

**LACKAWANNA COUNTY LAND BANK  
REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING MINUTES  
April 12, 2019**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Lackawanna County Land Bank was held on Friday, April 12, 2019 in the Commissioners' Conference Room, 123 Wyoming Avenue, Fifth Floor, Lackawanna County Government Center, Scranton, Pennsylvania.

At 10:00 AM Chairman Patrick O'Malley called the meeting to order and all joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

Roll Call was taken by Commissioner Patrick O'Malley (Chairman) – Present  
George Kelly-Excused  
Henry Deecke - Excused  
Wayne Beck – Present  
Marion Gatto – Present  
Terrence McDonnell – Present  
Steve Pitoniak – Excused

Also present were Atty. Joseph Colbassani, Land Bank Legal Counsel, Ralph Pappas, Business Relations Manager, Jesse Ergott, Advisory Committee Spokesperson and Barbara Arens, Administrative Assistant.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS BOARD (AGENDA ITEMS ONLY)**

There were no comments made at this time.

**PRESENTATION OF MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

A Motion was made by Marion Gatto and seconded by Terrence McDonnell to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2019 meeting as prepared and presented.

**All in Favor**

**PRESENTATION OF VOUCHERS FOR EXAMINATION AND APPROVAL**

A Motion was made by Marion Gatto and seconded by Wayne Beck to approve voucher expenditures of March 8, 2019 through April 12, 2019, as presented.

**All in Favor**

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **New Interest /Land Bank- Dunmore, Old Forge, Throop**

Terrence McDonnell stated that the Dunmore Council is on board with joining the Land Bank. We are still waiting for the School Board to act on it. Hopefully, it should be done soon. Regarding Old Forge, the Council has approved the resolution to join and it is just a matter of the getting the School Board to approve the resolution. Regarding Throop, the solicitor, Attorney Cimini, requested more information from Mr. Pappas. Atty. Cimini is very positive that the resolution will go before Council soon. The Mid-Valley School District is already on board. C. J. Mustachio, Olyphant Borough Manager, has been given information on the Land Bank. To date we have not heard back. Olyphant a few tax delinquent properties.

### **1445 Meylert Avenue Update**

Mr. Pappas stated that they are still completing the Phase II environmental assessments on this property. There are no results yet.

### **Ontario Street Property/Fell Township**

The Land Bank is now in possession of this property. The Land Bank is working with the Township on the demolition specifications. The Land Bank is contributing \$20,000 towards demolition of the property. Mr. Pappas will call the Township Supervisor to find out if the building is secure and to make sure that the front door is at least closed and locked. The Land Bank would like to get a salvage company into the property before the demolition.

### **Blight Task Force Update**

Todd Pousley, NeighborWorks Neighborhood Revitalization Manager, addressed the board regarding the Blight Task Force. Members have met twice so far this year to finalize the action plan and the steps to be taken for the remainder of the calendar year. After completion of the action plan, the recommendations will be presented to the municipalities and hopefully implemented. He stated the team already had two good early wins. The first being a new process with the Tax Claim Bureau to vet and disqualify bidders at tax sales. At the most recent tax sale in March, the tax claim bureau was able to get a list of winning bidders to all the municipalities. This gives them an opportunity to look at the list and make sure the bidders are not delinquent on any fees or taxes. They can also check to see if their current properties are in compliance. If such a bidder was found to have these issues, a petition could be filed to have that bid disqualified.

### **Bid Openings/if Necessary**

There were no property purchase bids received prior to this meeting. There are currently 102 properties in the Land Bank and with the five being added today, the total will be 107.

### **Advisory Committee Discussion**

608 Mineral Avenue, Scranton - An application was received from John Litwinsky. Mr. Litwinsky is an adjacent property owner and would like to purchase the property. Recommendation of the Advisory Committee is to accept the side lot application.

2018 Edna Avenue, Scranton – An application was received from Robin and Don Hallock. They own the adjacent property and reside across the street from this property. Recommendation of the Advisory Committee is to accept the side lot application.

438-440 South Main Avenue, Scranton - Kevin and Tracey Mitchell submitted a side application to purchase this property. They currently own the adjacent property at 436 South Main Avenue. Recommendation of the Advisory Committee is to accept the side lot application.

100 Blk of North Keyser Avenue, Scranton - Keyser Valley Community Center is owned by the City of Scranton and there is a long standing water drainage problem. Commissioner O'Malley explained when Keyser Avenue was re-crowned there was supposed to be a water basin installed by PennDOT. It was not done. The City has approached the Land Bank about having this adjacent property transferred from the Tax Claim repository to the Land Bank and then conveying it to the City. The County Grant Manager submitted a grant application on behalf of the Keyser Valley Neighborhood Association. That grant was approved. The plan is to fix the drainage problem and also pave the parking lot including this additional lot. The Advisory Committee is definitely in favor of this project

314 New York Street, Scranton – Side Lot – The Land Bank already owns this property. Recommendation of the Committee is to accept this side lot application.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **PROPERTY ACQUISITION – Scranton**

**Resolution No. 19-011** – Approving the Acquisition of Additional Property from the Tax Claim Office Repository List of Unsold Property – A Motion was made by Marion Gatto and seconded by Terrence McDonnell.

**All in Favor**

### **PROPERTY DISPOSITIONS**

**Resolution No. 19-012** – Approving the Conveyance of Certain Land Bank Owned Property Under the Land Bank Side Lot Program – A Motion was made by Terrence McDonnell and seconded by Marion Gatto

**All in Favor**

## **BLIGHT TO BRIGHT GRANT UPDATE**

**Resolution No. 19-013** – Ratifying the Cooperation Agreement with the Lackawanna County Redevelopment Authority for the Land Bank's Administration of the Blight to Bright Grant - Discussion: The County applied for and was approved for this grant. Back in November, to keep the Blight to Bright money separate from the LSA Grant, the Grants Manager was requested to ask the Commonwealth Finance Agency to have the Lackawanna County Redevelopment Authority assigned oversight of the Blight to Bright grant. The Commonwealth approved this assignment but wanted a Cooperation Agreement between the Redevelopment Authority and the Land Bank. A Motion was made by Terrence McDonnell and seconded by Marion Gatto.

**All in Favor**

### **PROPERTY DONATION REQUEST – Mayfield Borough (Previously Tabled)**

**Resolution No. 19-007** – Approving the Donation of Property to the Lackawanna County Land Bank – Discussion: At the last meeting, the Board tabled the approval of the donation because of possible contamination of the property. The owner of the property produced a letter from the DEP stating that they, the DEP, felt it was safe. However, the Lackawanna County engineer, Gary Cavill, felt that you just never know with these underground tanks. There could be gasoline migration under the ground after all these years. Ralph Pappas spoke to the owner and instead of the Land Bank getting involved, he asked the owner if he would be interested in donating the property to the Borough. After consideration, the owner is going to donate the property to the Borough. There is a structure on the property. The Land Bank will be contributing twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) from the LSA grant for demolition of the building. Anything over and above the twenty thousand will be the responsibility of the Borough. A Motion to Not Accept this Donation was made by Marion Gatto and seconded by Terrence McDonnell

**All in Favor**

**ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION**

Jesse Ergott, NeighborWorks NEPA CEO, spoke about the accomplishments of the Land Bank hitting the 100 property mark. He spoke about the possibility of the Land Bank having Teri Ooms, Executive Director at The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development, conduct a follow-up on an earlier study. Her group did a study early on about the effects of blight and the cost of blight to a community in terms of lost tax revenue and quality of life issues. NeighborWorks could facilitate Ms. Ooms coming back to speak of what value the sale of these 100 properties had on the neighborhoods. We want to make sure people are aware of the value of what's happening in their neighborhoods.

Mr. Ergott also spoke of possibly looking at targeting some of the blighted vacant properties the Land Bank already owns and also properties that the Land Bank is looking at in key neighborhoods. Even just cleaning up the properties and stabilizing them. They could do some demonstration projects, even if it's only landscaping, drainage projects and beautification. We would need the cooperation of the City. He stated we are not going to get interest in some of these properties until you clean them up. The Land Bank owns some of these properties.

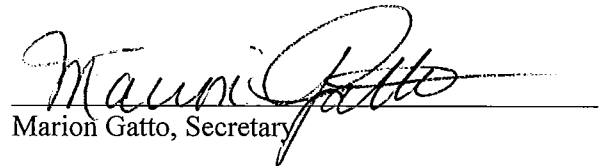
**OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD:**

None at this time

**ADJOURNMENT** – A Motion to adjourn was made by Terrence McDonnell seconded by Marion Gatto.

**All in Favor**

Next Meeting: Friday, May 10, 2019

  
Marion Gatto, Secretary

Prepared by Barbara Arens