



ECLB Board Meeting

Erie County Land Bank

1230 Townhall Road West, Suite 500, Erie, PA 16509

Tuesday, September 24, 2024 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. EDT

I. Call to Order & Attendance

Board: Brian McGrath, Jack Lee, Christine Rush, James Cardman, Dave Mitchell, Suzanne Weber, Tim Bogdanets, Sandy Morrow

Additional: Jennifer Hirneisen, Christie Mahany, Krista Arnold, Rachel Jessup, Rock Copeland

Absent: none

II. Review Minutes from Previous Meeting

- Motion to approve minutes from previous meeting by D. Mitchell, seconded by S. Morrow; all in favor, none opposed.

III. Financial Report

- Motion to approve financial report by J. Lee, seconded by J. Cardman; all in favor, none opposed.

A. Demolition Fund

Unchanged.

IV. Hearing of the Public

None.

V. Erie Land Bank

Due to timing, ELB didn't have a disbursement request ready for ECLB's August 2024 meeting; therefore, this request is for two months.

- Motion to approve disbursement to Erie Land Bank in the amount of \$47,262.07 (2023 WP \$4,668.55 and 2024 WP \$42,593.52) by D. Mitchell, seconded by J. Lee.
Roll call vote:

C. Rush: Yea

J. Lee: Yea

J. Cardman: Yea

D. Mitchell: Yea

S. Morrow: Yea

S. Weber: Yea

T. Bogdanets: Yea

B. McGrath: Yea

VI. Solicitor Updates

ECLB Bylaws redlined version distributed. Not to be voted on today.

Red entries are new. Yellow entries are requests. Deletions are crossed out.

Original bylaws were created in 2019. This update is to reflect changes already voted on in Board meetings.

Bylaw updates to be reviewed and voted on at October's meeting.

State statutes originally utilized in creating bylaws.

Board members to send comments to C. Mahany; she will distribute them to the Board and J. McClintic.

Governance Committee will discuss comments at October meeting.

VII. Unfinished & New Business

A. Properties

1. Update on training held at 146 Mott Street, Corry

Nothing to update.

2. Update on controlled burn at 516 South 2nd Street, Corry

Good to go; DEP still needs to do the final inspection.

3. Millcreek SWAT Training

5 locations utilized.

K. Arnold and A. Qayumov "tagged along" on the training. Among other types of training, gas deployment was utilized.

A. Qayumov has been updating our social media and is still working on some posts. C. Mahany will notify Board when these are updated with SWAT training info.

4. Award demo quotes for 26 Grant Street, Union City

Lowest bid is from Empire Excavating & Demolition for \$11,675.00.

Empire did 80 E. High St, which involved a yard reset of a large parcel. They had to bring in a lot of fill. While we previously had issues with them, they've been doing well lately.

K. Arnold worked with BIU on the previous home burial and has been making sure demo work is good now.

Questions were raised about disposal sites; approved disposal sites are included in the Scope of Work. DEP can provide more information regarding disposal sites.

We require zoning and building permits. Permits are issued by the municipalities and state building inspector; we're not aware of where contractors are disposing of materials.

Motion to approve awarding demolition contract for 26 Grant Street to Empire for \$11,675.00 by J. Cardman, seconded by S. Morrow. Roll call vote:

C. Rush: Nay

J. Lee: Yea

J. Cardman: Yea

D. Mitchell: Yea

S. Morrow: Yea

S. Weber: Yea

T. Bogdanets: Yea

B. McGrath: Yea

C. Rush commented that she "[doesn't] trust the process with Empire."

B. 19 W Park Place

This is a habitable property; it's structurally sound, good sized, and we've done a cleanout and board up. It's a good property for the CCLT to turn into a permanent housing unit.

The Mayor has discussed the property with the funeral home behind it. The Mayor has discussed our properties with people and seems to have promised that they can acquire these properties.

The funeral home seems to expect to acquire this property, and the Mayor is in agreement. They've put in a crematorium in their old garage, and intend to demolish the property and use the space for a new garage and parking. Neighbors are unhappy about the crematorium in this space.

We have currently invested over \$25,892.00 in the property. It's an excellent renovation project that's four houses in from the main corridor.

J. Cardman inquired if the property is zoned commercial.

The zoning districts are changing. Phil Conklin agreed that we should save the property for the tax roll.

J. Cardman commented that we're here to help municipalities, and he doesn't want us "to battle the municipality over zoning or the local plan."

K. Arnold remarked that we've agreed on the current plan and are partnered with the municipality.

B. McGrath asked if we can recoup the funds we've put into the property.

K. Arnold agreed that this is a valid question. The funeral home sounds like they're willing to pay for the demo; K. Arnold has reached out to them for confirmation of this.

D. Mitchell explained that there are basically two governments currently in Corry. There will be a "big protest" around the funeral home if they buy the property, though it makes sense for the business to demolish the property if acquired.

K. Arnold pulled up the neighborhood on Google Maps and pointed out that this could cause concerns in the neighborhood in terms of parking.

The lot itself isn't worth much; a grant from the CCLT would be applied to the property.

D. Mitchell said that "pragmatically, it would be an improvement to the neighborhood if the funeral home buys it" and pointed out that the business is unlikely to move. He believed that protests against the funeral home would go to local council, and thought the money should be put into other homes in the area.

K. Arnold responded that there are three houses we're looking at to level.

S. Weber asked if this property is for sale.

C. Mahany replied that no, the funeral home would have to apply and whether or not the application is approved is based on best use.

J. Hirneisen suggested finding another property to rehabilitate.

Motion to allow staff to proceed with negotiating a fair deal for sale of 19 West Park Place to the funeral home for a reasonable recovery of costs contingent on

demolition within eight months, moved by D. Mitchell, seconded by S. Weber.
Roll call vote:

C. Rush: Yea
J. Lee: Yea
J. Cardman: Yea
D. Mitchell: Yea
S. Morrow: Yea
S. Weber: Yea
T. Bogdanets: Yea
B. McGrath: Yea

B. Program Updates

1. Master Homeowner Program

Sessions are being held at Corry Hi-Ed on Thursday evenings.

Homeowner's Toolbox was the first session. Jeremy Bloeser spoke at the second session, Home Maintenance. The third session is this week with the topic of Legal and Insurance Issues, to be presented by Brian Hennessey, Esquire.

S. Weber feels that "the Land Bank's mission is to eliminate blight; it's not a social services agency." She suggested that other agencies might take our template, such as the Greater Erie Board of Realtors or maybe a bank. She does not believe that the program "merits the time spent out of the office."

K. Arnold pointed out that this is blight prevention, which is also part of our mission.

C. Rush put in that "it addresses blight in an unconventional way", and that another agency would already have done a program like this if they were going to do so.

S. Weber said that she has seen St. Martin's Center do this before.

C. Rush replied that what she's seen "isn't on this magnitude."

B. McGrath commented that it's fine if someone wants to take it over, but that "we shouldn't fool ourselves that another agency will now volunteer."

J. Cardman stated that he initially agreed with S. Weber's point of view, but then thought that as a whole, what does a Land Bank do? This is another part of promoting blight prevention. He said that "we need to continue with this program and programs like it."

He's previously worked on a program with Mercyhurst University through LEAF regarding bluff recession, which involved code administrators. He suggested at some point that we could show property drainage.

He continued that "we should leave on our tablet" any type of program where we can work on blight prevention, so we don't just demolish.

C. Mahany agreed that "we'll never demo our way out of blight."

K. Arnold reminded us that this is also the introductory run of the program.

J. Cardman commented that we could end up administering grant projects, like the Greater Erie Industrial Authority does, for fixing up homes.

D. Mitchell asked how many people own homes but can't necessarily afford professionals and have no training in home care. ECCRA has programs to assist with half the cost of some home maintenance. He said there is a need for this, as people don't do maintenance since they don't know how. This could also be great for our renovation and rebuild buyers.

B. McGrath stated that if the program is successful, we should continue. Perhaps we can find partners if we expand the program going forward.

C. Mahany replied that we are partnered with Impact Corry and Corry Hi-Ed on this session. She also commented that this program isn't taking much staff time except for startup activities; and that most of the other organizations mentioned as possibly taking over aren't able to take on something like this program due to being short-staffed or having limited funding.

In regards to partners, K. Arnold pointed out that we also have some silent partners, such as those building the displays for sessions.

2. Rapid Reset Exterior Clean Up

We have been asked if the program is available to City of Erie residents. Are we staying within our partnered areas or expanding into the City?

The program helps recover properties that have gotten out of hand, in an attempt to keep the houses on the land from becoming Land Bank properties.

There is a formal application and vetting process. Applications are usually submitted by code enforcement or other municipal officers, not by the property owners.

ECLB has an approved budget of \$100,000.00 for this program.

J. Cardman was concerned that if all municipalities know about this program, "we'll blow through the budget."

K. Arnold replied that they all do know about it.

C. Mahany pointed out that there are strict rules surrounding the program; and that once the funding is gone, it's gone.

We currently have two qualifying applications and several inquiries.

Municipalities are filtering those in need, as zoning officers know the backstories of the properties and owners. Municipalities certify a follow-up plan.

This program is an opportunity for our partners to take advantage of Land Bank tools.

In response to the initial question regarding whether to take the program into the City of Erie, J. Cardman stated that he thinks we should try it out longer before expanding.

C. Mahany replied that we are still piloting the program, so maybe we can expand in the future.

C. Personnel

Executive session.

VIII. Notices & Announcements

None.

IX. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn