

Minutes of a meeting of the Halifax Relief Commission
and City Advisory Board.

Halifax Relief Headquarters,
May 14, 1918

Present-

T. Sherman Rogers Chairman
Judge Wallace
His Worship Mayor Hawkins
Mr. Fowlke
H. W. Johnston
L. Fred Monaghan
R. P. Bell
Controller Finlay
Alderman Godwin

T. S. Rogers - I suppose this meeting is held in answer to my suggestion to the City. I may say that I was going away to Ottawa on business in connection with the Commission, and the new Council having been elected, we met and had a general talk over the general situation in Halifax. It was very pleasant and very satisfactory, and I suggested that as soon as I got back we had better get together informally again and thoroughly discuss any matters that might be open for discussion at the present time, so that your work and ours may expand as nearly as possible without friction. We are all interested in the same problems, more especially confined to one part of the City, although affecting people all over the City. In consequence of this, your duties have been made very much heavier, and therefore it seems to us now that we are about to start into the work of reconstruction, it is better for us to get together and see where difficulties are likely to arise and straighten them out and at a good start.

That is about all I have to say, except that I went to Ottawa particularly with reference to what should be a general policy of the Commission as to our permanent work in this City. As you know, as I have said often in public and also in the Press, we have a great problem before us to get houses rebuilt and the people back in them as soon as possible. Labor and material are high, money is scarce, and we have not money enough to go around, and therefore the task of the Commission is a very difficult one and I think we are in need of the co-operation of all public bodies as well as all citizens, to work together as far as possible. Now the general policy of the Commission is this and has been this, that the money being paid out for losses to buildings that are partly or wholly destroyed, should, in the great majority of cases, be retained by the Commission and paid out when the expenditures on the property are being made. The money is for the purpose of restoration and not simply for payment of damages. The same thing applies to the restoration of houses. We feel it is in the interests of the City as a corporation, to have the assessable value of its property restored as soon as possible, and therefore we were afraid that if we simply assessed damages and paid money out to people who had lost their homes, many of them perhaps would not rebuild, and if they rebuilt, owing to high prices of materials, they might not build as well as the City at large would like to have them re-build, and therefore there might occur what has occurred in other cities, a want of regulation and a want of the proper sort of restoration. Therefore we have been pretty firm in holding on to the money which represents the appraised damage in that district, pending a development of our general policy. Where parties asked us for money to buy property in other parts of the City, we never hesitated, because that was simply transferring property in the North end to property somewhere else. Where parties satisfied us that they were leaving the City and convinced us that this was so, we dealt with them on a cash basis, but our general policy is to retain money for building

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pending the commencement of building operations. What we propose to do, is to say to the owner, and it is a difficult task, "We have certain designs of buildings which we think should be built, and you, having in mind the appraised value of your own property, make a selection from these designs." If we satisfy the parties in this respect, I suppose everyone is satisfied. If they want a better home and are willing to pay the difference, this is up to them. We have not decided even to hold them to that policy. If they wish to build themselves, to proper designs, we are quite content that they do so, but we think it our duty to point out to them that a contractor or a dozen contractors can do the work more quickly and it is the part of wisdom on their part to await developments.

As to the other great work of looking after those who rented houses, we estimated that there must be 600 families to be now provided for with temporary houses or in some other way. Therefore, we think it is up to the Commission, being a relief Commission, to relieve the suffering of these people, in building a certain number of houses. To what extent we shall pursue that policy, will depend on the cost of our initial effort this year, and the necessities of the people who are housed in that way. The funds for that purpose will not, we hope, appreciably affect the general relief funds. That is to say, we believe that by building a large number of houses, we can build them more cheaply and therefore save money to the people, and we are so advised by our architects and engineers that this is possible. The money for this purpose is to come from a fund that has to be established, for the purpose of paying pensions to the widows and families of those lost in the explosion, and to pay claims for disabilities and injuries. The fund for that purpose has to be established. The amount we do not know - it depends on the number of persons who are left, and they are pretty well scattered. We are in touch with a great many of them and are paying some of them already. When we know the amount which each person is to receive out of that fund, and the period over which those payments are to extend, we shall know what capital sum we have to set aside to meet that liability. That is the sum out of which we are making investments. We expect to help the City, if you wish us to, in its financing. We have bought some bonds which we can dispose of at a profit, and out of that same fund we propose to devote a large sum of money to rebuilding what we believe will be modern, up-to-date workmen's cottages.

In that connection it might be that in order to keep rents down, we might have to sink some capital, but no-one can tell at the present time. Even if we have to do so, we have the approval of the Federal authority to take that course. They received this suggestion through myself, the other day with a great deal of favor. They said that if that part of the City was to be rebuilt, they wanted to see if rebuilt well. They would leave that to experts, engineers and architects employed by us, but they certainly say that it would be a great mistake to fritter away a great deal of money paid out here in compensation, without having anything done to show for it, and in view of past experience in other cities, I think the City would be foolish to allow the opportunity to pass to improve conditions at any rate in one portion of the City.

Now, when in Ottawa, I had an interview with the Prime Minister and Mr. McLean, and the Prime Minister thought the matter was so important, that he called a special meeting of the Council at 12 o'clock on Wednesday last. At his request I reviewed the situation since the disaster, and the methods taken to relieve the situation, and forecasted the policy of the Commission on the lines I have suggested. The proposals of the Commission were received by the members of the Government with unanimous approval, that referred to the losses and capital in the proper building operations and said that if owing to war conditions on the one hand, by reason of which materials cost more and labor was higher, and if by reason of the conditions in Halifax, on the other hand, the necessity was present to immediately relieve the situation, the ex-

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tra amount of money that would be required, should not, under the circumstances, be considered.

Now I want to say to you that this map back of you, Mr. Mayor, was exhibited by me on that occasion. It was prepared by Mr. Charles Bell and shows the amount of property in Halifax not assessed. The red portions indicate property owned by the Dominion and Provincial Governments and you will see that on the whole water front there on the east side of the harbor we have one-third not assessed for taxation. Some time ago we asked Mr. Bell to furnish us with copies of this plan and when I was there this time, I took occasion to exhibit that plan before the whole Cabinet. I told them that was the situation in Halifax. This should be a national port. Halifax tax rate is \$2.54. I said "Is this fair?"

We have been discussing with the Minister of Militia and the Prime Minister, another difficulty, that is as to the separation of the North end of the City from the South end by Military property. We have always had in mind the possible extension of Albert Street through to North Brunswick Street, and it has been held up by the fact that there is military property there, and the Imperial authorities apparently never sell. And you know we are held up in the South end by Artillery Park which prevents the extension of Brunswick Street.

I have taken occasion since being Chairman of this Commission to call attention to this matter on several occasions. General Elliott had the matter in hand and on both occasions he has apparently been strongly in sympathy with the views of the citizens who think the thoroughfare should be opened. I think I am correct in saying that General Jackson of London is now here for the purpose of discussing the problem of military property in Halifax, and the matter is just ripe for public discussion. I do hope that something is to come out of this with General Jackson and that reports will be favorable from General Elliott.

The matter of the extension of this street of course is very important to the development of the north end, particularly Richmond. Anyone who looks at Richmond and knows it is very much handicapped by the fact that its streets are laid out at right angles in many cases up steep hills, and therefore the traffic up and down from Campbell Road to Gottingen Street is a continuous tax on the strength of the horses, animals and motors, so that if some way can be brought about and arrived at by which these grades can be ~~used~~ eased both going and coming, now is the time if at all.

You will observe that we have already called for bids on material for building purposes. You will be surprised to learn that our architects are rather of the opinion that the concrete can be used to great advantage on account of the nearness of the necessary material.

Ross and McDonald are our architects and are men of wide reputation. They were the architects of the and the buildings for the south-end terminals and Naval Department and apparently no matter what Government is in power in Ottawa, their position has been recognized. Mr. Ross is in town now. Being here, we were naturally brought into contact with him and that led to his being retained by the Commission. He has been also retained by to develop the housing scheme for workmen in connection with that large enterprise. So that these things should all give us confidence that he is a good man and knows what he is doing. At any rate, it is necessary for the Commission to put themselves into the hands of experts, and that we have done.

The Commission has had the valuable assistance of your City Engineer who worked day and night on behalf of the City through the Commission. His presence with us has helped very much. Through him we have always felt we have been in touch with the important executive part of the City and endeavoured in that way to work out ~~such~~ such problems as we had at this time, in harmony with the engineering department.

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Now under the Act that was passed at the last Session, we have power to define a devastated district. That does not mean we are to take over the City Government of that part; it only means that within that district there is to be a final authority. As I expressed to the Mayor before, and as I say to you now, there is not the slightest desire on the part of the Commission to do anything that is not in the interests of the City, and we expect your co-operation. The work is distinctly yours, of course, in a large measure and I suppose you have about all you can attend to in general City matters and we have all we can attend to in this matter. At the same time, I cannot see why there should not be the most absolute co-operation between us and the City in the work we are to undertake. If there are to be any changes made in the streets in the North end, I think they will be such changes as will commend themselves to your engineering Department and in fact to any person who will look at things from an engineering standpoint. If a person was to be located somewhere where we think it is in the general interest that the streets should be developed, it is an easy thing to say to him, "Here is a lot on the other side of the street that will suit you as well." If it does not suit him as well, we can pay him for it.

Mayor Hawkins - I think, Mr. Chairman, your remarks are all to the point, including the general plan that you laid out in making the changes in streets. Will your expenditure include the introduction of water and new sewerage and sewer connections?

T. S. Rogers - I do not think, to any extent. The present water and sewer will be not affected at all. If we build houses on a street where there is no sewer, we would certainly have to make connection - that would be part of the undertaking.

Mayor Hawkins - You mean you would pay for it?

T.S. Rogers - Yes, but as between us and the City. If we do anything that is for the ultimate benefit of the City, of course the City will be expected to deal fairly with us in that regard; for instance, if we supply you with a public square at our cost in place of one that you now have, you would not expect or want to keep the one you have got and make us spend money on the other?

Mayor Hawkins - You mean in the devastated area? There are certain areas held by the City - there is a square above Richmond Street. You mean if you supply space somewhere else, you would want that? I think that is a perfectly reasonable request.

T.S. Rogers - I would say to you that any question relating to water and sewers or any question of importance as between the City Council and this Commission on which we might disagree, I want right now to say that I would be quite willing to leave it to a board of arbitrators on which you should occupy one seat, myself or my colleagues one seat and we two to choose a third. I say that just to reassure the Council. It would not be fair, for instance, we laid out a street and put water and sewerage, to hand it over to you when you are getting your money out of it by taxation.

Mayor Hawkins - If you took over streets or other lands that we own there now? You can look on Mulgrave Park as belonging to the City. If you took it as a residential or other district and gave us some other place, don't you think that would be reasonable?

T.S. Rogers - Anything like that we would leave to a board of arbitration consisting of the Mayor, the Chairman of the Commission and any person they might agree to or any person named by the Chief Justice or Prime Minister or both.

Mayor Hawkins - Referring again to the question of rebuilding the houses. You mention that the policy was that residents of Richmond could get an adjustment of his claims if he bought a house in another district. Have you dealt with them the other way? Made arrangements with any number yet to re-build their houses.

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T. S. Rogers - We have deferred a lot of them and have dealt with over one hundred of them already.

Mayor Hawkins - The reason I ask is that several of them have come to me. A concrete case - A lady, a widow, lived at 61 Bloomfield Street and now lives at #7 Luncey Lane; has a son overseas and a son and daughter married on whom she cannot depend in any way. Her house was wrecked and she says, condemned. She was sent to see Mr. Clarke. He told her he did not know what the Commission intended to do. She got a contractor, a Mr. Josey, who is, I know, a good man. He gave her a figure of \$1450 for rebuilding her house. She was offered, I think, \$1300 by you people. When she put in her contractor's bill of \$1450, Mr. Clarke said "What do you say if we give you \$1450 and take your land." Now why should you take her land? Her lot is 25 x 100. She has no-one she can go to, and of course she comes to the Mayor. I have complaints coming in every day. She is anxious to get her house built back there. She is paying rent somewhere. Why should she be compelled to pay rent out of her own pocket?

T. S. Rogers - The question of rent is a very wide question. I will tell you how we are dealing with it in a large number of cases. From the first we have laid down the principle that we could not pay what is known as indirect damages, which would be the case of this woman, in the fact that she had lost the use or rent of her house during the time elapsing between Dec. 6th and this date. You see what an enormous tax it would be on our funds if we paid everybody.

Mayor Hawkins - I understood that Sir Robert Borden said such claims should be paid up to \$5000

T. S. Rogers - He stated distinctly that this was at the discretion of the Commission, and also stated that all indirect damages should not be paid.

Mayor Hawkins - Is this indirect damages?

T. S. Rogers - Yes, by reason of the destruction of her property she has lost the rent of it. That is an indirect damage.

Mayor Hawkins - If she did not happen to have this son overseas, from whom she is getting separation allowance, she would have to go to the poor house.

T. S. Rogers - Not at all - Then we would look after her through the Rehabilitation. Everyone suffering that way has been made a cash allowance.

Mayor Hawkins - Her separation allowance hardly pays her bills.

T. S. Rogers - Did this woman ever make any claim on the Commission for an allowance?

Mayor Hawkins - Yes.

T. S. Rogers - Was it refused

Mayor Hawkins - Yes.

T. S. Rogers - If she made a claim and it was investigated and refused, there must have been good reason for doing so. There has never been a case of real need turned away from this building.

Mayor Hawkins - Why should she be told that it was not known what the Commission would do?

T. S. Rogers - How long ago was she here?

Mayor Hawkins - I do not exactly know.

T. S. Rogers - That is just the point; if she came in to-day, she would be told.

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Mayor Hawkins - There is another case where a house was totally destroyed and the allowance was \$1300. I know the house could not be built for twice that. The woman was told that was all she could get. They are quite willing to allow the Commission to rebuild the house. Would you build her a \$1300 house or a house with the same room and air space as was in the original house?

T.S. Rogers - How would you deal yourself with that case?

Mayor Hawkins - Houses that were assessed up there for small cost, could not be constructed for twice that price.

T.S. Rogers - You would not ask us to pay the money. You mean, why should not we build the houses as they were? We hope that if we rebuild these houses we shall rebuild them much more artistically. We are waiting for architects' estimates.

Mayor Hawkins - I think if you were to tell the people you would build them houses as good as they had, giving them the same rooms they would be satisfied.

T.S. Rogers - You do not want to see any of those square boxes of houses built in the City again. You would rather persuade them to take a more beautiful house, even if the air space were smaller.

Mayor Hawkins - A lot of those houses were not much to look at outside, but they were comfortable inside. If the Commission is going to do that, I think it is very nice, but they should not make the poor people pay for it. They ought to be given to understand that. The people are treated superciliously by certain people, and told to get out. Sometimes they lapse into tears and they are ordered out.

T.S. Rogers - As far as the Commission is concerned, we have tried to select the best men we could get for services of that kind, but there is sure to be a slip-up occasionally. On the other hand, women-folk are pretty hard to satisfy.

Judge Wallace - I think the Mayor is right. The people should be taken into our confidence as soon as possible. As soon as possible they will be told fully and frankly and I think they will be satisfied. I was not aware that this conference was arranged for, and some other engagement was made for me at 4 o'clock, and I shall have to withdraw.

Mayor Hawkins - Is there any other matter you wish to bring up?

Controller Finlay - I was going to ask Mr. Chairman, how soon will it be before you let the people know about the diverting of these streets and where they shall or shall not build. A man came to my house yesterday who owns a property on the west side of Gottingen Street, and is anxious to prepare to build. He thought he would begin to rebuild by filling in in his own time.

T.S. Rogers - That problem of the west side of Gottingen Street is a very difficult one. I would like the view of the City Council as to what they would like us to do. Would you like to make regulations as to the style of house that should be built? Are you issuing permits to make repairs in the Merkersfield district?

Controller Finlay - No. This man is anxious to make improvements in his house. I just thought I would ask this question to-day. The Mayor will have more to say about the Merkersfield district.

Alderman Godwin - Mr. Chairman, there is only one thing that I would like to mention and that is in connection with the Appraisal Board. I personally think the Appraisal Board are not an appraisal Board. I believe that their hands are tied with certain rules and regulations and there are a good many more like myself. One instance was that of a seven room house with modern plumbing and in perfect order. There was a four roomed house next door to it with about \$25

worth of plumbing. They grouped these two together and appraised them at a value of \$1500. You could not build the two of them for twice \$1500.

T.S. Rogers - Probably you could not have got more than \$1500 for them before the explosion.

Ald. Godwin - They were not for sale previous to Dec. 6th.

T.S. Rogers - The only way to do is to establish a board of appraisal of as good men as you can get, and if you can name me five men more qualified than the ones we have - we thought we were doing the best we could.

Ald. Godwin - But I venture to say that outside of Mr. McKenzie, and almost including McKenzie, the appraisements were made on those houses and none of them saw them.

T.S. Rogers - We have particulars of all the houses in the district.

Ald. Godwin - I venture to say that the hands of the appraisal board are tied.

T.S. Rogers - What do you mean?

Ald. Godwin - They have certain rules and regulations to go by rather than the appraisal of the building.

T.S. Rogers - If that is so, I never heard of it before. The fact of the matter is that the Appraisal Board has our instructions to do absolute justice as far as it is possible to do it. The general theory of appraisal must be on the basis of market value at the time of the disaster. When we come to rebuild for them we expect that we will give them something better than the sum of money to his credit, stands for.

Ald. Godwin - I know of cases where you put in bathrooms where no bathrooms were in before.

T.S. Rogers - You know of cases in which we put in bathrooms where there were no bathrooms in before?

Ald. Godwin - Yes.

T.S. Rogers - Where was it? What is the name?

Ald. Godwin - I do not care to tell the name, but Judge Wallace knows. They never had \$25 worth of plumbing in them before. Those are facts.

Mayor Hawking - We have to take some precedent in the City on the smallpox situation, and we are inclined to put it up to the Commission. We have a report here from the Health Board on this matter. We think that it was brought in here by your Reconstruction men.

T.S. Rogers - Breakfield and Foley Bros. bring in thousands of men in connection with the terminals, and if smallpox comes from them, do you put the bills up to them to pay.

Mayor Hawking - If I had been Mayor they would have done so.

L. F. Monaghan - We always charge the Military authorities.

T. S. Rogers - That is another thing.

T.S. Rogers - There is smallpox all over Nova Scotia.

Mayor Hawkins - I had a telegram from the Governor of Prince Edward Island. They have smallpox there and think it came from Halifax. What if we have an epidemic? Halifax may be quarantined from the province and dominion.

T.S. Rogers - An explosion occurs in Halifax, and you have to telegraph men to come and come quickly.

Mayor Hawkins - Contractors make arrangements in a case of that kind.

T.S. Rogers - We will do that. As far as I am concerned, we cannot accept the liability for smallpox in the City even if it did start from reconstruction men, but we took the earliest steps to meet the situation. We prepared and equipped the original hospital in order to meet any possible situation, before smallpox broke out at all. When it comes to a show-down, and we cannot agree about that, we will bring it to a board of arbitration.

R.P. Bell - We wrote the City on May 12th as follows-

Cont. Finlay - As regards this, Dr. McKay said the money was altogether out of proportion to what we want. For instance, the plumbing was supposed to cost \$1800.

T.S. Rogers - There was one formerly that would cost a lot. Mr. Craig tells us now that the plumbing would not cost over \$700. Have you seen this plan, Mr. Johnston?

H.W. Johnston - No; it was prepared by an assistant in my office. There is a suggestion that the Mayor did not bring up. Why cannot Lawlor's Island be used? It was built for smallpox cases, and why cannot the City take advantage of it?

Cont. Finlay - We have permission from the Government to use it if necessary.

Mayor Hawkins - We cannot make any arrangements about Lawlor's Island. It has been suggested that we take Caviochi & P gano's camps.

Cont. Finlay - The best solution is to go to Lawlor's Island. The government have given permission.

Mayor Hawkins - When is it the intention to build the houses?

T.S. Rogers - They are all to be done at the same time.

Mayor Hawkins - Don't you think the former owners should have their houses done up first? I would urge that.

T.S. Rogers - Alright, we shall take that into consideration. That will be for Mr. Ross. He will be here tomorrow and we can discuss that with him. We have been delayed in the first place on account of legislation and in the second place because these matters take time.

Cont. Finlay - I would like to be a little clearer about Merksfield. If we could just tell people what you are going to do, they could make their plans. How long will it be before we know?

T.S. Rogers - That depends on whether or not we include Gottingen Street in the devastated area.

Mayor Hawkins - We should ~~not~~ control the rebuilding there. I do not see the sense of controlling any part of it if you do not include that.

T.S. Rogers - We might confine our efforts to the eastern slope.

Mayor Hawkins - If you are not going to take that, the City should get busy and there should be some supervision of it.

T.S. Rogers - There is supervision now - the engineer is not giving permits for it.

Mayor Hawkins - They should never perpetuate the conditions that were there before.

H.W. Johnston - I think it is a good opportunity to urge upon the Chairman that he include that in the devastated area.

T.S. Rogers - I would suggest that the City take charge of this portion of the area.

Cont. Finlay - If you provide the funds.

Mayor Hawkins - Settle with the people on a generous, not a niggardly basis.

T.S. Rogers - We will work together on that. You must not tell the people we are not paying them what they are entitled to until you see what we are going to give them.

Mayor Hawkins - One has certainly a general idea of what is fair.

T.S. Rogers - So have those five men and they have more experience than you or I.

Mayor Hawkins - Those five men are officials of the Commission, and how free a hand have they?

T.S. Rogers - An absolutely free hand. They are bound down by all the evidence that is available to them.

Mayor Hawkins - They talk to these people that come to them as tho their hands are tied with respect to what they should do.

T.S. Rogers - When a man comes in and says his house is worth \$8000, they cannot say "Here is \$8000 for you." We must know all the facts and by them they are governed. It does not satisfy a good many because you know very well how hard most people are to satisfy.

Mayor Hawkins - You must recognize that this was their home and it was satisfactory to them. They spend their money on it and improve it in one way and another and when they come down and your appraisers say \$1300 is all they can get.

T.S. Rogers - You tell them that the Commission will give them all that is coming to them. Tell them to wait.

Mayor Hawkins - They have not always got very sympathetic treatment from the Commission.

Cont. Finlay - When will we receive cheque for \$2300 to pay accounts for emergency relief- and also what about the loan of \$20,000 we have applied for.

Mayor Hawkins

T.S. Rogers - At the present moment we can advance you \$10,000 and soon the balance.

Mayor Hawkins - That \$10,000 will not be enough. Are we going to get any more.

T.S. Rogers - We paid that \$2300 as relief and that is the end of it. It has to be audited as relief. The former finance committee would not pay that. They sent it back to the City.

L.F. Monaghan - The Commission asked us to consider that a final settlement and we still have about \$100 worth of bills.

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T.S. Rogers - Why were not they all sent at the same time? We wont pay those until they are certified correct by the City.

R.P. Bell - They should have come to us.

L.F. Monaghan-They were, and you sent them back.

T.S. Rogers -Some of them looked as tho they had not been authorized and our former finance committee would not pay them, but any bills that the City contraller certifies as correct, will be o.k'd and paid.

Cont. Finlay -The first money you loaned the City for school purposes and forwarded to the Board of Control was to be at 5%. There has been no change in that?

T.S. Rogers - 5% up to the time you got legislation - not permanently.

R.P. Bell - At that time the old Relief Committed said they would loan it until you were able to borrow by Legislation.

Cont. Finlay - We borrowed the \$25,000 from you under promise that it would be at 5%, with no talk about legislation or giving time or anything else.

T.S. Rogers - You have all you need from the Royal Bank.

Cont. Finlay- That is aparrrt from you altogether.

T.S. Rogers - How much will you want from us this summer.

Cont. Finlay - The statement has not been accurately compiled yet. The Bank will loan us at 6% for reconstruction.

T.S. Rogers - Any deposit of bonds ~~for~~ the Bank accepts, is satisfactory to us.

Cont. Finlay - The Bank tells me that if I can borrow from the Relief Commission, to do so, but I have arranged, and my report was made this morning to the Board of Control, to borrow up to \$275,000 at 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ % for general purposes for sewers, sidewalks, etc.

L.F. Monaghan- That \$2300 was made up to Feb. 21st and notwithstanding negotiations pending ever since, the other bills were not included.

Mayor Hawkins - When do you expect to start reconstruction?

T.S. Rogers - Mr. Ross will be here this week, we have called for tenders and ought to be under way soon.

Mayor Hawkins - Have you prepared plans.

T.S. Rogers - If we oan construct them here oheaply, the houses will probably be concrete block houses.

Cont. Finlay - The concrete blocks were a failure here at first.

T.S. Rogers - That may have been the fault of the construction, and has been overcome. If it can be done successfully, it will be done. Concrete work has been developing in the City a great deal.

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