

LACKAWANNA COUNTY LAND BANK
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
May 13, 2016

The regular meeting of the Lackawanna County Lackawanna County Land Bank was held on May 13, 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 – Excused
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 April 8, 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 months of December 2016 through May 2016. He then explained that one voucher was for the Boards liability insurance and the other was for legal ads for the meeting dates. Both checks were cut. Mr. Koldjeski questioned the liability insurance coverage. Since Marion Gatto, Terrence McDonnell and Henry Deecke were not public officials, are they covered by this liability insurance? Rick Jones, Lackawanna County Risk Manager, was called into the meeting to discuss this issue. Mr. Jones explained that because they were appointed to this board, this insurance would cover them for any action taken as a land bank member. Mr. Jones stated he would check the actual policy language.

Motion was made by Mr. McDonnell and seconded by Mr. Deecke.

All in Favor

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment at this time.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement

Mr. Kelly explained again 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. Attorney Colbassani and Mr. Kelly explained that the School Board has it on their agenda for the work session on May 31, 2016. Mr. Kelly will be attending that work session and presenting the land bank and answering any questions. Attorney Colbassani stated he had not heard back from the City. Mrs. Aebli stated she had spoken to Attorney Shrive and he stated that he was working on it. Commissioner O'Malley stated the importance of getting the land bank on the City's agenda. Mr. Koldjeski asked if other municipalities have been contacted regarding participation in the land bank. Mr. Kelly explained that we initially focused on Scranton because they have the largest amount of repository properties. However, if the City of Scranton does not get on board soon, other municipalities will be contacted for participation. We wanted to focus on Scranton because they need the most help. Mr. Koldjeski stated that he recently spoke at the Lackawanna County Borough Association meeting. He suggested that we send a letter to Al Chelik, Association President, and set up a date to explain the land bank at a meeting. Mr. Kelly explained that one of the things encouraged of a land bank is to have public meetings to explain the benefits of having a land bank.

b) Solicitor comment regarding Conflict of Interest Policy

Attorney Colbassani stated he had spoken to some other land Bank solicitors regarding their conflict of interest policies. He stated some of attorneys he spoke with said they don't have a conflict of interest policy. They just adopted the state ethics code. However, he feels the land bank should have a Conflict of Interest policy. A draft of the policy was distributed to the board. The board was asked to review the policy and suggest any changes where appropriate to Attorney Colbassani prior to the next meeting.

c) Land Bank Website

Mr. Kelly called upon Ralph Pappas to explain what is happening with the land bank website. Mr. Pappas explained that until the land bank has a separate and permanent website, there is a link to the land bank documents from the lackawannacounty.org website under the Economic Development link. Currently on the link are the Board of Directors, Meeting Dates and Contact Information, Policies and Procedures, By-Laws, Agenda's, Minutes, and Land Bank resources. Mr. Koldjeski suggested contacting the University of Scranton about assisting with the permanent website. All agreed that was a good idea and Mr. Kelly stated we would follow up that suggestion

ACTION ITEMS

a) Adopting a Legal Services contract with Attorney Joseph Colbassani

Mr. Kelly explained that a motion was made to hire Attorney Colbassani at the March 11, 2016 meeting. Today we are just formalizing the contract. The contract terms begin on March 15, 2016 for \$1,000 a month not to exceed \$12,000. Mr. Koldjeski stated he reviewed the contract and didn't see anything regarding Atty. Colbassani's professional liability insurance. Atty. Colbassani stated he would send a copy of his insurance for the Land Bank's records. A motion was made by Mr. McDonnell and seconded by Mrs. Aebli

All in Favor

b) Adopting Land Bank By-Laws

Mr. Kelly explained that a motion was made at the March 11, 2016 meeting to adopt the By-Laws pending review by the land bank solicitor. Atty. Colbassani stated he has reviewed the By-Laws and approve them as to form and legality. Mr. Kelly explained there could be changes in the By-laws as the Land Bank goes forward.

A motion was made by Mr. McDonnell and seconded by Mr. Pitoniak.

All in Favor

c) Adopting Land Bank Policies and Procedures

Mr. Kelly again explained that a motion was made at the March 11, 2016 meeting to adopt the Policies and Procedures pending review by the land bank solicitor. Atty. Colbassani stated he has reviewed the Policies and Procedures and approve them as to form and legality.

A motion was made by Mr. Deecke and seconded by Mrs. Aebli

All in Favor

Opportunity for the public to address the Board.

Jennifer Spiller, Director of Neighborhood Redevelopment, NeighborWorks NEPA
Jesse Ergott, Executive Director, Neighbor Works NAPA

Both Ms. Spiller and Mr. Ergott thanked the Land Bank Board for their work so far and expressed their organization's desire in assisting the land bank to engage the community. Having recently attended a land bank summit, Mr. Kelly explained the strategy of other land banks and how the Lackawanna County Land Banks hopes to mimic the more successful land banks in establishing a countywide blight task force. Hopefully, their organization as well as other Community Development organization could assist in that task. The current priority is the City of Scranton. However, Commissioner O'Malley explained if the City and School Board do not join the land bank soon, the land bank will move on to other municipalities sooner than expected.

Mr. Koldjeski stated that he and Commissioner O'Malley recently met with representatives of the City. He explained that the City is demolishing some properties that are structurally sound and can be rehabilitated. He expressed that an organization like NeighborWorks could take possession of a structurally sound house through the land bank, rehabilitate it to get it back on the tax rolls. The discussion continued on how organizations like NeighborWorks and United Neighborhood Services could assist the land bank in different ways to help eliminate blight in Lackawanna County.

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