

Pottstown Borough Land Bank Meeting

September 27, 2021

Meeting was called to order at 4:34 p.m. by Deb Penrod, Chair.

Roll call:

Board Members: Deb Penrod, Twila Fisher, Carol Kulp, Jamie Sanchez, Lisa Vanni (Zoom)

Support/Admin: Peggy Lee Clark, Alex Thigpen, Danette Wilson, Justin Keller, (Zoom), Winnie Branton (Zoom)

Guests: Paula Bickelman, Tom Burleigh, Craig Way

Twila made a motion to approve the minutes from previous meeting; Carol seconded the motion. Minutes were approved.

Review of bank statement: No change to our balance.

Bills and Communications:

- We continue to field inquiries from folks interested in the land bank. Deb Spence wants to do a placemaking proposal on Cherry St. She needs to submit an application and we will go from there. This is a property that is not adjacent to her own.
- We did receive a bill for D&O insurance. Winnie said the PHARE grant dollars can't be used to pay for that, but Justin said to send it to the Borough and they will take care of it out of the allocated budget.
- Winnie: The County had an upset sale a few weeks ago. Did they send Justin a list of registered bidders? Yes. That list allows Justin to notify the County on the front end of anyone who may not be in compliance with the Borough before they purchase a property. Justin said the Borough is not comprehensively going through the list but looking for any names that stand out due to license revocation, etc. Winnie asked to be emailed a copy of that list so that she can review the layout.

Report from Administrator:

Peggy said that we have not received many property inquiries except for the placemaking one. We can't move forward on it until we get the pre-screened application.

Paula Bickelman has joined us with interest in acquiring a property. They had a U&O inspection and they hit another roadblock.

Paula: 122 E. 3rd has been under contract for a year (owners are in bankruptcy). They were supposed to close it today. They had a 3rd floor fire and a hole in the roof that now produced rot into the third floor into the second floor, which is dipping into the center of the house. It is registered as a 3-unit rental and we were going to bring it back to a single family home. We cannot offer them what we wanted to due to the disrepair. We also do not know if

we can return it to a single-family home. With the new price offer, the homeowner will now be sitting on debt.

The question is, can we get the property owner to donate it to the land bank, is there a path forward? There has been no discussion with the homeowner as of yet to see if they are even willing to do this. That would have to happen first then Paula could come back to the board for public discussion.

Has the house been designated as blighted? We will look into it.

Note: Winnie joins us on this call as a consultant, not the land bank attorney.

We have an RFP for a land bank solicitor (legal services) that we plan to push release on Oct. 1. If anyone has any questions or suggestions for change, now would be the time to address it. Peggy went over the small changes we recommended at our last meeting.

Land Bank Pre-screening Applications: We haven't received any more at this point. It's time to push this out again to a wider audience.

Craig will make sure it is circulated in the Pottstown Housing Coalition meeting on October 6 as well.

Another avenue to pursue is with the RDA and Judy Memberg about the property that they could partner with in redevelopment. We are looking for a simpler transaction to start with that would have a quick turnaround.

Winnie asked if we have a list of all the vacant lots in the Borough. Justin said they are working on a revised list that would include repository properties. Justin will put in a call to Danielle at the County, then send the updated list to Winnie, Peggy, and Deb.

Unfinished Business: Biannual Review of Policies and Procedures

Public Comment: This was sent to Alex Thigpen from Keith Costello, who said he reviewed the draft and was in favor of the changes.

Deb made a motion for us to approve the minor changes during the biannual review. Second made by Jamie Sanchez. Motion passed.

Blighted Property Update

September update was sent out by Deb. This is a reference point for the land bank members. A lot of properties on that list are probably too far gone for most of the people who are trying to go through the land bank, but perhaps we can encourage other investors to consider them.

Sheriff, Upset, and Judicial Sales

Alex registered as an observer for the upset sale on Sept. 23. One of the properties we had identified was up for sale there. He observed that most of the properties had bids over the initial bid/asking price, which seems to be a good thing but also indicates that we have carefully watch the properties coming available. We hope to have the results of those sales as soon as possible.

There is a continued judicial and upset sale scheduled for Dec. 9. It is recommended that Justin get a list of people registered to participate in that sale.

Peggy introduced a letter signed by Deb that would be sent to folks who own blighted properties, reminding them that donating to the land bank is an option. There is a form on the land bank form for property donations. It would be good to include that with the letter.

Guests to invite on a regular basis: Pottstown Housing Coalition, other investors.

Twila will make sure to send out the email list from the Pottstown Investors Conference.

Land Bank Network meets on a quarterly basis and is looking for support from land banks who have been through the process regarding legislation that, for various land banks, is at different levels of approval.

Winnie gave an update on several other land bank connections she is involved with as well as some upcoming grant opportunities (pending budget approval at the state level).

Motion to adjourn made by Twila; seconded by Carol.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.