

## **LEECHBURG BLIGHTED PROPERTY DEMOLISHED**

Armstrong County's blight remediation efforts have targeted two vacant properties along Siberian Avenue in Leechburg Borough.

A week before Christmas, number 137 was torn down by Baker Excavating & Contracting. The other structure – a former duplex at numbers 125-127 – has also been slated for demolition.

On Friday, Dec. 21, 2018 Armstrong County Commissioner Pat Fabian met with Leechburg Mayor Wayne Dobos at the demolition site. They were joined by the county's Department of Planning and Development's Executive Director Darin Alviano and Program Manager Brigid Beatty.

"It started with this guy," Commissioner Fabian said, giving a nod toward the mayor. "He was the one who brought up the issue of blight and asked us what we could do about it."

The issue of blight was raised in late 2016 during one of the Board of Commissioners' regional town hall meetings by Mayor Dobos, who at that time was on Leechburg Council. The development of a Blight Remediation Plan followed. Two separate grants – a \$100,000 Community Development Initiatives Program Grant and a \$100,000 Keystone Community Program Grant – both from the Department of Community and Economic Development were obtained after discussions took place between county officials and State Sen. Don White (R-41<sup>st</sup>) about community revitalization.

In July 2017 the county-appointed Blight Task Force recommended to the commissioners that some of the grant money be allocated to demolish three blighted properties. Those included the two properties on Siberian Avenue in Leechburg and one former duplex on Diamond Way in Kittanning.

In 2018 Leechburg Borough entered into an agreement with the county to acquire the two problem properties out of the county repository and to pay for the structures to be demolished. The county in turn will reimburse the borough for the cost of the demolitions using grant funds. Kittanning Borough has entered into a similar agreement with the county.

The remaining funds from the grant will go toward Land Bank activities. On Dec. 20, 2018 the Armstrong County Board of Commissioners approved an ordinance authorizing the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Armstrong (RACA) to act as a land bank. This will facilitate the return of vacant, abandoned, tax delinquent and blighted properties to productive use. It is one more tool the county can use to combat community deterioration, improve the quality of neighborhoods, foster economic growth and spur investments.