

**LACKAWANNA COUNTY LAND BANK  
SCHEDULED MEETING MINUTES  
October 11, 2019**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Lackawanna County Land Bank was held on Friday, October 11, 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 Ralph Pappas, staff  
Commissioner Patrick O'Malley – Present  
Al Chelik - Present  
Wayne Beck – Present  
Henry Deecke - Excused  
Marion Gatto – Present  
Terrence McDonnell – Present  
Steve Pitoniak – Present

Also present were Atty. Joseph Colbassani, Land Bank Legal Counsel, Ralph Pappas, Business Relations Manager.

**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 September 13, 2019 meeting as prepared and presented.

**All in Favor**

**PRESENTATION OF VOUCHERS FOR EXAMINATION AND APPROVAL**

A Motion was made by Steve Pitoniak and seconded Wayne Beck by to approve voucher expenditures of September 14, 2019 through October 11, 2019, as presented.

**All in Favor**

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

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

Mr. Pappas stated that Old Forge and Throop are still in limbo. Regarding Carbondale, in September, Mr. Pappas and Jesse Ergott met with Carbondale City Council and answered all of their questions and looks like have it on their agenda for their October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting to join the land bank. At the same time, the Carbondale Area School District is going to join as well. Mr. Pappas forwarded the land bank information to Dave Cerra at Carbondale Area School District, they had a few questions but they're on board as well. On October 21<sup>st</sup> both of those entities will be joining the Land Bank. Mr. Pappas thanked Mr. Ergott for going along with him that day. Commissioner O'Malley set Tuesday, October 22, 2019 at 11:00 am as the date and time to announce that Carbondale has joined the Land Bank. Mr. Pappas will confirm the date and time with Rick Notari.

Commissioner O'Malley asked Jim Rodway, Lackawanna County Community Relations Director, to assist the land bank by having his staff promote the Land Bank while attending community meetings. Mr. Rodway explained that he and his staff are well versed in going out to the communities and explaining what Lackawanna County has going on at all times. The Board inquired of Mr. Rodway as to whether or not his staff would go out and start talking to the municipalities about becoming a part of the Land Bank. They could explain on how the land bank is placing properties back on the tax rolls and eliminating blight. Mr. Rodway asked for information on how a municipality becomes involved. That will be the first question asked by municipal officials. Mr. Pappas is going to work with NeighborWorks to prepare an informational hand out. Mr. Rodway would like to start going out into the communities the beginning of November. He would like a list of the municipalities you are already on board. Mr. Rodway noted that his coordinators have a good rapport with the councils. He can go during the day and speak to the Borough Managers. Mr. Chelik suggested emphasizing the Blight Training that will be taking place, giving them a flyer. Mr. Chelik stated that there is a meeting of the Lackawanna County Association of Boroughs on October 17<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Rodway offered to attend that meeting. Mr. Chelik relayed that it would not be a problem for Mr. Pappas to appear at this meeting and speak about the Land Bank. Mr. Rodway will work in conjunction with Mr. Pappas.

### **1445 Meylert Avenue Update**

Mr. Pappas explained that he spoke with Don Rinaldi, Lace Building Affiliates, and he offered \$1,500 for the property. Through the email poll with this Board, everyone was in agreement with accepting this \$1,500 offer. Attorney Colbassani has prepared the deed and it was sent to Mr. Rinaldi for his review. An amendment to our original agreement was also sent to Mr. Rinaldi. The Amendment stated the price of \$1,500 along with protecting the Land Bank from any future litigation involving the remediation of the property

### **601 Prospect Avenue, Scranton Update**

Mr. Pappas stated that it is an ongoing project. It is all cleaned out now and is no longer a fire trap.

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

Mr. Pappas stated that he contacted Jones Auction House regarding the salvaging of some on the chalkboards, bookcases and staircases. They have not responded as of this date. KBA Engineering, Fell Township's engineer, is preparing the specs for the demolition of the property. They are hoping that demolition may take place before the end of the year.

### **Scranton Demolitions**

Mr. Pappas spoke with Attorney Eskra, Scranton's City solicitor, regarding the progress of the three properties. Attorney Eskra stated that the demolitions are going to be done in-house by DPW. It is probably a month away before they actually get to them. DPW has a priority demolition that must be done first and then another matter to address. These three properties will be next on the list.

### **Blight Task Force Update**

Mr. Ergott updated the Board on a few issues, one is the Blight Training Code Enforcement Workshop – that is set for October 29, 2019 from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm at the Dunmore Community Center. It is being held in conjunction with the Lackawanna Flood Risk Coalition Session that will take place immediately following the workshop. We are looking to have a captive audience. We want to get the information out to the Borough Association meeting that Mr. Chelik spoke about to promote that Code Enforcement session. Everything is looking good. NeighborWorks has been in constant touch with Chris Gulotta, the workshop facilitator, and he's putting the final pieces together for the workshop. The other item we spoke about last month is the video about the Land Bank. Voyager Video is helping NeighborWorks produce some material on the Land Bank and the impact that it has had on the community. They are starting to schedule interviews. I am hoping that the demos are earlier rather than later so footage can be included. Filming should be wrapped up in the next couple months so that the video can be released to really show the economic impact that the Land Bank has had. It can be put on ECTV and YouTube as well as the County Website

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

There were no property purchase bids received prior to this meeting.

### **Advisory Committee Discussion**

521 Brook Street, Scranton – A side-lot application was received from the next door neighbor, Brenda G. Walsh-Matias. She has been maintaining this property since the house was razed.

524 Alder Street, Scranton – A property purchase application was received from Florina Lopez. Her family runs a restaurant on Pittston Avenue and they originally wanted this property for parking but they were turned down by the City because it was too far away from the restaurant. They would now like to put a house on the property. Mr. Pappas informed them that they better go to the City to make sure it is in conformance to build. There was some discussion about the size of the lot and how it would conform to the building regulations.

North Merrifield Avenue, Scranton (2 properties) – During heavy rainstorms these two properties becomes a lake. The City needs to get these properties in their possession as there is a pumping station that is located on the property line between the two lots. Mr. Pappas sent an email to Don King and informed him that the Land Bank actually owns one of these properties presently and the other one is in the Repository. Mr. King sent an email to the City Solicitor and said it would be a good idea for the City to own these two properties in order to continue to maintain the pumping station.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**PROPERTY ACQUISITION – Scranton**

**Resolution No. 19-028 – Approving the Acquisition of Additional Property from the Tax Claim Office Repository List of Unsold Property –**

Parcel Address: 521 Brook Street, Scranton	Pin #: 16707030048
Parcel Address: 524 Alder Street, Scranton	Pin #: 15616060033
Parcel Address: North Merrifield Avenue, Scranton	Pin #: 14412050016

The Advisory Committee is in favor of approving the acquisition of these properties. A Motion was made by Terrence McDonnell and seconded by Al Chelik to approve this Resolution.

**All in Favor**

**PROPERTY DISPOSITIONS**

**Resolution No. 19-029 – Approving the Conveyance of Certain Land Bank Owned Property Under the Land Bank Side Lot Program –**

Property Located at 521 Brook Street, Scranton	Pin #: 16707030048
Purchaser: Brenda G. Walsh-Matias	Price: \$100.00

The Advisory Committee is in favor of conveying these two properties under the Land Bank Side Lot Program. A Motion was made by Marion Gatto and seconded by Terrence McDonnell to approve this Resolution.

**All in Favor**

**Resolution No. 19-030 – Approving the Conveyance of Certain Land Bank Owned Property Under the Property Purchase Program –**

Property Located at 524 Alder Street, Scranton	Pin #: 15616060033
Purchaser: Florina Lopez	Price: \$500.00

Parcel Address: North Merrifield Avenue, Scranton	Pin # 14412050015
Purchaser: City of Scranton	Price: \$1.00

Parcel Address: North Merrifield Avenue, Scranton	Pin # 14412050016
Purchaser: City of Scranton	Price: \$1.00

The Advisory Committee is in favor of conveying these properties under the Property Purchase Program. A Motion was made by Terrence McDonnell and seconded by Wayne Beck to approve this Resolution.

**All in Favor**

**Resolution No. 19-031 – Approving a Speaker Agreement With Chris Gulotta For the Blight Training Code Enforcement Workshop For Municipalities –**

The amount is fifteen dollars (\$15.00) per hour not to exceed fifteen hundred dollars (\$1,500.00). Jesse Ergott then spoke about how Mr. Gulotta did the Blight Task Force sessions and he will come in do a whole presentation with all of the sample ordinances and all of the other pieces that are templated so that the municipalities can just plug in to them. He really talks through some case scenarios and other things and how they've been successful in other places and will be available to answer questions. There is a lot of leg work that he does and the expertise that he is bringing is worth the cost and is highly valuable for the municipalities. Mr. Pappas stated that it is set for Tuesday, October 29, 2019 at the Dunmore Community Center at 5:00 pm. A Motion was made by Marion Gatto and seconded by Wayne Beck to approve this Resolution.

**All in Favor**

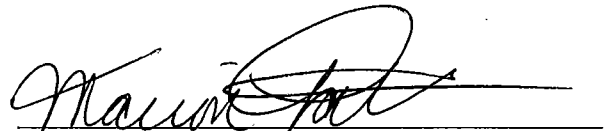
**OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD:**

Attorney Colbassani took this time to mention that one week from today, Friday, October 18, 2019, Lackawanna Pro Bono is having their annual fundraising Gala at the Cultural Center. They've helped over 7,700 indigent people who couldn't get access to legal aid for one reason or other, number one, they're overwhelmed plus we don't have a legal aid office in Scranton anymore, it's in Pittston. A lot of these people don't have transportation. Members of the Bar volunteer to do cases in landlord/tenant, family law and tax cases. Of course the Program costs money so if you're not doing anything Friday night, the tickets are \$150 per person which is a little steep but goes towards helping people. It's a big problem. You see more and more legal matters being done pro se because people can't afford legal representation. Also proliferation of estates being done without lawyers and it's a big issue/problem with the Courts and with the Row Offices. People need help and it's all tied into blight, poverty, easing human suffering with all these things we are doing. It's all interrelated. We have one of the best pro bono groups in the state, like the Land Bank. So if you're not doing anything, please consider attending. You can go to their website, LackawannaProBono.org and get the information.

**ADJOURNMENT** – A Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner O'Malley and seconded by Terrence McDonnell.

**All in Favor**

Next Scheduled Meeting: Friday, November 8, 2019

  
Marion Gatto, Secretary

Prepared by Barbara Arens