

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

The regular meeting of the Lackawanna County Lackawanna County Land Bank was held on July 8, 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 – Present

Also present were Atty. Colbassani, Land Bank Legal Counsel, Commissioner Lauren Cummings, and Laura Seguin, Housing Financial Analyst, 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 June 10, 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 July. There was one voucher. A check in amount of \$1,000.00 made payable to Atty. Colbassani for legal services.

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

All in Favor

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **a) Formation of a Land Bank Advisory Group**

Mr. Kelly explained that both the City of Scranton and the Scranton School District passed resolutions authorizing the Mayor and the President of the school board to sign the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement. Mr. Kelly stated that originally the Scranton School District wanted representation on the Land Bank Board. He explained that was not possible because of the composition of the board and the land bank by-laws. He informed school district board that the intention is to form an advisory committee for each municipality and they will have the option to appoint members of this advisory group to help direct how the properties are deployed and what are the strategies to be used. We want the local communities to drive the revitalization on their area. The Scranton School Board asked if they could have 2 representatives on the advisory board. Mr. Kelly stated he also had interest from some Scranton City Council members about being part of the advisory group. Ms. Aebli indicated that the Mayor would like to appoint members to the advisory group. Commissioner O'Malley explained that each advisory group member would be acting on behalf of their own municipality. Mr. Kelly asked the Land Bank Board if they know of anyone that is interested in serving on the advisory committee to let him know. The focus is on Scranton right now. Mr. Kelly stated organizations like United Neighborhood services and NeighborWorks have indicated that they also want to be part of the advisory group as well.

### **b) Expansion of the Land Bank to include additional Municipalities**

Mr. Kelly stated that Mr. Koldjeski has finalized the judicial sale. The total number of repository properties is 1077. There are 610 properties in the City of Scranton. The City of Scranton will be the primary focus initially. Mr. Kelly explained that he did a quick analysis of the repository list and broke it down by municipality. He provided the list to the land bank board and further discussed the number of properties in each municipality. He stated that now since we have the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement with the City of Scranton, we can approach the school boards that cover multiple municipalities to get them on board. Once the school board is on board, we can approach the municipalities within that district to participate in the land bank. Mr. Kelly then explained the side lot program. The land bank will not take possession of a property until someone has shown interest in purchasing the property. Mr. Kelly also informed the board that there has been an inquiry by someone who wants to donate a property to the land bank. He will be following up with the owner on that process.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **a) Resolution NO. 16-006 –Approving a Conflict of Interest Policy**

Attorney Colbassani stated he reviewed both resolutions as to form and legality and approve them.

A motion was made by Mrs. Gatto and seconded by Mr. Kelly to approve Resolution NO. 16-006.

All in Favor

### **b) Resolution NO. 16-007–Approving the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement with Lackawanna County, the City of Scranton and the Scranton School District**

Mr. Kelly stated that the resolution is contingent upon a vote by the Lackawanna County Commissioners

A motion was made by Mr. Pitoniak and seconded by Mr. Deeke to approve Resolution NO. 16-007.

All in Favor

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

### **Lisa Durkin, Deputy Director United Neighborhood Services**

Ms. Durkin thanked the board for appointing Ralph Pappas to the Lackawanna County Housing Coalition.

### **Marie Schumacher, Taxpayer-City of Scranton**

Mrs. Schumacher stated that a county reassessment is needed. She informed the Board that she had conducted her own study over the past year and will be presenting her findings to both Scranton City Council and the Lackawanna County Commissioners. She then explained a brief summary of the results of her study.

## **Commissioner Lauren Cumming**

Commissioner Cummings had some questions regarding the side lot program. In particular, the policy that the land bank will not acquire a property unless someone has an interest in purchasing it. Mr. Kelly explained the reasoning for this policy. Commissioner Cummings also had some questions on the City of Scranton's policy regarding the side lot program. Mrs. Aebli stated that she would have to talk to the City Treasurer for those answers. Mr. Kelly and Atty. Colbassani then explained both the City's and the County's tax sale process.

Mrs. Cummings stated that part of the problem she has with the land bank is that the land bank can acquire property prior to the judicial sale. She believes preference is given to the land bank prior to the public getting a chance to bid on a property. The discussion on the process continued. Mr. Kelly stated that the board could adopt a resolution stating the land bank would not acquire a property until after the judicial sale. Commissioner Cummings stated she would appreciate that. Commissioner O'Malley then discussed the 30 foot lots in the Waverly Heights area and how these can now become larger parcels for development. He also stressed the fact that the land bank can cut through a lot of red tape and get more property back on the tax rolls. Mr. McDonnell and Commissioner O'Malley both stated that if someone gets a property at a judicial sale, they can just sit on it. Whereas the land bank can put contingencies on the property to make sure it is developed. If it's not developed, the land bank can take it back.

Commissioner Cummings also questioned whether there would be contingencies placed on larger parcels acquired by the land bank. Mr. Kelly explained that if a community group wanted to revitalize a certain area for low to moderate income or even market rent, then the land bank could deed it over to that group instead of the highest bidder. Commissioner Cummings stated, for the record, she does not want the land bank to deed property to an entity who will use government money to build Section 8 housing. Then, from start to finish it is paid for with government dollars. That is what she is completely against. Commissioner O'Malley then explained that any development would have to be approved at the local municipal level. Commissioner O'Malley discussed the success of the Cedar Avenue development completed by United Neighborhood Services. A few years ago the area looked like a bomb hit it. Now, he stated, it is a great place to live. He explained the land bank legislation was never established to hurt the community. Mr. Kelly then explained that the land bank must try to do everything possible to allow people to stay in their homes. He also explained that before the land bank disposes of any properties, they will get the recommendations of the advisory committee.

Mr. Kelly also announced the Land Bank has been approved for a \$160,000 Local Share Account Grant. Commissioner Cummings stated that she is completely against gambling money used for this purpose. She feels that money should be going to the property owners themselves so they could pay their taxes. Mr. Kelly explained the grant process.

## **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.

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Marion Gatto, Secretary