTED REALTOR
  - c) CHECK LAKE COUNTY TAX RECORDS