

ERIE COUNTY LAND BANK BOARD MEETING

August 29, 2018 – 9:00 to 11:00 AM

Log Cabin Community Center

1401 Juliet Street, Albion, PA

Meeting Minutes

Roll Call

<u> X </u> James Cardman	<u> </u> James Domino	<u> X </u> Jennifer Hirneisen
<u> X </u> Jack Lee	<u> X </u> Brian McGrath	<u> X </u> Dave Mitchell
<u> X </u> Christine Rush	<u> X </u> Dotty Schloss	<u> X </u> Bernard Slomski

Review and Approval of Minutes from July 25, 2018

<u> Bernard Slomski </u> Motioned	<u> Jennifer Hirneisen </u> Seconded	<u> Yes </u> Approved
<u> Yes </u> James Cardman	<u> N/A </u> James Domino	<u> Yes </u> Jennifer Hirneisen
<u> Yes </u> Jack Lee	<u> Yes </u> Brian McGrath	<u> Yes </u> Dave Mitchell
<u> Yes </u> Christine Rush	<u> Yes </u> Dotty Schloss	<u> Yes </u> Bernard Slomski

AGENDA

I. Old Business

Compliance with Sunshine Act

ECLB meetings are subject to the Sunshine Act. All regular board meetings and governance committee meetings are open to the public. They are, and will continue to be, advertised in Erie Times News. The ECLB Articles of Incorporation have been advertised in Erie Times News and the Erie County Legal Journal,

RFP for Housing Assessment and Real Property Strategy

Shelby Clark completed an initial rough draft. The Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development (ECDP) is reviewing the draft, and may need to make a few minor edits. The Housing Assessment will become part of Erie County’s Comprehensive Plan. A significant portion of the project scope will be in support of ECLB. It is anticipated that ECLB will be given an opportunity to provide input on the RFP and consultant selection process.

II. Financial Report

John McGranor provided a financial report. An additional \$164,956.64 of Gaming Funds was received, and that brings the total balance to \$1 million. Expenses incurred include \$4,692.12 to Clark Community Consulting, \$163.30 to Erie Times News, and \$95 to Erie County Legal Journal. Total expenses this period were \$4,950.42.

III. Hearing of the Public

Gary Wells, the Albion Borough Manager, noted that small municipalities, like Albion, need help with blight mitigation due to the expense involved, as well as legal and technical challenges.

Jim Cardman suggested ECLB may want to consider holding blight mitigation workshops in the future.

Dave Mitchell noted that Corry established a core group of community members to assist with assessing properties and blight. He emphasized the importance of getting the entire community involved. Kathy Wyrosdick added that it will be helpful to set guidelines and priorities on a county-wide basis, including not only residential properties, but also commercial and industrial.

IV. New Business

Introduction of Solicitor Alberstadt

Attorney Jay W. Alberstadt, Jr. was welcomed by ECLB.

Agreement for Legal Services – MacDonald, Illig, Jones & Britton, LLP

At the request of the governance committee, Attorney Adam Williams, from the County Solicitor’s office, reviewed the draft agreement on behalf of ECLB. Attorney Adam Williams provided the legal review. Several minor edits were recommended.

Dave Mitchell made a motion to approve the agreement, as revised by the County Solicitor’s office. Dotty Schloss seconded the motion. Jennifer Hirneisen recused herself since she works with MacDonald, Illig, Jones & Britton, LLP.

The agreement with MacDonald, Illig, Jones & Britton, LLP, for provision of legal services was approved by the following vote:

<u>Yes</u>	James Cardman	<u>N/A</u>	James Domino	<u>N/A</u>	Jennifer Hirneisen
<u>Yes</u>	Jack Lee	<u>Yes</u>	Brian McGrath	<u>Yes</u>	Dave Mitchell
<u>Yes</u>	Christine Rush	<u>Yes</u>	Dotty Schloss	<u>Yes</u>	Bernard Slomski

Management Agreement with Erie County Department of Planning

ECDP's accountant has been asked to review the draft agreement. It will then be forwarded to the Erie County Solicitor for review.

Bernie Slomski asked whether or not anyone had concerns about the management fees to be paid to ECDP, and especially the \$50,000 management fee for this year. Would this be perceived negatively by the public since the money is going back to the county? He also noted that many grant programs place a 10% cap on administrative fees. John McGranor noted that these fees were "not to exceed" amounts, and that in his opinion, the actual costs would be significantly less, especially this year. Shelby Clark is no longer working as land bank coordinator. He also explained that in order for ECDP to provide administrative services to ECLB, additional staff would need to be hired. Before hiring additional staff, a funding source would need to be secured.

Jim Cardman stated his opinion that ECLB should be self-funded. The county tax payers should not have to pay for the administrative services provided by ECDP. Dave Mitchell voiced his support for the agreement. He noted that in his opinion, it makes sense to work with the county.

Following some discussion, it was decided that the management agreement should be revisited as part of the September meeting agenda.

Albion Blight Mitigation Planning - Presentation by John McGranor, Planning Department

ECDP is currently assisting Albion Borough with an update to its comprehensive plan. One of Albion's top priorities is to improve its neighborhoods. The goals and action items associated with this priority function as Albion's blight mitigation plan.

The plan is supported by the results of a property condition field survey. All properties in Albion were field inspected for physical condition, and the results were mapped, using GIS. This data will help Albion to identify and prioritize properties for acquisition and demolition, code enforcement efforts, etc. The methodology used is similar to field surveys that were done in the City of Erie and Millcreek Township.

A blighted house located at 38 Cherry Street was identified by Albion as a priority for acquisition and demolition. The property owner has agreed to donate the property, and the adjacent landowner has expressed an interest in acquiring it for additional yard area. The cost of demolition is holding up the project. This may be a good pilot project for ECLB.

City of Erie Land Bank - Presentation by Kathy Wyrosdick and Scott Henry

The City of Erie Land Bank and the Erie Redevelopment Authority are working together to address blight in the City of Erie. Kathy Wyrosdick spoke about the extent of blight in the City of Erie, and the negative impacts that it is having. Statistics show that 4,700 homes are vacant, 1,900 homes have been completely abandoned, and 122 homes have been officially declared blighted. Due to significant

population loss over the previous few decades, there is no market for these homes. That limits rehabilitation options. In most cases, demolition is the best course of action.

Scott Henry talked about the work of the Erie Redevelopment Authority. In recent years, the focus has been on blighted residential properties. They utilize a Blighted Property Review Committee which meets regularly and evaluates properties for blight according to specific criteria. The Redevelopment Authority receives approximately \$400,000/year in CDBG funding from the city. It also uses other grant sources, when available. CDBG eligibility criteria limit the use of these funds to specific neighborhoods based on the income levels of residents.

Kathy requested that ECLB consider making a \$2 million funding commitment to the City of Erie Land Bank over the next 3 years. She explained that a long-term commitment will help the city to plan ahead, pursue grant opportunities, and leverage additional funding. The city would like to pursue additional grants such as ECGRA Renaissance Block grants, Keystone Community grants from DCED, etc. The funding is needed primarily for property acquisition by eminent domain (by Redevelopment Authority), private sale and/or tax sales.

Jim Cardman expressed a preference for plans to be provided for the proper disposition of any properties acquired, including the anticipated outcome, and information about how the community will benefit. Detailed plans will help ECLB evaluate its options and select the best applications/projects.

Kathy explained that it's not always possible to determine in advance whether a property is a good candidate for rehabilitation, or if demolition will be needed. For example, interior access is not always possible. Also, in some cases, neighborhood groups step forward and offer to assist with rehabilitation.

No decisions were made regarding the City of Erie Land Bank's funding request. Follow-up discussions will be needed.

V. Other Business

ECLB thanked Albion Borough for the use of its facility and for providing refreshments.

VI. Adjournment

 Dave Mitchell Motioned Brian McGrath Seconded Yes Approved

Next Scheduled Meeting: September 26, 2018
Union City Borough Building
13 South Main Street, Union City