

LACKAWANNA COUNTY LAND BANK
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 9, 2016

The regular meeting of the Lackawanna County Land Bank was held on September 9, 2016 in the Conference Room of the Commissioners' offices at 200 Adams Avenue in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

At 10:00 am Chairman O'Malley called the meeting to order and asked for all to join in the pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Roll Call was taken by Mr. George Kelly (member)
Commissioner O'Malley (Chairman) - Present
Henry Deecke – Present
Linda Aebli – Present
Marion Gatto – Present
Terrence McDonnell – Present
Steve Pitoniak – Excused Absence

Also present were Atty. Joseph Colbassani, Land Bank Legal Counsel, Ron Koldjeski, Director Tax Claim Office, and Ralph Pappas, Business Relations Manager, Department of Economic Development

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment at this time.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Deecke and seconded by Ms. Aebli to approve the minutes of the August 12, 2016 regular meeting as prepared.

All in Favor

PRESENTATION of VOUCHERS for EXAMINATION and APPROVAL

Mr. Kelly presented, for examination and approval, a listing of voucher expenditures for the month of September. There was one voucher. A check in amount of \$1,000.00 made payable to Atty. Colbassani for legal services.

Motion was made by Mrs. Gatto and seconded by Mr. Deecke to approve the voucher.

All in Favor

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Review of Property Acquisition/Disposition Process

Mr. Kelly started the discussion by explaining the different applications that the public would complete if they are interested in purchasing a property on the repository list. The forms will be on the website and the interested party would complete the form to start the process. Mr. Kelly then explained the land bank acquisition process using the handouts included in the board packets. He informed the board the plan is to place signs on all the repository properties. The signs would state that the property is available for purchase through the Lackawanna County Land Bank. The Tax Claim office contact information will also be included on the sign. That way if the interested party wanted to bid on the property they could work directly with the tax claim office. The board agreed that signage on each property is a good idea. Mr. Koldjeski questioned whether the land bank would take all the properties or just those where someone is interested in purchasing. The reason being that there could be some plotting done on some adjacent non-conforming lots to make them suitable for development. Mr. Koldjeski then gave some examples of how consolidating these properties can work. Mr. Kelly asked Mr. Koldjeski to give the land bank a list of non-conforming properties that he feels could be consolidated for development.

Mr. Koldjeski further reiterated his past statements that we must address the City's Pittsburgh plan. Mr. Kelly stated that he and Atty. Colbassani plan to meet with Atty. Jason Shrive, City Solicitor, and Wayne Beck, City Treasurer, to discuss the Pittsburgh plan and how to get those properties into the land bank. Mr. Kelly stated that in the future, Mr. Beck, will be part of these discussions as a member of the advisory committee. He would have been at this meeting but he had a prior commitment. The discussion continued regarding properties tied up in the Pittsburgh plan with Commissioner O'Malley stressing the importance of getting those properties into the Land Bank. Interested parties can then purchase the properties without a lot of red tape. Mr. McDonnell asked if there was a form that someone could submit if they had an interest in a certain property. Mr. Kelly explained the various applications the land bank will have available. Once the applications are submitted, the staff will research the property and follow up with the interested party who wants to purchase the property.

Mr. McDonnell questioned the issues of placing all the repository properties into the land bank. Mr. Kelly stated there would be liability and maintenance issues. Bob Timlin, from the Scranton Redevelopment Authority, was also present at the meeting. Mr. Koldjeski questioned Mr. Timlin about a loan the City took a few years ago and used the redevelopment authority as a catalyst to get the loan. Mr. Timlin stated the only property he knew was the DPW property. Mr. Koldjeski stated he feels there were numerous properties involved. Mr. Kelly stated he would like to sit down with Mr. Timlin and discuss the redevelopment properties and how to get them into the land bank. Commissioner O'Malley again stated the objective of the land bank is to be the catalyst to place properties back on the tax rolls.

Mr. Kelly stated the Department of Community Development has the staff to assist in the process. The plan is to have a photo taken of every property and place it on the website. Once someone shows an interest in a property, we will do our due diligence to get it into the land bank for eventual disposition to the interested party. Mr. Kelly continued by reviewing the acquisition and disposition flow charts within their board packets as well as the draft copies of the various applications. He also reviewed in detail the property donation process. If the board has any comments regarding the applications, he requested they send them to Ralph Pappas.

Notification to taxing bodies prior to Land Bank property(s) acquisition

Mr. Kelly stated that this would be more in line with property donations. If the property is free and clear with no tax liens or municipal claims and has potential for development, the land bank would acquire it. If there are any liens on the property, we would talk to the taxing body to see if they are willing to waive the claims. If not, the property owner would have to settle all claims with the taxing bodies before we would take the property into the land bank. As a courtesy to the taxing bodies, we will make them aware of the properties we are taking into the land bank.

Advertising of property(s) prior to Land Bank acquisition

Mr. Kelly stated the land bank will publish the property after we take title to a property.

Scranton Advisory Committee Update

Mrs. Aebli raised the question of the role of the advisory committee. Mr. Kelly explained that we would meet with the group and discuss the properties that they feel should be acquired by the land bank. He stated advisory board should consist of people who have a vested interest in the highest and best use of a property. Mrs. Aebli stated the Mayor appointed City Treasurer Wayne Beck to the advisory board. Councilmen Pat Rogan, as Chairman of City Council's Community Development committee, will be on the advisory board as well. She also received a request from Lisa Durkin, COO of United Neighborhood Services and she will be another member of the advisory committee. Mrs. Aebli asked about a contact at the school district. She was advised to contact either the School Board President or Virginia Orr, the School Board Secretary. Mr. Kelly also mentioned Jesse Ergott, who previously stated he would like to be part of the advisory committee. Mrs. Aebli also stated she feel someone from the city's Licensing, Inspections and Permits department should be on the committee. She will have more details for the next meeting. Mrs. Aebli asked if the Mayor would approve the members of the advisory committee or will the land bank approve the members. She was advised to send a letter to the land bank board stating the names of appointed advisory committee members.

ACTION ITEMS

Resolution #16-008 agreeing not to acquire tax sale property prior to the Tax Claim Bureau's judicial sale process

The board discussed in detail the pros and cons of acquiring a tax sale property prior to the tax claim bureau's judicial sale. It was suggested by Mr. Koldjeski to add the phrase "as declared absolute" to the resolution. After some additional discussion, a motion was made by Mrs. Gatto and seconded by Mrs. Aebli to table this resolution for further study.

All in Favor

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Bob Timlin-Scranton Redevelopment Authority

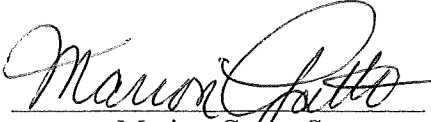
Mr. Timlin stated the Scranton Redevelopment Authority supports the land bank 100%. Mr. Kelly stated we would like to meet with Mr. Timlin and discuss how we can work together and get some there properties into the land bank. Mr. Koldjeski raised the issue of some requirements involved when purchasing redevelopment property. Mr. Timlin responded that would have to be discussed with their legal department.

Jennifer Spiller-NeighborWorks

Ms. Spiller stated she was happy to hear about the signage that will be placed on the properties. NeighborWorks has started to do some research on some of the repository properties and feel they will be able to make some recommendations as to the highest and best use of certain properties. She stated they are also working with the Institute at Wilkes College on getting some vacancy data that may be of benefit to land bank in the future.

ADJOURNMENT

As all business had been conducted, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Deecke with a second by Mrs. Gatto. The motion carried.


Marion Gatto, Secretary