

**LACKAWANNA COUNTY LAND BANK  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
February 10, 2017**

The regular meeting of the Lackawanna County Land Bank was held on February 10, 2017 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 – Present

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

None at this time.

**MINUTES**

A motion was made by Mr. Deecke and seconded by Mrs. Aebli to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2017 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 months of January 6, 2017 through February 10, 2017. There were two vouchers. A check in the amount of \$1,000.00 made payable to Atty. Colbassani for legal services. A check in the amount \$975.00 made payable to the Jaworski Sign Company for the "For Sale" signs for the land bank properties.

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

All in Favor

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **a) First Round of Property Acquisition Update**

Mr. Kelly explained that the land bank has applications of interest for 26 of the 100 properties being acquired by the land bank. Eleven (11) of the applications are for side lots and nine (9) for Community Development. The majority of those are from NeighborWorks. NeighborWorks wants to acquire and develop the properties in different areas of Scranton. The Hill Neighborhood Association is also interested in some properties. There is also an application for the commercial property on Meylert Avenue.

### **b) Scranton Advisory Committee Update**

Mrs. Aebli stated that the advisory committee met that morning at 9:00AM. The advisory committee considered the first 26 properties on the list that Mr. Kelly referred to previously. She explained that Neighborworks would like to purchase nine properties. However, they do not want to purchase these properties until they have grant money available. The Hill Neighborhood Association is interested in five (5) properties. The advisory committee felt they needed more information from the HNA regarding their plans for the properties. A local developer is also interested in one of the properties that the HNA has shown an interest. That developer is purchasing the adjacent structure and would like to extend the property. The advisory board recommended we reach out to the developer for more information. The advisory board also recommended the land bank staff reach out to the developer of the Lace Company who has shown an interest in the Meylert Avenue. The recommended price for that property is \$10,000. However, Mrs. Aebli recommended that the land Bank not to sell any property with a demolition liens until city's CDBG office gets an answer from HUD regarding extinguishment of the liens. Mr. Kelly explained that we are just worried that HUD may require the City to pay back the demolition liens. He stated that we will take the property, but just make sure it is clear of the liens before we sell it. Mrs. Aebli also stated she would send an email notifying the Board and staff of all the properties that have demolition liens. Mr. Kelly further explained that the properties that the non-profits have shown an interest will be leased to them for a dollar a year. Their agreement will include a clause stating that if they don't maintain or abide by the lease, the lease will be terminated.

Mr. Koldjeski questioned the \$10,000 price for the Meylert Avenue property and asked if it was arrived at through an appraisal. Mr. Kelly explained that was price that the advisory committee arrived at because of the size of the property. The discussion continued regarding the Meylert Street property and

the possibility of selling it at a lower price due to the environmental issues on the property.

Mr. Koldjeski informed the Board that he has repository bids on two of the properties on the initial acquisition list. The two properties are located at 198 Wilbur Street and 206 Wilbur Street. He requested his solicitor take those two properties off the initial land bank acquisition list.

Mr. Kelly asked Atty. Colbassani about the status of acquisition process. Atty. Colbassani informed the board he has reviewed the first 42 deeds. He had minor issues on 2 of them. He will be addressing those issues. Mr. Kelly then reviewed the process moving forward. He stated that Mr. Koldjeski will sign as the Tax Claim Director, then Mauri Kelly will certify the deeds. Atty. Colbassani will then sign to certify the address of the grantee. Mr. Kelly then stated that after we acquire the properties, we could do a bulk action to quiet title. Mr. Koldjeski agreed with Mr. Kelly regarding a bulk action to quiet title on the properties. Mr. Koldjeski also informed the board and staff that he has requested his title searches from the attorney's that have completed the title searches for his office. He will provide the land bank staff with those searches when he receives them.

Mr. Koldjeski then addressed the board regarding a property in Taylor that the owner would like to donate to the Land Bank. The property is on the west mountain and contains approximately 110 acres. It may have some environmental issues. The discussion continued about the possibility of taking this property into the land bank and addressing the environmental issues through the Brownfield grant. However, the land bank would have to enter into a Cooperation Agreement with the Borough of Taylor and the Riverside School District before any action can move forward.

**c) Liability Insurance for Land Bank Properties**

Atty. Colbassani explained that he spoke with Rick Jones, the County's insurance risk manager, regarding liability insurance for the land bank properties. Mr. Jones told him he would be adding the Land Bank to the County's general liability policy as an additional insured. Mr. Jones will be getting the written confirmation to Mr. Pappas within a day or two.

**d) Land Bank Website**

Mr. Kelly stated that he has requested Mr. Pitoniak to assist with the website. Mr. Pitoniak has recently worked on the website for the Metropolitan Planning Organization. Mr. Pappas stated the staff will be meeting with Chris Speicher next week. Mr. Speicher is a business teacher at Marywood University. He has an intern that will help construct the website. Mr. Kelly explained we did have an estimate of \$11,000 to construct the website. However, we took the recommendations of some of the board members and the public to reach out to the local colleges for assistance.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

Resolution NO. 17-002 Amendment No. 1 of the Land Bank By-Laws with respect to Article III, Section 1, "Annual Meeting"

A motion was made by Mrs. Gatto and seconded by Mr. McDonnell to approve Resolution # 17-002.

All in Favor

## **ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR THE YEAR 2017**

Mr. Kelly explained the previous resolution, Resolution NO. 17-002, changed the time of the reorganization meeting on the second Friday in January from 1:00 PM to 10:00 AM. It will also be held during the regular meeting scheduled for that day. However, the reorganization did not take place at the meeting in January. Therefore, the election of officers will be held today.

Mr. Kelly announced the current names and positions of the current office holders. Mr. Deecke made a motion to keep the officers in the same positions as 2016. The motion was seconded by Mr. Pitoniak.

All in Favor

Mrs. Gatto then cast the vote to elect the slate.

The officers are as follows: Commissioner Patrick O'Malley -Chairman  
Terrence McDonnell – Vice Chairman  
Linda Aebli – Treasurer  
Marion Gatto – Secretary

## **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION**

Mr. McDonnell asked how close we are to getting the deeds into the land bank and then selling them to the interested parties. Mr. Kelly then outlined the process going forward. The discussion continued regarding when the last time property taxes were paid on the some of the repository properties. Mr. Koldjeski explained he knows taxes were not paid on some of properties since 1993.

Also discussed were properties that were taken by the City as part of a flood mitigation grant program. It is understood these properties cannot be sold but must remain as open space. The board requested Mr. Pappas check to see if these properties can be leased.

Commissioner O'Malley requested Atty. Colbassani reach out to Atty. John Minora regarding a property on Farr Street owned by the Scranton School District.

Mr. Koldjeski also spoke about another property owned by the City at the corner of Parker Street and Hollister Avenue. Apparently, a wall surrounding the property is in poor condition. The neighbors are concerned about the wall failing and collapsing into their properties.

Mr. Kelly mentioned a property that Wells Fargo Bank wanted to donate. Jesse Ergott, who was present during the meeting, stated Neighborworks has applied for it.

Mr. Koldjeski made the suggestion to Atty. Colbassani that he could contact Mauri Kelly beforehand and have all the certification pages signed in advance.

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

None at this time

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

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Marion Gatto, Secretary

Prepared by Ralph Pappas