

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of the Weathersfield Township Trustees Special Meeting
Held on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Call to order: Steve Gerberry

Pledge: Completed

Roll Call: Steven Gerberry - Present Richard Harkins - Present
Edward Whittaker - Present Patrick Glunt - Present

Public Hearing:

This is a Public Hearing held pursuant to Ohio Revised Code §505.86 and §505.871 challenging an order requiring demolition of the structure and removal of the junk vehicles on the property located at 1380 Depot Street, Mineral Ridge, Ohio 44440, Permanent Parcel Number 21-015000 (the “Property”) in Weathersfield Township. James Vargo and Charlotte Vargo, the property owners, requested the hearing.

The hearing is being electronically recorded.

Law Director Cherry Lynne Poteet represents the Township. The following documents are presented as Exhibits for entry into the record:

- 1. A certified copy of Resolution 25-045 adopted by the Weathersfield Township Trustees at their meeting on March 11, 2025, declaring the structures on the Property to be a nuisance and threat to public health and safety as unfit for human habitation and ordering their demolition and declaring the vehicles on the property to be junk motor vehicles and requiring their removal.
- 2. A copy of the declaration of the Trumbull County Board of Health, adopted at their regular meeting on February 26, 2025, declaring the structures on the Property to be Unfit for Human Habitation.
- 3. A copy of the lien report for the Property dated February 14, 2025.
- 4. A copy of the letter sent by certified mail on March 17, 2025 to the Property owners, James and Charlotte Vargo, notifying them of the order to demolish the property and remove the junk vehicles and right to request a hearing.
- 5. A copy of the letter from the Property owners, James and Charlotte Vargo, dated March 22, 2025, requesting a hearing.
- 6. A copy of the letter to the Property owner, James Vargo, dated April 2, 2025 setting the hearing for April 8, 2025 at 6:00 PM and acknowledgement that Zoning Director, Kelly Clarke, spoke to the Property owner, James Vargo, on April 2, 2025 advising him of the hearing for April 8, 2025 at 6:00 PM.
- 7. Photographs of the Property

Mr. James Vargo Sr., the property owner, was sworn in and testified. He stated that the home was rented for seven years, however he told the residents to leave in December. He agreed that the house was unacceptable to live in at that point but stated that was the fault of the renters. He stated he did not attend the Board of Health hearing because it was on Zoom and he is not computer savvy, and he was sure they only looked in the windows, they hadn’t gone inside. He testified that the house was only a mess inside, but it was structurally sound. He stated he had emptied the junk out of the house. He also stated that there were no vehicles at the house.

Under cross-examination, Mr. Vargo admitted that the photographs in Exhibit 7 and Exhibit 8 were accurate photographs of the house. He stated that the black substance on the second-floor exterior walls extending about a foot above the porch roof shown on the first photograph in Exhibit 8 could be mold, but he wasn’t sure because he had not gone on the roof. He admitted that the window at the back of the house on the second floor was missing and there were several broken windows but blamed the tenants. He also admitted that there were no gutters or downspouts on the house and there was a several foot-long section of the fascia that was rotted out and missing and a portion of the siding on the side of the house was rotten. He stated that he did not recognize the vehicle in the picture of the rear of the house and doesn’t know anything about it and doesn’t believe it is there. He stated that the footprints in the snow of animals going into the hole in the foundation were prints of the tenant’s cat.

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Mr. Vargo stated that he had plans to fix the house up, replacing the rotten siding and repairing the windows, and requested that the Board reconsider the order of demolition.

Kelly Clarke, Weathersfield Township Zoning Inspector, was sworn in and testified. She described and authenticated each of the Exhibits. Zoning Inspector Clarke testified that the former tenant at the Property had called her when she moved out and stated that there was mold all through the house, that there were groundhogs and raccoons living under the house, and they were moving out because it was unsafe. She stated that she contacted the Board of Health to investigate the allegations, and the Board of Health investigated and declared the house unfit for human habitation.

Zoning Inspector Clarke testified that she took the photographs that are Exhibit 8 on April 7, 2025. She described the structural deficiencies in the house reflected in the photographs – the missing and broken windows, the mold covering the exterior walls, the evidence of animal tracks leading to a hole in the foundation, the rotted fascia board and siding, the deteriorated porch, and the lack of gutters and downspouts. She stated that she had been contacted multiple times by people in the neighborhood who were concerned about the condition of the house and the impact on their property values.

Zoning Inspector Clarke also testified that the white car shown in the photographs is parked in the grass behind the house. She stated that the vehicle had sunk into the dirt and appears inoperable.

Finally, Mr. Vargo testified that he agreed there were issues with the siding, fascia, gutters, and windows of the house but he was planning to fix it. He stated that the house is solid as a rock and should not be demolished.

No additional testimony was offered, and the hearing was concluded.

25-256 Motion to ***adopt a resolution to proceed with the demolition of the structure which is unsafe and structurally defective and to remove the junk vehicles*** located at 1380 Depot Street, Mineral Ridge, Ohio 44440, Permanent Parcel Number 21-015000 in Weathersfield Township, Trumbull County, Ohio.

Motion by: Rich Harkins Seconded by: Steve Gerberry
Vote: Steven Gerberry - Yes Richard Harkins - Yes Edward Whittaker - Yes
Motion Carried

25-257 Motion to ***adjourn the hearing.***

Motion by: Rich Harkins Seconded by: Edward Whittaker
Vote: Steven Gerberry - Yes Richard Harkins - Yes Edward Whittaker - Yes
Motion Carried

Patrick J. Glunt, Fiscal Officer

Steven J. Gerberry, Trustee

Richard T. Harkins, Trustee

Edward K. Whittaker, Trustee