

City awaits plan to repair SRO building

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A Civil Court judge yesterday adjourned until tomorrow the city's request for a public administrator to oversee the rehabilitation of a Port Richmond single-room-occupancy (SRO) house at 90 Park Ave.

Meanwhile, the city said it would try to provide security at the three-story frame house, which authorities say is frequented by drug abusers and prostitutes.

Tomorrow the owner, David Wexler, must present a plan to secure and renovate the building, which he agreed yesterday was in deplorable condition. He could not be reached last week for comment in a story that appeared in the Advance Monday, which detailed conditions at the house.

Judge Frank V. Ponterio granted the adjournment because the owner's lawyers hadn't seen the city's petition until yesterday in the West Brighton court, said Jay Duskin, who represents Wexler for the Meiers Corners law firm, Alan D. Lasher.

The court papers never reached Wexler, because he does not reside at either of two Port Richmond addresses, including 90 Park Ave., which he listed on

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official records. After the brief proceeding yesterday, the owner refused to give his address to the Advance.

Wexler owes more than \$6,000 in taxes, water bills and emergency repairs made by the city, records show. There are more than 120 pending violations, according to the city Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD).

Responding to complaints by two residents, an Advance reporter last week visited 90 Park Ave., and found empty crack vials and human feces among the debris. There was no running water or working plumbing, and the third-floor bathroom smelled from a backed-up toilet and excrement floating in a bathtub. Residents went without heat for most of February and without electricity in September, they said.

The Advance spoke with four

people who said they lived in the SRO before October, when Wexler stopped collecting rents of \$200 a month, they said. They each said they were on limited incomes and could not afford to move out. They estimated that six to more than a dozen squatters occupy the 14-room building.

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After inheriting the house in March 1981, "I brought in a tenant I knew over 30 years. I didn't realize he was dealing with drugs and prostitutes," the owner said.

The tenant stopped paying rent and told other residents to do the same, Wexler said. "It was like a domino situation. Everything went out of control after that."

He tried evicting the disreputable tenants, "but they just came back."

Wexler thought he'd found a solution when a Port Richmond developer said he wanted to buy the house and run it as a safe SRO for low-income tenants.

Page 1 of 3