



TOWN OF GRIFFITH UNSAFE BUILDING COMMITTEE

JULY 18, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

The Town of Griffith Unsafe Building Committee Meeting scheduled for July 18, 2024 was called to order by Chairman Rick Ryfa at 3:37 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 Alfredo Estrada, Law Firm of Burke, Costanza and Carberry
Steven Stelk, Code Enforcement Officer & Fire Marshal

1. APPROVAL OF JUNE 20, 2024 MINUTES

Vice-Chairman Jerome made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 20, 2024 Unsafe Building Committee Meeting as presented.
Chief Schoon seconded the motion.
Motion carried 4 – 0.

2. UNSAFE BUILDING

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

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

Attorney Estrada advised there was a recent purchaser. After the sale, the purchaser pulled permits on a few things, and they have begun rehabbing the property. Although there has not been any correspondence with the new owner, they have seen some movement. Attorney Estrada asked the Committee if they would continue this matter for 30 days as this will allow his office time to contact the new owners and get a progress update via email, as well as pictures of the property. Attorney Estrada stated hopefully, they might be able to dismiss this property in a few months.

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

There was no one in attendance to represent this property.



Attorney Estrada advised this property passed final inspection today. There are some fines, in the amount of \$500, that the owners are going to pay. Attorney Estrada stated they need to confirm whether those fines have been paid. The owners have also been brought into Court regarding some ordinance violations. Attorney Estrada stated they are wrapping all these items together to get this matter dismissed. Attorney Estrada stated he is asking the Committee for 30 days to get this matter wrapped up. Hopefully, with the next few days, Attorney Estrada would provide the Committee with a voluntary dismissal and then it can be taken off the Agenda.

Vice-Chairman Jerome made a motion to continue this matter for another 30 days.
Chief Schoon seconded the motion.
Motion carried 4 – 0.

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

Jennifer Pavelka was in attendance to represent this property.

Ms. Pavelka stated she brought all the estimates she has obtained for the roof repair at this property as apparently, they were not all provided at the last meeting. Ms. Pavelka stated she heard back this morning from the roofing company that was going through the insurance company, and they advised the insurance company is not going to cover the roof repair because they said the hailstorm went around the entire area and stayed away from her house.

Ms. Pavelka stated she did receive an estimate for \$6,000, which is for a partial repair of the roof, so she will be trying to get in touch with them to do the work for that amount. Attorney Estrada asked Ms. Pavelka if this would be a partial repair; and she confirmed it would be a partial repair of the roof in the area the Committee stated she needed to have repaired. Attorney Estrada asked Ms. Pavelka how old the entire roof was, and Ms. Pavelka replied she has owned the home for over 20 years, and it depends on which part of the roof you are asking about. Ms. Pavelka stated the previous owner put organic shingles on the roof, which are bad for the roof. She was told her insurance might cover the replacement of those shingles, but the organic shingles are only meant to last 5-6 years. Ms. Pavelka stated the organic shingles are the ones going bad on the back part of the roof. Ms. Pavelka continued by saying there is another part by the garage they fixed about 8 years ago. Attorney Estrada asked Ms. Pavelka, "What is the price difference is between the partial and the full repair?" Ms. Pavelka stated a full roof repair will cost between \$15,000 to \$17,000, and the partial repair would cost about \$6,000 to \$7,000.

Attorney Estrada stated the issue here, in his opinion on behalf of the Committee, is that we are going back here in a few years, if not sooner, with a partial repair done. Attorney Estrada stated he believed the intent of this Committee was to get an appraisal for the whole roof, but he will leave that up to the Committee to make the determination. Attorney Estrada stated he would rather not be back here in a few years with Ms. Pavelka having to spend another \$9,000 on another partial repair. Ms. Pavelka stated she would like that as well and if she could win the lottery tomorrow, she would get a new roof. Ms. Pavelka stated she loved seeing the Committee's faces but not enough to come every month to these meetings. Ms. Pavelka wanted the Committee to know she is trying to get a loan, but every time she applies for financing to get that much money, she gets denied.

Chief Mance asked Ms. Pavelka if she has pursued any kind of assistance through any organization, and Ms. Pavelka replied she has not because she does not know who to go to.



Chief Mance asked Ms. Pavelka if she had contacted the North Township Trustee to see if there is any type of assistance there, and she stated she will try again. In the past when she has contacted them for assistance, every time they ask if she has kids and when she responds no, she is told they cannot help her because there are people with kids needing help.

Chairman Ryfa stated he felt with the circumstances of whether Ms. Pavelka would be in or out of violation for not repairing the roof, the roof is going to have to be repaired very soon. Further, Chairman Ryfa stated there are some inconsistencies as far as what she is saying about the roof shingles, as he could not imagine someone putting shingles on the roof that only last five (5) years. Ms. Pavelka began to speak, and Chairman Ryfa reminded Ms. Pavelka that he was not done speaking. Chairman Ryfa continued saying it did not make sense (5-year shingles) or Ms. Pavelka was just misinformed but either way, the Committee is not hearing what they need to hear. Chairman Ryfa said he would entertain a motion to continue this matter for 30 days. The Committee will look at the estimates and begin a discussion, in the next couple of weeks, about the feasibility of repairing the entire roof. Chairman Ryfa asked Ms. Pavelka if she was working with any loan officers or a finance company, and she replied yes. Chairman Ryfa asked Ms. Pavelka how she was going to pay for the entire roof repair, and she replied she would get a loan. Ms. Pavelka stated she has been trying to get a loan, but no one will approve her for a loan. Ms. Pavelka stated she does not have a co-signer, and without a co-signer, she cannot get a loan. Chairman Ryfa stated regardless, it is going to have to get done. There is no other choice.

Chairman Ryfa asked when the last time was that there was a visual inspection of the home. Attorney Estrada advised the Town is not allowed on this property, but the visual inspection was probably a few months back. Attorney Estrada commented that the area just had another storm. Chairman Ryfa asked Ms. Pavelka if she got water with the storm, and Ms. Pavelka replied no, she did not. Attorney Estrada asked Ms. Pavelka if she had any more damage sustained from the storm, and she replied no, not that she could see.

Again, Chairman Ryfa stated he would entertain a motion, and they would try to have a plan that they could put in place 30 days from now. Further, if in 30 days Ms. Pavelka does not have financing or she states she cannot do it, Chairman Ryfa said then the Committee would have to determine what they were going to do. Chairman Ryfa advised Ms. Pavelka that in 30 days, if she states that she cannot do it, then the Committee will have to make a decision on the matter.

Attorney Estrada stated there are two (2) estimates for around \$11,000 that would be a complete tear off and replacement. Ms. Pavelka stated she did not see those estimates as she just glanced over the estimates this morning. Chairman Ryfa asked Ms. Pavelka, who was becoming very emotional and who began to cry, to not take this as being disrespectful. Ms. Pavelka stated this is her home, and she has been trying so hard. Chairman Ryfa stated Ms. Pavelka needs to take responsibility for this and to take this seriously. Chairman Ryfa reminded Ms. Pavelka that she stated she went through them (the estimates), and then she stated she did not go through them (the estimates). Chairman Ryfa advised Ms. Pavelka that this is a serious matter and if she could get a whole roof for \$11,000, then she needed to do that. Ms. Pavelka stated she is willing to try anything, and she wants to keep her house. Chairman Ryfa advised Ms. Pavelka that she would not be able to keep her house if she does not make this matter a priority in her life and decide to go forward and get this thing (roof) fixed. Chairman Ryfa stated if she cannot go forward with getting the roof repaired, then Ms. Pavelka would need to provide documentation showing that she was denied the loan.



Attorney Estrada asked Ms. Pavelka if she contacted Alamo Roofing Company, and was she denied by them for a loan? Ms. Pavelka advised she did contact Alamo Roofing Company last year, and she was denied by them. Some discussion ensued. Attorney Estrada stated he had here an estimate from Alamo dated June 20, 2024. Ms. Pavelka stated she called Alamo again to get a new estimate because the Committee had asked her to get new estimates. Attorney Estrada commented that the June 20, 2024 estimate is for \$15,000.00 but the monthly payment, for six (6) years, would be \$250.00. Ms. Pavelka stated that the estimate was if she had a credit score of 670 or higher. Ms. Pavelka stated she has been paying off her bills and paying them on time to get her credit score up.

Chief Mance stated this was the concern he expressed before, which offended Ms. Pavelka and which he apologizes for, but after the roof is fixed, then the siding is the next thing, and then the windows. Chief Mance advised Ms. Pavelka that there are just many, many issues with the house, and he is not sure how she is going to be able to address all these issues and stay out of coming in front of this Committee. Ms. Pavelka stated she would sell her house, or she would leave, if that is what it takes. Chief Mance stated to Ms. Pavelka that he just wanted her to be realistic in her evaluation. Chief Mance stated he did not want to see Ms. Pavelka put money into the house and get herself deeper into credit issues if this isn't a feasible solution for her.

Attorney Estrada advised there was a June 17, 2024 estimate for a complete tear off and replacement for \$8,700.00. Ms. Pavelka stated she believed that estimate was just for a section of the roof. Attorney Estrada stated the estimate indicates they will remove up to two (2) existing layers, but only in the area shown in pictures. Attorney Estrada stated for \$8,700.00 or \$6,000.00 for a partial, and then \$11,000.00 for a complete repair; it just does not make sense to do a partial repair. Some discussion ensued regarding a motion, but no motion had been made.

Vice-Chairman Jerome made a motion to continue this matter for 30 days.

Chief Mance seconded the motion.

Discussion: Vice-Chairman Jerome suggested that no work be done without reviewing it with this Committee first so that within these next 30 days, nothing will get done on the roof without Committee approval. Chairman Ryfa advised Ms. Pavelka that in the next 30 days, nothing is to be done to the roof unless Ms. Pavelka is prepared to replace the whole roof. Ms. Pavelka stated she could try to get that done. Chairman Ryfa stated there is no way that is going to happen. Vice-Chairman Jerome stated to Ms. Pavelka that she really needs to evaluate her position because it is not just the roof. As Chief Mance mentioned, there is siding. There are windows. A home in good shape requires probably \$4,000 - \$5,000 a year in maintenance costs because furnaces go out, air conditioning goes out, plumbing goes bad, roofs need repair, etc. Home ownership is an expensive proposition. This is something Ms. Pavelka needs to consider, especially right now since prices are very high everywhere. Vice-Chairman stated if Ms. Pavelka is working with a loan officer, a bank, a consultant, or a counselor, she may need to sit down and evaluate her next step, whether it is in this house or not. Chairman Ryfa asked Ms. Pavelka if she owned the property, and she responded "yes." Chairman Ryfa asked her if she had a mortgage, and she said "yes." Chairman Ryfa stated the Committee cannot tell Ms. Pavelka what to do, but she could always contact her mortgage company, let them know she is dealing with some serious stuff and ask if they can work with her in this matter. Chairman Ryfa advised Ms. Pavelka that she has a month to try to do that, and that is something she should seriously consider doing tomorrow. He advised that she should let the mortgage company know she is before the Unsafe Building Committee, and the Committee can have the



home demolished. He suggested she ask the mortgage company if they can help her out, as the mortgage company wants a foreclosure less than Ms. Pavelka does.

Chairman Ryfa asked Ms. Pavelka if she would allow some time before the next meeting, the inspector to go on her property and get some pictures, either with a drone or visually. Ms. Pavelka said she would allow the inspector to go on her property to get pictures for anything outside. Ms. Pavelka said she has big dogs, and she does not allow people to enter her residence because of the dogs. Chairman Ryfa asked Attorney Estrada to note that Ms. Pavelka gave permission for the Inspector to go on her property and take pictures of anything on the outside.

Chief Mance asked Ms. Pavelka for her permission to have the Police Department's Social Workers try to find some avenues that might help her; and she replied, "Absolutely. I will take any help that I can get." Ms. Pavelka went on to say that years ago, they had both their incomes, and it was so much easier. Then he (Darren McIntyre) started going through a depression and lost his job, and now it is just her income. Ms. Pavelka stated she is trying, and she is willing to sell the house if that is what it takes. She stated she would figure out a place to go. Ms. Pavelka stated she is really trying, and she will take any help that she can get.

There was no further discussion on the matter. The motion was voted on, and it carried 4 – 0.

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

Bilal Siddiqui was in attendance to represent this property.

Bilal Siddiqui advised they had their electrical inspection on Monday, and they did not get red-tagged, so he believes they passed. Attorney Estrada confirmed they did pass the electrical inspection. Mr. Siddiqui further advised that everything the Fire Department had requested be done is complete except for a stain on the stairs, which they have been working with Steve (Stelk) on.

Chief Schoon asked if the drywall had been repaired upstairs because they could not get in to see it. Mr. Siddiqui stated the drywall has been repaired, and he will e-mail the pictures of the repaired drywall to the attorney. Chairman Ryfa suggested Mr. Siddiqui take pictures of everything and e-mail them. Mr. Siddiqui stated he could get that done this week.

Chairman Ryfa asked Mr. Siddiqui as to where do they currently have tenants residing. Mr. Siddiqui stated mainly on the first floor; and there are a couple tenants upstairs on opposite ends of the building; Apartment #20 and he could not remember the number of the other apartment. Chairman Ryfa asked Mr. Siddiqui if the stairwells and exits totally up to code. Mr. Siddiqui responded, "Yes." Chief Schoon advised there is storage underneath the stairs that needs to be moved. Some conversation ensued but it was inaudible.

Attorney Estrada asked Mr. Siddiqui how many apartments are at this location, and Mr. Siddiqui replied "20." Chairman Ryfa asked how many apartments are filled now, and Mr. Siddiqui responded, "probably 10 or 11." Chairman Ryfa stated that at some point over the past few months, somebody had stated (and if it isn't Mr. Siddiqui, Chairman Ryfa stated he apologizes) the upstairs would essentially be cordoned off and not rented. Mr. Siddiqui stated that he and Steve had discussions earlier; and Chairman Ryfa stated he was referring to discussions that were held here at these meetings. Chairman Ryfa stated he believe the



Committee was under the impression that there would be nobody living upstairs. Attorney Estrada said either last month, or two (2) months ago, it came as a surprise that someone was living upstairs. Mr. Siddiqui stated he knew this was discussed previously, and their first order of business was the stairs were unsafe. The stairs were the major impediment for having people upstairs. Mr. Siddiqui stated it was their understanding that as soon as the stairs passed full inspection, it would be safe for people to travel upstairs. Mr. Siddiqui stated when they passed all the inspections on the stairs, they assumed it was ok for people to be upstairs. Chief Schoon advised the male in Unit 13 stated he has been in the apartment for about a month, and he said there were no issues in his apartment.

Chief Mance stated part of the confusion comes from it is either Mr. Siddiqui, or his father (Raziuddin Siddiqui), who comes to the meetings, so the Committee never speaks to the same person in a consecutive month. It is like Mr. Siddiqui has to this defense of "Oh, I didn't know. It wasn't communicated." Chief Mance stated to be honest, he is a little tired of this. Chief Mance advised that last month, he told Raziuddin Siddiqui (Bilal's father) to make sure the area is clean from all the tree trimmings that someone has done on the property over the years. There are stacks of tree trimmings there. Chief Mance stated he went past the property today, and the trimmings are still there. Bilal asked if the stacks were on his property, and Chief Mance replied yes, and it is rubbish. Chief Mance asked Bilal Siddiqui if he was at the property today, and he responded he was not. In response to Chief Mance's question, Bilal Siddiqui stated the last time he was at the property was probably last week. Chief Mance said the trimmings are in the same corner they have been since these meetings started a couple of years ago; that being the Southeast corner of the property where there is a large pile of debris. Mr. Siddiqui asked exactly where the debris pile was located, and Chief Mance stated it was in the parking lot towards the bike path. Mr. Siddiqui stated that is not their property. It is NIPSCO'S property. Mr. Siddiqui stated if the debris is in the parking lot, then it is theirs. If the debris is on the other side of the parking lot, then it belongs to NIPSCO. Chief Mance asked if next to their parking lot is their property, and Mr. Siddiqui stated it is their property. Chief Mance then advised Mr. Siddiqui it was his rubbish. Chief Mance also stated that he did not know if it was due to the storm, but throughout the back, there are dead tree limbs everywhere. Chief Schoon advised they were there Monday, and it looked like a lot of it was fresh. Mr. Siddiqui advised he spoke with a Mike or a Dave, who is head of the Arborist Division at NIPSCO, and he has confirmed that he is going to have crews out there as that is NIPSCO's property on the other side of the parking lot. Chief Mance told Mr. Siddiqui to make sure by Monday that he knows where his property line is because they are going to research it and if that debris is on his property, then he is going to get a ticket on Monday. Chief Mance said he is done with this matter.

Vice-Chairman Jerome stated the other thing to consider is if that is NIPSCO'S property and the debris is Mr. Siddiqui's, then Mr. Siddiqui cannot put his debris on NIPSCO's property. Mr. Siddiqui stated he has spoken to NIPSCO's Arborist Division, and NIPSCO said are going to take care of it. Chairman Ryfa stated they are not going to take any third-party testimony; however, if he has something in writing, then that is fine. Chief Mance said it is simple. Just make sure if it is your property that it is cleaned up. Anything that is still on Mr. Siddiqui's property on Monday, Mr. Siddiqui will be issued citations.

Chairman Ryfa stated there are two (2) concerns the Committee has; they are:

1. While Mr. Siddiqui is in this process with the Unsafe Building Committee, can the Town cite them and fine them? Attorney Alfredo advised "yes." Attorney Estrada explained there are different sections of the Municipal Code and State Statute; one being Unsafe



Building which has jurisdiction over buildings that are unsafe, being a common nuisance, uninhabitable, etc., which this property is still. There are others that are code violations (i.e., tall grass, rubbish, broken windows, etc.), which is a separate code. The Town could fine them and still have these issues. Chairman Ryfa stated if there are code violations, especially going through this process, there should be no excuse for those. Chairman Ryfa asked that if Code Enforcement or members of the Police Department see any of those issues, they should inform this Committee if any citations have been issued. Attorney Estrada stated the code violations are heard in Lake Superior Court.

2. Chairman Ryfa stated he is still thoroughly confused as to how, when or why they started allowing tenants on the second floor when the Committee told Raziuddin Siddiqui that was not to happen anymore. There have been a couple of residents who have reiterated a couple of times that there are tenants on the second floor. Bilal Siddiqui stated he believes he was part of those discussions as well, and he has been working one on one with Steve (McDermott), and they had discussed once the stairs were safe, then it would be ok. Chairman Ryfa stated this information was not being conveyed to the Committee. Chairman Ryfa stated Steve (McDermott) may have dropped the ball and did not let the Committee know that he was talking to Mr. Siddiqui on this matter. Attorney Estrada stated the only last comment he has on this matter is that it seems like, hopefully, they are coming to an end on this matter. There has been a significant amount of resources and time that the Town has expended to prosecute this matter (i.e., title search, attorney costs, paralegal costs, and mailing services). Attorney Estrada stated he would like reimbursement of those costs for the Town as part of the final fee if there is ever a dismissal on this property.

Chief Mance motioned to continue this matter for 30 days.

Vice-Chairman Jerome seconded the motion.

Motion carried 4 - 0.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

Bid for Demotion - Property at 705 Arbogast Street, Griffith, Indiana

Attorney Estrada stated at this time, he is going to ask for a continuance on this discussion pending some moving parts with the bidder and the property owner.

Chief Schoon motioned to continue this matter for 30 days.

Chief Mance seconded the motion.

Motion carried 4 - 0.

4. CLOSE

The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 P.M.

MEMBERS OF THE UNSAFE BUILDING COMMITTEE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Ryfa".

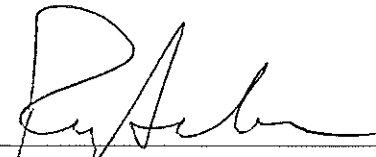
Rick Ryfa, Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Jerome".

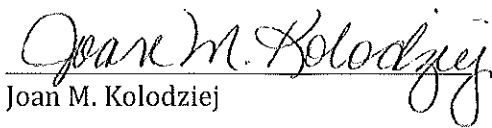
George Jerome, Vice-Chairman




Greg Mance, Police Chief, Member


Roy Schoon, Fire Chief, Member

Prepared by:


Joan M. Kolodziej