

## **Minutes from Land Bank Board Meeting**

January 25, 2021

Submitted by Twila Fisher

In attendance: Winnie, Justin, Peggy, Twila, Deb P., Carol K.

After determining we would have a quorum, Deb P. asked the guests to identify themselves for the minutes at 4:40 p.m. We had Craig Way and Tom Hylton as guests on the call.

Deb called the meeting to order at 4:42 p.m.

We didn't have minutes from November meeting.

### **Bills and communications:** Justin

The Land Bank received an invoice in the amount of \$1050.00 for Land Bank services.

Some correspondence with residents who have inquired about transactions and about rehabbing a multi-unit property back into single unit and disposing it for owner occupancy. We will discuss this more later in the agenda when we talk about sheriff sales and blighted property.

Report of exec director and/or related staff

**Comment/question from Craig Way:** "It's been a but a year since I've been attending meetings. Has the board developed a process through which to acquire properties, like a document?"

Winnie answered this:

The first step in the process is Request for Information (RFI – found on Borough website), and expressing interest to the Land Bank (i.e. "I'm interested in X property, maybe land bank can help me with it). The LB doesn't have resources to buy and hold properties but can help walk through the process. We have a pre-screening application so that we can work with folks who have interest, approve them, and have them on our list of qualified developers. The purchase application form is sent to board for review, then it will be posted on the website. But the first step is that RFI. Secondly, read the policies and procedures on website – this will go over pricing, qualifications, etc. In the next few weeks you will see the purchase form. Think of LB as someone who can help the developer look into the property they want through various venues. Those applications will be reviewed by land bank and determination will be made on if and how to move forward.

Justin: We would still have to put the info out publicly, disclosing interest in property and to contact land bank board if they have questions/concerns. This ensures equal opportunity.

Winnie gave an example of how this would work. The PHARE grant is set up in a way that allows us to do that and covers four properties in the next 8-9 months.

### **PHARE Grant – Winnie**

Judy Memberg said PHFA is delayed in disbursing funds due to COVID, etc. As of today, funds have not been disbursed.

The end of January was the deadline for first report, and that was also pushed back so we have no obligations right now but also no money until it comes through.

### **Pre-Screening Investors - Winnie**

Winnie circulated to the board an updated form for prequalifying developers. Public comment and board members were incorporated into the application. The goal is to create a list of interested parties and so this is the way to do that. If the board is comfortable with revised version that it can be submitted to Ginny for placement.

Twila made motion to approve, Carol seconded. Motion passed. Winnie will ask Ginny to place the form on the webpage.

**Request for Quote:** Winnie asked authority to develop a request for proposal. When she looked at it more, it seemed unnecessary based on other procurement policies. You would seek quotes from a number of members, then review proposals and select one. Asking entities to submit quotes and respond to them.

She has a number of title search firms and appraisers, some from Pottstown and some from Philly. The one in Philly will do title searches for about \$250. We won't always have to pay for this – some entities like the tax office will already have it done and can likely share it. Some of these properties we cannot get inside, so we really want to have the title search.

Winnie has a list of companies who could receive Request for Quotes – you can do it by phone or email, we can send it to anyone we want to have a chance at this.

### **Title Companies**

Heartland Abstract – Andrew Monastra

Precision Abstract – Philly

Penn Title Co. - Pottstown

Golden Abstract – Pottstown address

Carol made a motion for Justin to reach out to these companies with the request for quote; Twila seconded.

### **Appraisal Companies**

Geiger Appraisals – have done eminent domain

TriCounty Property Appraisals

Zambody? Appraisals in Gilbertsville

Twila entered two other companies in the chat, as did Peggy.

Twila made a motion, Carol seconded for Justin to send a notice to those appraisers.

Carol asked for clarification about the buying process – how are people supposed to buy it without seeing inside? Winnie shared that this is not for the faint of heart, but even at sheriff's sales it is bought sight unseen.

**PA Land Bank Network Update:** Winnie presented a session with the housing alliance and she will share those resources.

They are going to allow for intercommunication among land banks.

**Land Bank Administration** – this is just a follow up to last meeting where we were talking about PAID working with Borough and LB.

Peggy said that they are going forward – the exec committee that Matt Hovey started working on and PAID's solicitor picked up again. It will be shared with PAID's full board on Feb. 9, the next board meeting and after that it will go on to land bank for review. There are no surprises and is what we discussed prior. They feel it is a good time, now PHARE grant exists and people are contacting them.

**2021 Budget:** Winnie has updated draft but we are waiting for administration piece, which is absent from the budget (charge from PAID to Land Bank), based almost on PHARE budget.

**Community Outreach and Education:** Winnie asked if we can we do another learning piece before next board meeting? Broadcast it widely to the community so that we understand where we are at and what we are working on. We have PHARE grant now, PAID will be administrator, we are looking for property donations (some land banks have had success with those kinds of properties). Assist residents with properties that are vacant and putting them into good hands.

**Blighted meeting last Wednesday** – no action was taken. Some properties will be removed from the list. The BPC would like to prioritize the ones best suited for the land bank to review/consider. Our new president indicated an interest in working more with land bank and community outreach program.

**Twila** – can I ask about the pink houses on Grant St. again – can the solicitor make sure they are certified as blighted? It is on Hobart Run's goals for 2021 to do something about those houses.

**Sherriff Sales** – Winnie thinks and will verify before putting in writing – the land bank can use priority bid there and at the tax claim bureau sale.

**Upset sale** – land bank has very discreet powers but properties that go to upset sale still have private debt and incumbrances that don't get wiped clean with the sale – just municipal taxes come off.

Twila expressed interest in working more with Winnie on this based on her experience in the City of Reading.

**New business** – side lot disposition program

Winnie is working on application form that she will circulate to deb and the board with a few suggested revisions to policies and procedures that is more consistent with what other land banks are doing.

Land banks often spend time on vacant lots that aren't available

City of Baltimore has a very simple process

Right now our rules and regulations have a minimum price (\$750) and transfer costs are on the buyer and that might be more than what more than what a neighbor wants to pay for the lot.

Land bank ordinance requires **bi-annual review of policies** and procedures: it is time for us to take a look at them again. Winnie is suggesting a work session to look through them and clarify or tweak them before transacting business.

Carol asked if these vacant properties might be nuisance ones that neighbors might want to purchase? Winnie, said, yes – we try to get those lots into the hands of people who will take care of them. Justin said we have a running list of these lots. It should be easy to transition these properties, but we still have to put it out there.

Do we need a procurement policy for how we are going to do business? Buying things, goods and services.

Tripod Land Bank is a good resource to look at.

We should form a policy committee and look at what other land banks are doing.

Can we put that into our biannual review? Yes.

Is there a better time of day for our land bank meetings? Carol is flexible. Justin will ask Ginny to send out some options

Mike Mauger just resigned from the board as secretary; Justin will get clarity from Michael about staying on the board. Twila will serve as interim secretary.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:36 p.m. following a motion from Twila and second from Carol.