

**LACKAWANNA COUNTY LAND BANK
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
October 13, 2017**

The regular meeting of the Lackawanna County Land Bank was held on October 13, 2017 in the Commissioners' Conference Room, 200 Adams Avenue. Sixth Floor, Scranton, Pennsylvania.

At 10:00 am Chairman O'Malley called the meeting to order and all joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Roll Call was taken by 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, Deputy Director of Tax Claim, Ralph Pappas, Business Relations Manager, Department of Economic Development and Margaret Piccotti, Assistant to George Kelly.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

There were no comments made.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Ms. Linda Aebli and seconded by Mr. Terrance McDonnell to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2017 regular meeting as prepared and presented.

All in Favor

PRESENTATION of VOUCHERS for EXAMINATION and APPROVAL

A motion was made by Mr. Steve Pitoniak and seconded by Mr. Marion Gatto to approve voucher expenditures of September 8, 2017 through October 13, 2017, as presented.

All in Favor

DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) Bid Opening – 1305-1307 Price Street

Two bids were presented for 1305-1307 Price Street. The first bid in the amount of \$501 was submitted by Ms. Linda Grippa. The second bid in the amount of \$1501 was submitted by Mr. Kevin Coleman. Both are adjacent property owners. A motion by Mr. Henry Deecke and seconded by Mr. Terrence McDonnell was made and the bid for \$1501 from Mr. Kevin Coleman was accepted. Mr. Kevin Coleman will follow procedure and purchase 1305-1307 Price Street.

b) Land Bank Website

Mr. Ralph Pappas has been working with Steven Solon from our planning department and created a map featuring all the Land Bank properties located in the City of Scranton. Mr. Pappas has also prepared a Request for Proposal (RFP) to hire a professional firm to create an updated version of the county Land Bank website. A motion to release the RFP was made by Mr. Steve Pitoniak and seconded by Mr. Henry Deecke for Mr. Pappas to proceed with the request for proposals to hire a professional firm to set up the website.

c.) Blight to Bright:

Mr. George Kelly informed the board that he submitted an application thru the Monroe County Local Share Account requesting \$300,000 to create a program to address blight county wide. If funded, we would be able to create a Blight to Bright taskforce to address and demolish blighted properties. George Kelly also suggested having Town Hall meetings to inform the public of the funds we would have and how they could be used to improve the blighted properties. If not funded we will still address the situation but on a smaller scale.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE:

a) Side Lot Applications – Adjacent Property Owners:

Mr. Ralph Pappas stated the Land Bank received 1 application for a parcel at 347-349 East Locust Street. It was received from Werner Shelski on August 7, 2017. Mr. Shelski owns and resides in the adjacent property located at 34 East Locust Street. The Advisory Committee recommended the application be approved.

The Land Bank received 1 application for a parcel at 914-916 Eynon Street. It was received from Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Lee on August 25, 2017. Mr. and Mrs. Lee own the adjacent property located at 912 Eynon Street. The Advisory Committee recommends the application be approved.

The Land Bank received 2 applications for the parcel located at 1305-1307 Price Street. An application was received from Linda Grippa on August 10, 2017. Mrs. Grippa owns the adjacent property located at 1315 Price Street, Scranton. The second application was received by Mr. Kevin Coleman on September 27, 2017. Mr. Coleman owns the adjacent property located at 1301-1303 Price Street. Both applicants were advised to submit sealed bids which were opened at the meeting on October 13th. The first bid in the amount of \$501 was received from Ms. Grippa. The second bid in the amount of \$1501 was received by Mr. Kevin Coleman. The Advisory Committee recommended we accept the bid in the amount of \$1501 from Mr. Coleman.

b) Property Purchase Applications:

The Land Bank received a Property Purchase application for a parcel at 432 Farber Court from Mr. Peter Zabiegala. He is a city resident and a student at the University of Scranton. He would like to purchase the property to provide off street parking for University of Scranton students. He has submitted a bid of \$500 for the property. He stated that if zoning did not approve of him making it a parking lot he would still maintain the property. The Advisory Committee recommended accepting his offer to purchase the property.

The Land Bank received a Property Purchase application for a parcel on Snook Ave. from Mr. Jeffrey Ghergo on September 7, 2017. This property is directly behind his property at 1 Elmhurst Blvd. He has submitted a bid of \$500 for the property. The Advisory Committee recommends accepting his offer to purchase the property.

The Scranton Lackawanna Resource Development Corporation (SLRDC), an arm of the Scranton Lackawanna Human Development Agency (SLHDA) has submitted applications to purchase the properties at 2428 N. Main Ave., 1350 Bryn Mawr Street and a building at 1344-1346 Bryn Mawr Street. They are interested in building affordable housing on the land.

The first property at 2428 N. Main Ave. had an interested party that was going to purchase the property. When they determined what the taxes are on the property, they decided against purchasing the property. It was recommended by the Advisory Committee the previous approval of purchase be rescinded and then the approval of purchase to the SLRDC be approved.

In regards to 1344, 1346, and 1350 Bryn Mawr Street it was recommended the purchase be tabled until more research is done on the properties. Commissioner Patrick O'Malley would like to get an estimate on how much it will cost to have the building demolished. Mr. Ron Koldjeski suggested looking into if there was an insurance policy on the property when it was destroyed by fire. If so, the holder of the policy may be responsible for paying to demolish the building. Mr. Koldjeski is going to request a copy of the title search. Also, Mr. Kelly would like a Land Bank sign put on property to let the public know it is for sale. This will all be addressed at the next Land Bank meeting.

c) Additional Properties to be acquired from the Repository of Unsold Properties:

The following properties located at 419 East Market Street, 524 N. Rebecca Avenue, Rear 205 Prospect Ave. and the Corner of Taylor and Vine Street will all be acquired from the Repository of Unsold Property.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mr. Pappas stated 34 side lots have been purchased to date and an additional 14 properties are in different stages of the process. Attorney Colbassani stated the Land Bank is being recognized throughout the state for being very proactive with our Land Bank. Mr. Pappas then informed the Board that the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania is doing a story on the Lackawanna County Land Bank and it will be coming out on October 24th. They also are having their media get in touch with Mr. George Kelly for another interview. Mr. Kelly suggested the members of the Board partake in the interview as well. Mr. Kelly was also contacted by the Committee House of Urban Affairs and was asked to testify at a hearing regarding Land Banks and Redevelopment Authorities on November 14th.

Attorney Colbassani informed the Board that in regards to the Meylert Street property, we secured a release of the IRS lien. There was a question as to where it gets recorded. It was determined it should get recorded with the Clerk of Judicial Records and the Recorder of Deeds. Attorney Colbassani also stated he attended a Tax Assessor's Appeal hearing and on the list was the Lackawanna County Land Bank regarding the Meylert Street property. As part of the process to get the lien released, the Land Bank filed a tax assessment appeal to lower the assessment. The Board of Assessors lowered the assessed value from \$30,000 to \$8,000. Mr. Kelly stated the closing for the Meylert Street property should take place within the next 30 days.

ACTION ITEM

Resolution No. 17-024 Rescinding

Resolution NO. 17-024, Rescinding the Conveyance of Certain Land Bank Owned Properties to previously approved Applicants.

Motion by Henry Deecke

Seconded by Steve Pitoniak

All in favor

Property Disposition

The following motion was Amended to exclude the properties at 1344-1346 and 1350 Bryn Mawr Street

Resolution NO. 17-025 Approving the Conveyance of Certain Land Bank Owned Properties under the Land Bank Side Lot Program

Motion by Steve Pitoniak

Seconded by Marion Gatto

All in favor

Resolution NO. 17-026, Approving the Conveyance of Certain Land Bank Owned Properties under the Land Bank Purchase Program

Motion by Terrance McDonnell

Seconded by Linda Aebli

All in favor

Property Acquisition

Resolution NO. 17-027 Approving the Acquisition of additional properties from the Lackawanna County's Tax Claim Repository List of Unsold Property

Motion by Henry Deecke

Seconded by Linda Aebli

All in Favor

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Ron Koldjeski stated the City of Scranton has an ordinance regarding creating abandoned property registration. He would like a copy of the list. Ms. Linda Aebli suggested going to Council and then Licensing, Inspections and Permits. She also said she was going to look into it. Mr. Koldjeski asked about the expansion of the Land Bank. Mr. Kelly stated he had reached out to Justin Taylor, the Mayor of Carbondale. Commissioner O'Malley would like to have a meeting with leaders from neighboring communities and the public to inform and discuss the Land Bank.

A questioned was asked by Commissioner Laureen Cummings as to what the process was for other communities to join the Land Bank. Commissioner O'Malley responded stating that we go to the community and if they decide they want to join the Land Bank they inter into an Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement. The agreement must be agreed upon by the School

Board, the Municipality, and the County. When they have all signed off that Municipality becomes a member of the Land Bank.

A discussion between Commissioner Cummings and Mr. Koldjeski regarding communities continued.

Jamie Heenan, a resident of South Scranton addressed the board and would like to purchase a property and cultivate a community garden. She would like to know how she could do so. Mr. Kelly told her to contact Mr. Pappas and he will research the property and find out if it is in the Repository of unsold property. If so the Land Bank will then obtain the property and make it available to interested parties.

Mr. Terrence McDonnell expressed interest in having Dunmore join the Land Bank and asked Mr. Koldjeski if there were any properties in Dunmore on Repository list. Mr. Koldjeski said there are about 4 properties available. A discussion between Mr. Kelly, Mr. Koldjeski and Mr. McDonnell then took place regarding communities joining the Land Bank.

ADJOURNMENT

As all business had been conducted, a motion to adjourn was made by Terrence McDonnell with a second by Linda Aebli. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned.

Marion Gatto, Secretary

Prepared by Margaret Piccotti