



800 City Hall, 200 E. Wells St., Milwaukee, WI 53202, Telephone 414-286-2601, Fax 414-286-8550

## **Strong Neighborhoods Litigation Summary**

**Updated: April 12, 2018**

### **City of Milwaukee v. Leticia Gomez**

Court: Milwaukee County Circuit Court  
Case No. 18-CV-1947  
City Counsel: Heather Hecimovich Hough  
Opposing Counsel: Tristan Pettit  
Judge: Clare Fiorenza

Issue(s): Since 2012, MPD has had ongoing issues with nuisance/drug related activity occurring at the Gomez properties. MPD has attempted numerous times to work with the Gomez family to abate the nuisance activity to no avail.

Summary of Case: The City sued Gomez under Wis. Stat. § 823.113 alleging that two properties located on 5<sup>th</sup> place are drug house nuisance, and also under 823.02 alleging that Gomez's mismanagement of her properties constitutes a public nuisance.

Case Status: Status hearing set for May 1, 2018.

### **In re Larry Hopson bankruptcy**

Court: U.S. Bankruptcy Court  
Case No. 17-27269  
City Counsel: Hannah Jahn  
Judge: Hon. Brett H. Ludwig

Issue(s): Mr. Hopson and his two solely-owned LLCs own 25 properties and together owe over \$800,000 to the City. In addition to the municipal court judgments and tax liens on LLC-owned properties, which are not part of the bankruptcy, the Debtor owes over \$579,190.98 in delinquent real estate taxes as of July 2017. His Chapter 13 Plan

attempted to “cramdown” the debt to \$381,736.00 by claiming the property values are less than the tax lien on some of those properties. The City objects to that Plan, asserting that it incorrectly estimates the secured amount of the claim.

Case Status: The City objected to the Amended Plan based on the Debtor’s attempts to cramdown the secured debt. The Debtor filed adversary proceedings to allow the Court to determine the value of eleven of those properties. The court will hear evidence of the properties’ value at a court trial May 14, 2018.

**City of Milwaukee v. Elijah M. Rashaed**

Court: Milwaukee County Circuit Court

Case No: 17-CV-6823

City Counsel: ACA Kail Decker

Judge: Hon. Glenn Yamahiro

Issue(s): Public nuisance landlord violates ATCP laws and fails to maintain property conditions; also uses LLCs to insulate himself from consequences of his actions.

Summary of Case: The city sued Elijah Mohammad Rashaed and 18 of his entities that own property in Milwaukee seeking an injunction that prohibits him from managing properties, collecting rent, and acquiring or conveying property. The city seeks to get a receiver appointed to manage the properties and then sell them to pay for the cost of the receivership and satisfy all liens.

Case Status: After a contested hearing, the Court ordered a property manager to take over all 161 residential rental buildings (357 units) owned by the defendants as of April 4, 2018, and the defendants have surrendered control. Peter Ogden was appointed as the property manager and his firm, Ogden & Company, has been working diligently to evaluate properties, contact tenants, and overcome obstacles set in place by the defendants.

**In re City Wide Investments, LLC bankruptcy**

Court: U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin

Case No. 17-cv-1403

City Counsel: Hannah Jahn

Judge: Hon. Pamela Pepper

Issue(s): City Wide Investments, LLC filed bankruptcy to get back property located at 8940 N. Michele St. Property was part of an In Rem tax lien foreclosure proceeding brought by the City of Milwaukee and has since been sold to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party. After trial on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the Court found that the fair market value of the property at the time of transfer was \$330,000, and consequently, ordered a judgment in favor of the Plaintiff in the amount of \$280,894.56.

Status: City appealed to the District Court. Briefing completed; awaiting decision.

**In re James Miicke bankruptcy**

Court: U.S. Bankruptcy Court  
Case No. 17-23177  
City Counsel: Hannah Jahn  
Judge: Hon. Susan V. Kelley

Issue(s): After the City objected to the Debtor's first Chapter 13 Plan because it did not believe he was paying the maximum he should on the unsecured debt (fines and forfeitures for building code violations on buildings he no longer owns), the Debtor filed an amended plan, agreeing to pay 100% of the City's unsecured claim. As required by the Plan, the Debtor (with a realtor) has listed four rental properties (of the seven he and his associated entities currently own in the City) at listing prices of at least the assessed value. The proceeds of the sales, in addition to Mr. Miicke's disposable income, will pay the claims.

Status: The City approves the most recent Chapter 13 Plan; the Trustee has not, so the Plan cannot be confirmed yet. The City is awaiting confirmation of Plan so that payments can be distributed to the creditors.

**City of Milwaukee v. Hampton Avenue Group LLC**

Court: Milwaukee County Circuit Court  
Case No: 17-CV-004388  
City Counsel: Nicholas DeSiato  
Opposing Counsel: Mike Ganzer and David Halbrooks  
Judge: Judge John DiMotto

Issue(s): Sale and manufacture of K2 at convenience store

Summary of Case: After a nine month investigation with federal, state and local authorities regarding the sale of K2 (i.e. synthetic cannabinoids), DEA and MPD executed a search warrant on the convenience store Food Town Mini Mart on May 23, 2017. The search warrant resulted in the seizure of over 1,800 packets of K2, drug paraphernalia and equipment used to manufacture K2. In addition, the Department of Revenue seized over 4,000 boxes of illegal tobacco. On May 26, 2017, the CAO filed drug house litigation to close and seize the property.

Case Status: After a court trial and briefing, on November 14, 2017, the circuit court found the property to be a drug house and ordered it seized by the City and sold. CAO is working with the local alderperson and district commander to vet a potential buyer of the property. The proceeds of the sale will go toward community improvement and reimbursing the costs of law enforcement.

**City of Milwaukee v. Kenneth D. Churchill, III**

Court: Milwaukee County Circuit Court  
Case No. 17-CV-1135  
City Counsel: Heather Hecimovich Hough  
Opposing Counsel: Terry Teper, Bryan Ward

Judge: Rebecca Dallet

Issue(s): Since 2011, Churchill's 12 City property holdings have received 11 drug house designations and Churchill has failed to abate the drug, nuisance and prostitution activity at his property holdings. In addition, Churchill has numerous outstanding code violations that have not been corrected and have been open since 2015. The City also alleges that Mr. Churchill has direct involvement with the drug activity occurring at his rental properties.

Summary of Case: The City sued Churchill under Wis. Stat. § 823.02, alleging that Churchill's mismanagement of his properties constitutes a public nuisance; under Wis. Stat. § 823.09 alleging that the properties are Bawdy House nuisance, § 823.113 alleging that the properties are a drug house nuisance, and also that the properties are a nuisance per se due to the number of outstanding code violations and municipal citations attached to the properties.

Case Status: Defendant is selling off properties; 8 of the 12 properties have sold as of February 2018. Proceeds are being held in receiver's trust account. Trial set for June, 2018.

**In re. Paul M. Bachowski bankruptcy**

Court: United States Bankruptcy Court Eastern District of Wisconsin

Case No: 16-30646-beh; Ch. 13

City Counsel: Kevin P. Sullivan

Opposing Counsel: Todd C. Esser

Judge: Beth E. Hanan

Issue(s): The City has sought relief from automatic stay with respect to the 16 parcels Debtor proposes to sell ("Relief Stay") and has objected to confirmation of his plan with respect to Debtor's remaining 17 parcels ("Objection").

Summary of Case: Debtor has been in bankruptcy since October, 2016.

Case Status: In resolution of the City's motion for relief from stay, an order has been entered by the bankruptcy court incorporating agreed-upon deadlines for code compliance and listing for sale with respect to the debtor's properties and providing for increased monthly payments. Sale of the property at 617 W. Hadley is pending bankruptcy court approval.

**City of Milwaukee v. 2904 W Wisconsin LLC**

Court: Milwaukee County Circuit Court

Case No: 16-CV-1802

City Counsel: Kail Decker and Joseph Johnson (Kohn)

Opposing Counsel Firm: Heller Law Offices, LLC

Opposing Counsel: Michael G. Heller

Judge: Rebecca F. Dallet

Issue(s): There is a judgment against an LLC that remains unsatisfied.

Summary of Case: The City's collections firm, Kohn Law Firm, obtained a judgment for \$36,465.32 on July 26, 2016, for delinquent taxes against the owner of the property located at 2904 West Wisconsin Avenue. No one appeared for the supplemental examination of the owner's member or agent to inquire about the assets of the LLC owner and the property is now tax-delinquent in excess of \$230,000.

Case Status: The property owner paid \$46,000 for all delinquent 2014 taxes, interest, and penalties, plus agreed to pay \$5,000 per month toward 2015 taxes. Any failure to make that payment after notice of default will result in the appointment of a receiver to take over this 50+ unit apartment building.

**City of Milwaukee v. Mohammad Choudry, et al.**

Court: Milwaukee County Circuit Court

Case No: 16-CV-8057

City Counsel: Kail Decker

Opposing Counsel: Frank Gimbel, Russell Karnes

Judge: William Sosnay

Issue(s): Since 2009, Mohammad Choudry has amassed a portfolio of neglected rental properties. He frequently failed to record sheriff's deeds, regularly did not pay real estate taxes, and hid behind LLCs that incurred significant forfeiture debt. His tenants lived in poor conditions, the city rarely collected debts upon him, and his cash-only business made it difficult to garnish to pay those debts.

Summary of Case: The City sued Mr. Choudry and several related LLCs under causes of action including: debt collection, public nuisance, racketeering, and fraudulent transfers. In addition, the City sought to pierce the corporate veil of the LLCs and hold Choudry personally liable.

Case Status: The receivership has been operating for over a year. All life/safety issues have been addressed and receiver obtained a \$300,000 line of credit with a local bank to pay down debt and assist in making proactive improvements that will reduce future maintenance costs. Also, 15 of the 75 properties will be sold to reduce future expenses and obtain cash.

**City of Milwaukee Municipal Court v. Will J. Sherard**

Court: Milwaukee County Circuit Court

Case No: 16-CV-6628

City Counsel: Patrick Leigl

Opposing Counsel: Robert Meyeroff

Judge: Glenn Yamahiro

Issue(s): Did the municipal court abuse its discretion when it ordered Will Sherard to pay his municipal forfeitures in full?

Summary of Case: Judge Yamahiro denied Sherard's motion to set aside the municipal order and upheld the order to pay the forfeitures within 60 days. He subsequently denied the motion to stay the order pending the appeal.

Case Status: The Supreme Court denied Sherard's petition for certiorari review. Sherard continues to pay off remaining forfeitures.

**ORP Real Estate Holdings LLC v. City of Milwaukee**

Court: Milwaukee County Circuit Court

Case No. 15-CV-10358

City Counsel: Kail Decker

Opposing Counsel: Mark Peterson and Rock Pledl

Judge: Clare Fiorenza

Issues(s): Temporary and permanent injunction against raze order issued for 2801 W. Wisconsin Avenue for the purpose of providing a residential care center for male juveniles with disabilities. ORP initiated a suit in circuit court contesting the raze; and also in federal court for federal fair housing and disabilities claims.

Summary of Case: Upon stipulation in circuit court, ORP agreed to stipulate to dismissal without prejudice of the federal court case.

Case Status: ORP has sold the property at 2801 W. Wisconsin to the Near West Side Partners and the case was dismissed without costs as a result.

**City of Milwaukee v. M & R Properties Investment, LLC, et al.**

Court: Milwaukee County Circuit Court

Case No: 15-CV-7228

City Counsel: Kail Decker

Opposing Counsel: David Halbrooks

Judge: Rebecca Dallet

Issue(s): Property at 2710 W. Juneau Avenue was dilapidated and uninhabitable. The City served a raze order against the property and the owner did not comply.

Summary of Case: City sued the owner of 2710 W. Juneau Avenue to force it to raze the building. The owner stipulated to razing the building by a certain date. It failed to do so by that date. The city sought a finding of contempt and sanctions which was denied. Just prior to another scheduled contempt hearing, the owner conveyed the property to a third party who was not financially capable of completing the project. The city filed a motion under Ch. 242 to declare the conveyance to be a fraudulent transfer and the owner agreed to void the conveyance. The City razed this building in March 2017 at its cost due to the extended period of time it would take to compel the owner.

Case Status: The case is now a collections action by Kohn Law Firm.

**City of Milwaukee v. ELRA 2121, LLC, et al.**

Court: Milwaukee County Circuit Court

Case No: 15-CV-3720

City Counsel: Kail Decker

Opposing Counsel: David Halbrooks

Judge: William Sosnay

Issue(s): Property at 2405 W. National Avenue was dilapidated and uninhabitable. The City served a raze order against the property and the owner did not comply.

Summary of Case: City sued the owner of 2405 W. National Avenue to force it to raze the building. The owner expressed an interest in fixing the property instead and posted \$20,000 as a bond to assure its completion. Through a stipulation with the City, the owner was provided with an opportunity to repair the building. The owner successfully rehabilitated the property in early January and sold it that same date to a third party.

Case Status: The owner complied with the court's order 103 days after the deadline. The court adjusted its contempt order to impose \$100 per day for a total of \$10,300 in contempt forfeitures. The City has received payment on that contempt order, the building has been sold to a responsible owner, and the matter is closed.

**City of Milwaukee: Notice of Intent to File Application for Appointment of a Receiver**

Court: None, published only (March 30, 2017)

Case No.: N/A

City Counsel: Heather Hecimovich Hough

Opposing Counsel: Victor M. Arellano

Judge: N/A

Issue(s): Since 2011, DNS has issued at least 138 orders identifying at least 854 code violations at Miguel Saldivar's property holdings. To date, 44 orders to correct 458 code violations remain unabated.

Summary of Case: The City published the Notice of Intent to File Application for Receivership on March 30, 2017, with the intent of filing a nuisance action for receivership in circuit court after the expiration of 60 days (as required by statute).

Case Status: In March of 2017, the City published and recorded a Notice of Intent to File for Application of Receivership for all of the properties owned by Miguel Saldivar or one of his LLC entities. The notice was filed under the Wisconsin nuisance statute, and requested that Saldivar abate all nuisances (code violations) in 60 days or the City would file an application for a receiver. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Saldivar retained Attorney Victor Arellano to represent him in this matter. In addition, the City was contacted by Attorney Dan Habeck who represented F Street Investments. F Street had mortgages on

a number of the property holdings and was concerned that the properties were grossly ill-maintained. Victor Arellano, Mr. Saldivar's attorney, requested that the City enter into an agreement with Mr. Saldivar allowing him 120 days to make all the repairs to all of the properties. The City entered into the agreement. F Street Investments was closely monitoring the agreement because of their interest in the properties. The City terminated the agreement with Mr. Saldivar on May 23, 2017 for his failure to abide by the agreement's terms. The City discussed the matter with F Street and they moved forward with foreclosure actions that included requests that the Court appoint a receiver to manage/maintain the properties during the pendency of the foreclosure actions. The City attended these hearings and provided information to the court about the conditions at the properties and supported receivership requests. The court appointed receivers for all of the properties mortgaged by F Street. In addition, the City will be taking over ownership of three Saldivar properties in tax foreclosure. They are included in this next tax foreclosure batch that should be filed in March.

**City of Milwaukee v. NTO LLC**

Court: Milwaukee County Circuit Court

Case No: 15-CV-5210

City Counsel: Nicholas DeSiato

Opposing Counsel: David Frank

Judge: John DiMotto

Issue(s): A California-style hotel building at 2408 W. Kilbourn Avenue was a frequent location for prostitution, drug sales, and other public nuisance activity that disrupted the neighborhood.

Summary of Case: In August 2015, the CAO obtained a court order for a nuisance receivership for the 15-unit apartment. In May 2016, DNS ordered the property razed. In December 2016, the CAO obtained an order to compel the building owner to raze the building at its own cost. On June 30, 2017, the court found NTO in contempt of court for failing to raze the building and ordered a sanction of \$1,000.00 per day until the property is razed.

Case Status: On November 13, 2017, the court held a supplemental hearing. The court ordered NTO to provide documents for its related LLCs. Based on the result of the documents, the City intends to pierce the corporate veil at a hearing in June, 2018.

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