

Finger Lakes Regional Land Bank Corporation

March 26, 2018

Former OFA Cafeteria, 1st Floor
County Office Building
1 DiPronio Drive
Waterloo, NY 13165

Directors Present: Jill Henry, Greg Lazzaro, Larry Ledgerwood and Nick Sciotti

Directors Absent: Cindy Garlick Lorenzetti, Robert Hayssen and Gary Westfall

Staff: Bill Bordeau, Frank Fisher, Joe McGrath and Mary DeStefano

Public Attendees: Emil Bove, Esq., Midey, Mirras & Ricci, Lee Davidson, Lodi Town Supervisor, Mary Davidson, Lisa Keshel and Frank Sinicropi

1. The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Greg Lazzaro at 4:00 p.m. A quorum was present.
2. The February 26, 2018 meeting minutes were approved by motion of Nick Sciotti and seconded by Jill Henry. Carried 4 – 0.
3. CEO / President's Report

Mr. McGrath thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting.

Mr. McGrath stated that he attended the **New York Land Bank Association Annual Conference** held in Albany last week. Mr. McGrath stated that Seneca County is one of the smaller rural areas to receive funding as most Land Bank properties throughout New York State are found in urban settings. Mr. McGrath explained that the NYS Attorney General's office has additional funding to be released. The project period for the new grant monies has not yet been announced. Mr. McGrath stated that the momentum in seeking properties of interest needs to be continuous in using the current funding of \$500,000. By the end of 2018, the FLRLBC should be in a good position to apply to the NYS Attorney General's Office for the next round of funding.

Mr. McGrath gave an update on the **Taylor Avenue property** located in Waterloo. He stated that transferring the property to Habitat for Humanity seems to be the only option. If Habitat for Humanity does not take the property, the structure could sit for a long time.

Mr. Frank Fisher, County Attorney, stated that it was discovered that the property was involved in a bankruptcy in 2002. At the time of researching the property through the Treasurer's Office, the bankruptcy was not found.

Mr. Fisher stated that he has had communications with Ms. Miller, Esq., who stated that it was her understanding that any properties acquired through the Land Bank by **Habitat for Humanity** were going to be considered donations. Mr. Fisher stated that if a payment for the land needs to be made by Habitat for Humanity, a sale price needs to be established.

Mr. McGrath stated that the Taylor Avenue property was acquired by the Land Bank for \$24,000. Mr. Fisher questioned if the \$24,000 was justified by the value of the vacant lot.

Mr. McGrath stated that the interest is not there for someone to be willing to invest the funds for properties such as the Taylor Avenue property. Mr. McGrath stated that the \$24,000 was used to tear down the dwelling – the funds came from the first \$150,000 grant.

Ms. Henry stated that she has no problem in partnering with Habitat for Humanity – the focus should remain with the organization to allow them to vet the applicants, remove the administrative work from our role and return the property to productive use.

It was the general consensus that the Land Bank should move forward in working with Habitat for Humanity. The question does, however, remain as to whether properties should be donated to the organization. Vice Chairman Lazzaro stated that there should be some caveats established.

Mr. McGrath stated that tomorrow a County Code Enforcement Officer will accompany him to secure the doors at the **bowling alley located on Virginia Street** in Waterloo. Proper insurance has been obtained for the structure.

Mr. McGrath stated that the property located at **2127 Church Street in the Village of Lodi** was identified as a property to be removed from the 2018 Tax Foreclosure List for the purpose of being purchased by the Land Bank Corporation.

At this time, Mr. Emil Bove, Esq., with the Midey, Mirras & Ricci Law Firm was allowed to address the Board. Mr. Bove stated that the Law Firm represents the estate of Robert O'Brien. Originally, the estate included three benefactors as well as three properties. One property owned on Church Street was sold to the Town of Lodi with the intent of building a new town hall on the parcel. The second parcel on Mill Street has been sold for development purposes. It was then learned by one of the benefactors that the County intended to sell it at auction due to back taxes not being paid. Upon further research, it was learned that the property was going to be sold to the Land Bank. Mr. Bove stated that he would have hoped that someone from the Town of Lodi would have contacted the property owners regarding property taxes in arrears. Furthermore, he stated that the 2127 Church Street property would be of great value and is not comparable to other properties acquired by the Land Bank.

Mr. Bove stated that at this point in time, it is preferred not to challenge the County Treasurer's Office for the sale of the property but rather purchase the property directly from the Land Bank. At a cost of \$13,571.04, the property could then be transferred back from the Land Bank to just Mr. O'Brien. Mr. Bove stated that he appreciates the Board's indulgence and hopes that the letter of intent given to Mr. Fisher is considered. Mr. McGrath stated that the Bylaws of the Land Bank do allow properties to be sold back to previous owners.

Supervisor Davidson stated that the Church Street dwelling has not been occupied for eight to ten years and questioned why the taxes went unpaid for years. Mr. Davidson also stated that neither he nor the Town of Lodi carries the responsibility of reminding property owners to pay their taxes.

Supervisor Davidson stated that he is fine with whatever decision the Land Bank Board of Directors makes regarding the Church Street property and that he supports the land bank in future acquisitions of environmentally challenged properties.

Mr. McGrath stated that the acquiring of the Church Street property is desirable of the Land Bank because it is unoccupied, the neighborhood has numerous properties that are in disrepair and gaining control and investing in this property will assist in stabilizing the neighborhood, along with the incoming Lodi Town Hall to be constructed on the street.

Mr. McGrath stated that the Board of Supervisors offered an inventory of challenged properties to the Land Bank. The Land Bank is to consider these properties for acquisition. This helps to cycle the funds back through for other uses, e.g., for environmentally challenged properties and to eventually hire an attorney who specializes in this field.

Mr. Bordeau stated that the Church Street property can be further discussed at the April meeting. Mr. McGrath agreed and the offer to Mr. Bove's client to purchase would be considered at a later date.

Mr. McGrath reviewed the identified properties being offered to the Land Bank for acquisition and to be removed from the 2018 Tax Foreclosure List:

1. Village of Waterloo – 408 Railroad Avenue. This includes two parcels on a dead-end street with the only access to the street being the driveway to the parcels. The Code Officer was contacted but he could not gain access to the interior. This property will be a rehab.
2. Town of Seneca Falls – 16 Barker Street. It is believed the property is vacant, could have problems with rodents and has problems with turnover of renters. This dwelling could be turned around with new carpeting, new walls and paint. It would help increase the neighbors' property values.

3. Village of Lodi – 2127 Church Street. This property needs paint, roof work, gutters. It is the nicest property on the list. Access to the interior of the dwelling has not been made.
4. Town of Waterloo – 385 Cayuga Drive. This property has a trailer situated on it in the Border City mixed neighborhood of trailers and suburban houses from the development of the 1950's / 1960's. Mr. McGrath stated that a renter was in the trailer with no heat or water. The veteran is no longer living there and was referred to Seneca County Department of Human Services (DHS) for a temporary living situation. Mr. John O'Connors, Director, of the Seneca County Veterans Service Agency, is providing assistance to the individual. Mr. McGrath stated that it would cost approximately \$4,000 to demolish the trailer.
5. Town of Junius – 800 Caroline Street. There are currently two trailers that would cost approximately \$8,000 total for the haul away. The property is surrounded by agricultural and residential land.
6. Town of Varick – 5604 Route 96. Mr. McGrath stated that the property was identified late by Ms. Lisa Keshel, Director of Real Property Tax Services, to be added to the list. The site is in the Hamlet of Romulus. It would be a tear down situation.

Mr. McGrath stated that members present need to vote on passing FLRLBC Resolution No. 10-2018, to accept all six (6) properties referred to on BOS Resolution No. 41-18 or accept the five (5) properties excluding the Village of Lodi property. Mr. Ledgerwood made the motion to accept Resolution No. 10-2018 to accept all six properties. Mr. Lazzaro seconded. Carried 4 – 0.

Mr. McGrath reported that the **house acquired in Ovid** has had an asbestos and lead inspection and awaiting the report. A new septic system design has been approved by the Seneca County Environmental Health Department. When the demolitions are completed the house can be transferred to Habitat.

Mr. Fisher reiterated that the Land Bank should partner with Habitat for Humanity to put the properties back on the tax rolls.

Mr. McGrath stated that the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) is more concerned with the \$500,000 grant, noting that it is necessary to close out the \$150,000 grant. The remaining work on the Ovid property will close out that grant. A conference call is placed biweekly between LISC and land bank members throughout New York State for continuous updates. The next funding cycle will be 20 million dollars that NYS land banks will be eligible to apply.

4. Adjournment: A motion was made by Nick Sciotti to adjourn at 5:02 p.m. and seconded by Larry Ledgerwood. Carried 4 – 0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary DeStefano, Staff Resources Asst.