

**LACKAWANNA COUNTY LAND BANK
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
April 8, 2016**

Due to scheduling conflict regarding the Commissioners conference room the regular meeting of the Lackawanna County Land Bank was held on April 8, 2016 in the Conference Room of the Department of Planning and Economic Development offices at 135 Jefferson Avenue in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

At 10:05 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, Director, Tax Claim Bureau and Ralph Pappas, Business Relations Manager, Department of Economic Development

MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Pitoniak and seconded by Ms. Aebli to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2016 regular meeting as prepared.

All in Favor

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment at this time.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement

Mr. Kelly explained that in order for the Land Bank to start acquiring properties the intergovernmental cooperation agreement has to be executed by all three

taxing bodies, meaning the County, the School District and the City. Mr. Kelly informed the board since the last land bank meeting, he met with Linda Aebli, City Solicitor Jason Shrive and Atty. Joseph Colbassani, land bank solicitor, to discuss the intergovernmental cooperation agreement. Mr. Kelly then introduced Atty. Colbassani to the board. Atty. Colbassani briefed the board on his legal background and stated he is looking forward to working with them. He stated that he has been doing some research on land banks and has been in touch with staff of other regional land banks. Mr. Kelly then explained all representatives at the meeting were in agreement with most of the language in the intergovernmental cooperation agreement. However, two issues were brought up. The first issue was maintenance of the property to continue at the local municipal level. Atty. Shrive had proposed that all three taxing bodies share in the maintenance of the land bank properties. After further discussion of this issue, it was agreed that maintenance of the properties would remain with the municipality. The other issue brought up at the meeting was the transfer of property to a non-profit agency. The concern is that if a property is turned over to a non-profit agency and the non-profit agency ceases operation for any reason and the property is not maintained or developed as stated in the deed. What happens to the property? All agreed that it was a good question. Mr. Koldjeski brought up the example of the Hill Neighborhood Association who plans on acquiring properties in the Hill section of the city from the land bank. After some discussion, it was agreed that a reversionary clause or a covenant would have to be included in all deeds stating that if the property owner did not follow the terms of the deed, the property would revert back to the land bank. Mr. Kelly then explained a program of the non-profit group NeighborWorks. They will take a property and rehab it and put it back on the market for first time homebuyers or for people who do not have an opportunity to buy a house. Mr. Kelly stated the land bank is not against working with non-profits as long as they have an active plan to get the property back on the tax rolls.

Mr. Koldjeski also informed the board that he and Commissioner O'Malley plan on meeting with the city next week to discuss some properties in the city that may be condemned but are still structurally sound. Mr. Koldjeski explained a few alternate plans they will be discussing regarding these properties. Mr. Kelly brought up another issue that needs to be addressed. The issue being that the City is not collecting taxes though the county's tax sale.

b) Solicitor comment regarding review of By-Laws and Policies and Procedures

Commissioner O'Malley asked Atty. Colbassani about the By-Laws. Atty. Colbasanni stated he is good with the form and legalities of the by-laws and policies and procedures but wanted to add some ethical obligations for the land bank board and staff. They would be separate from the by-laws. He requested if someone has a conflict of interest policy within their department to get it to him

for his review. He would use that as a guide to develop a conflict of interest policy for the land bank

c) Land Bank Website

Commissioner O'Malley asked about the next agenda item, the land bank website. Mr. Kelly stated that attempts were made to get the land bank added to Legistar, the County's legislative research tool. This is where you locate the County agenda's, minutes and supporting documents. The land bank was added but they can't seem to get the agenda process to work. We wanted to get this completed as soon as possible while we work on a permanent website. Mr. Kelly explained that the plan for the permanent website is to solicit a request for services from a few companies. Companies will be asked to come in and demonstrate and give us a bid on creating the website. They would also instruct the staff on how to manage the website. Mr. Pitoniak reported on some of the proposal information that the Luzerne Lackawanna County MPO received on their proposed website. Mr. Kelly stated after the land bank proposals are received they will be presented to the board for approval.

Opportunity for the public to address the Board.

Jesse Ergott from NeighborWorks thanked and commended the board for the progress that has been made since the initial meeting. His organization as well as other community developers see future opportunities in the Land Bank's work. Eventually, they would like to have a say or some input into on how the disposition process works. Mr. Kelly stated it would be important for the organization to have a plan for the land bank properties and present it to the board.

Lisa Durkin COO from United Neighborhood Centers stated she is the current chair of the Lackawanna County Housing Coalition. Their organization has included land bank and how to use it as a tool as part of their goals for the year. She wanted to make the board aware that they are having conversations regarding the land bank at their meetings as well. Mr. Kelly asked if the housing coalition would like someone from the land bank board of their board as well. He then stated he would be looking for volunteers from the land bank board.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Marion Gatto, Secretary _____