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Summary Minutes

October 19, 2016 Public Meeting

Unreinforced Masonry Building Proposed Mandatory Retrofit Policy

6 – 9 PM | St. James Lutheran Church

Policy Committee members present: Walt McMonies, Tom Carrollo

Staff: Amit Kumar, Shelly Duquette, Carmen Merlo, Jonna Papaefthimiou, Felicia Heaton.

Public: please see sign-in sheets.

Jonna Papaefthimiou welcomed everyone. She made a brief presentation on the risks of URMs and the City's efforts to address this risk. [Refer to PowerPoint presentation.]

6:36pm

Clarifying questions:

Mary: I live in a Class 3 building. I am worried about it squashing me. What is the other type of earthquake besides Cascadia? Answer: Crustal.

[Inaudible] Can we get this presentation? Answer: Yes, it will be posted on the website.

What kind of earthquake is the standards based on? A short jolt? Answer: Yes, the geotech engineers consider all types of earthquakes and come up with a code that will work for them all.

[Inaudible] I am a property owner, live in Florida. My daughter lives in our URM. What else can I warn her to do during an earthquake? Gas risk? Stay away from windows? Answer: Duck cover and hold on is best. You can also get an automatic gas shut off valve. You should make sure that your property manager can do a gas shut off.

Felicia Heaton: If you have a gas shut off valve the contractor has to reset them. You can go to PBEM website or NW natural website to find information. To duck and cover under a table is best. Near an interior wall is next best.

Follow-up: What if you don't have prop manager at your building to respond? Answer: After the shaking stops, you should leave the building. Especially if you smell a rotten-eggs smell. If gas is outside, it's not so dangerous. But if you smell gas, get out of your building. Have a go bag packed and be ready to go. Have a safe place to go to in case of aftershocks. In NZ we saw that the second earthquake did more damage to the earthquake.

[Inaudible]: At a time when city seems to approve demolition and lack of affordable housing, if we require retrofitting then doesn't that mean that buildings will turn over and developers will build high end apartments that people can't afford? Is something being done to replace the current URM affordable housing? Answer: That was a consideration for the city policy committee. Affordable housing providers like Central City concern intend to update their buildings. And if affordable housing providers can't meet the standards in time, they can get an extension. Follow-up: So there is no direct effort to keep the affordable housing that is just low rent-market affordable? Answer: Not unless the owner wants to formalize it being permanently affordable.

[Inaudible]: My concern is that the mandate will cost the property owners and they will pass the cost through to tenants. Did you consider San Francisco policy that gives low or no interest loans, that were tied to legal rights for tenants to return. Also no evictions were allowed for landlords who used that program. Did you look at that policy? Answer: We did look at SF policy; it was a positive concept but there were very few building owners that took those loans. There is also an Oregon law that prohibits government from making loans to private entities.

Richard Walden: I live in a very old, reinforced building with low income residents. What happens if our building gets rehabbed? Do we get pushed out to Gresham? This building is owned by Home Forward, and by PDC. Answer: You will not be evicted. They are planning to accommodate all their tenants somewhere while they do the work, possibly by constructing a building now and moving tenants into the new building and then returning to their building afterwards. So that may be a strategy. Another way is that you do the work when people move out. Then you do the units one at a time. Amit adds: We did provide for 20 years to do the retrofits. Owners wanted that longer time frame.

Walt: We were able to do the work for floor joist tie-ins one at a time. The floor isn't attached and then it wobbles during an earthquake. For 36 units it took us 2 years to do that.

Mary Sacora: I live in the Buckman neighborhood. I agree with the concerns about pass-on costs. I am angry at the development that is happening. I don't want to leave my building. The costs are too high for new buildings. There is also fear of a bridge collapsing, what happens when we are cut off from downtown? Can we get Federal financing from FEMA? Oregon constitution doesn't allow loans- Are there any legislators that are moving to change that?

Answer: Yes, bridges are seismically vulnerable. There is work being done on this also. FEMA money might be available for some projects, but not enough for all the URMS in Portland. We could maybe do critical buildings. The City also is working on a legislative strategy to help URMS in a number of different ways – we should talk afterwards.

[Inaudible]: I live in a URM, run a non-profit in a URM. I have been trying for years to find a way to retrofit our building. The cost is millions of dollars and the tax codes are difficult to access. Is there anyone at the City who can provide help to navigate the way forward for non-profits. Answer: The committee did recognize that there is a need to make financial tools available. There is expected to be help available for a PDC employee to navigate these issues, be the "earthquake czar."

Rob Demetri: I live in SW Vista in a Class three building. I agree with Mary about people being pushed out. My question is clarification. I heard you say one more meeting that there is public input allowed. Just one? Answer: There is one meeting scheduled Nov 3rd. They will decide if they need more meetings

to make a decision. They allow public comments at their meetings. Then the policy goes to City Council, which also allows public comments.

Felicia: Can learn more about URM's from our twitter account or the website.

Darlene Garrett: I thank the City for informing us. I think building owners should notify a tenant moving in that they live in a URM. If they also want to sign a waiver that we've been notified, then fine. The policy doesn't require notification of tenants until late in the process. I think people should be informed from the outset that they live in a URM. Can a structural engineer tell what a building will do? Answer: We want the property owners to create an evaluation report. These will be public information.

Darlene: As a tenant, residents should be given that info as well. Banks have a community reinvestment credits in law. They can reinvest in their community. I think the city and maybe county should pull together banks and finance people to find out how to direct their CRC into URM's. Seattle is giving their property owners half as much time as Portland has proposed. Portland has also had a voluntary seismic retrofit program since 1995. Answer: Primary reason is cost involved and time needed to plan to avoid disruption for tenants. It was originally 10-15 years, but these other concerns pushed it out. So we made intermediate benchmarks. For example, tying walls to roof needs to be done sooner so it doesn't all get left to the end.

Darlene: I want the City and County to come up with financial incentives.

[Inaudible]: When would the 3-5yrs for assessment start? Answer: It would be after Council Adopts the policy.

Erica Hiller: I am a member of the City Club study group on earthquakes. About gas lines, 1/3 of the system has a shut off valve that is owned by NW Natural Gas.

Mary: I am grateful for this meeting. And my rant about affordable housing I mean, but thank you for this opportunity to talk. We don't have an on-site manager at my building. Could there be a requirement that tenants could volunteer to be gas shut off?

Richard Walden: I know that neighbors like to help each other. What is the potential for neighbors to help? Answer: Not recommended to do unlicensed retrofits. But 90% of people saved are saved by their neighbors. You should sign up for NET.

[Inaudible]: I am medical trained. Do I have to save 54 people? Answer: Yes, until you find some people to help you.

Walt Mc Monies: I own 3 URM's. They are very expensive to retrofit. It cost \$1Mil for 10,000 square foot building. We had lots of help from Amit and BDS. You can fight your way through this with adequate capital. This is not affordable housing, but it is reasonable, \$2.25 per square foot. Less costly than new stuff at \$3 per square foot. Landlords really need some help. I need some help with my latest project. It takes lots of planning and it needs financial support from City or County.