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Thursday, July 31, 2008

Redevelopment Authority continues efforts in Brownsville

By Amy Zalar, Herald-Standard
07/13/2007

Updated 07/14/2007 12:06:04 AM EDT

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Despite efforts by the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority to make deteriorating downtown Brownsville better place, the process has been slow going.

During Tuesday's monthly meeting, authority member Rob Sleighter said although the authority has demolished two structures and improved the wharf, it is overwhelming when there are "500 buildings" that need demolished.

Executive director Andrew French said he continues to speak with the office of Gov. Ed Rendell, and is hopeful additional money will be provided so the authority can move on to the next redevelopment phase. The area was previously targeted for state money aimed at making improvements.

The authority voted on three resolutions dealing with money geared toward improving the borough. A motion was approved for \$135,000 through the Department of Community and Economic Community Conservation and Employment Program to further support the Brownsville Borough Targeted Revitalization Initiative. French said the money would be used for legal expenses and appraisal work.

The authority also voted to use \$35,000 of the \$135,000 allocation to support offices at the former Oddfellows Building to target the revitalization initiative. The money will be used by the Brownsville Area Revitalization Corp.

The authority also approved a resolution ratifying a contact with the state for \$200,000 through the Growing Greener! Main Street Program to support revitalization. However, French said the money already has been used for demolition.

Authority member Dee John said she appreciates the efforts, but the borough needs a "shot in the arm" like Uniontown. Sleighter replied that Brownsville needs "more than a shot in the arm." He said if only one building at a time is ton down, "we'll all be dead" when the last one falls.

French said work continues to improve Brownsville, adding that the authority has been in "court battle over court battle" for code enforcement. Numerous buildings owned by Earnest Liggett have been cited for code violations, and the issue continues to be fought in court.

Updated 07/14/2007 12:06:04 AM EDT

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