



**LOWER SOUTH VALLEY LAND BANK
BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2023
EARTH CONSERVANCY, 101 S MAIN STREET, ASHLEY BOROUGH
9:00 AM
MINUTES**

I. ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER

Members present: Carl Byra, Sam Guesto, Donna Wall, Joe Hillan, Dave Wilson, Paul Keating, Ronald Jones, Rick Oravic
Staff present: Sara Hailstone, Shannon Calluori, Chris Slusser
Others present: Gale Conrad

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

III. MINUTES

A motion was made by Sam Guesto and seconded by Paul Keating to approve the minutes of the November 8, 2023 board meeting.
Approved 8-0

IV. FINANCE REPORT

None

V. STAFF REPORT

1. Judicial Sale

Attorney Slusser stated that the Luzerne County courts confirmed the sale of the August Judicial Sale properties to the Land Bank and the deeds were mailed. Attorney Slusser will initiate quiet title after he receives the deeds.

2. Bankruptcy Law

The Board discussed the memo from Attorney Slusser's officer regarding how a bankruptcy filing prevents a property from going to tax sale. This inquiry related to two blighted properties in the Municipality of Kingston. Also, the attorney that represents one of the interested parties for each of the properties indicated that the party is not interested in selling the property to the Land Bank. As a next step, Shannon will reach out to Attorney Baranko in Attorney Slusser's office to determine how the bankruptcy filing impacts the Urban Redevelopment Law's eminent domain authority (which can

only be used by the Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority) or the Conservatorship Law's conservatorship authority. Paul Keating will continue code enforcement efforts with these two properties.

3. Tax Exemption Status

Attorney Slusser will research what the Land Bank needs to provide Luzerne County in order to qualify for tax exemption status.

4. Luzerne County ARPA Funding

Sara Hailstone and Sam Guesto suggested that we contact Luzerne County to obtain written clarification on when we must commit the ARPA funding. Per Federal guidelines, as a subrecipient to the County funding, the county met the Federal commitment date of December 2024.

5. Property Updates

- Disposition

Sam Guesto asked the Board how the Board will arrive at a sales price for the Land Bank properties. It was discussed that an appraisal is one way to determine sales price. Sara Hailstone suggested that we draft disposition policies to guide when the Land Bank may donate a property versus sell a property at market rate. Shannon Calluori will draft policies for review by the Board.

- Municipal Updates

- Staff met with the City of Wilkes-Barre and the City of Nanticoke regarding priority properties to research.
- Hanover Township: requested title searches for several properties.
- Ashley Borough: waiting on response from the County repository for one property.
- Wilkes-Barre: requested title searches for three properties.
- Municipality of Kingston: sent letters to two property owners; no response to date.
- Newport Township: Joe Hillan stated that he will use Land Bank money to demolish 48 Newport Street when it is time to move forward with demolition. He previously thought he would use other demolition grant money, but the money has been spent on other projects.

6. 2024 meeting dates

Staff will advertise the 2024 LSV Land Bank meeting dates. The annual meeting will be held in January for the purposes of electing officers.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Review Auditor RFP responses and select vendor

Two qualified firms submitted proposals. The Board felt that both cost proposals were higher than expected due to the amount of funding received and transactions processed during 2023.

A motion was made by Joe Hillan and seconded by Sam Guesto to have staff request a revised cost proposal from the two firms.

Approved 8-0

2. Review 2024 Draft Budget

The Board reviewed the 2024 budget and agreed to prorate the annual membership fees the same as the previous year, as follows:

- Ashley Borough and Newport Township: \$1,500 each
- Hanover Township, City of Nanticoke, Municipality of Kingston: \$6,250 each
- City of Wilkes Barre: \$8,250

A motion was made by Sam Guesto and seconded by Paul Keating to approve the 2024 Budget.

Approved 8-0

VII. NEW BUSINESS

None

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Carl Byra and seconded by Joe Hillan to adjourn the meeting.

Approved 8-0