

**Rochester Land Bank Corporation**

**Meeting Minutes**

**February 18, 2016**

**City Hall, Rm. #223-B**

**30 Church Street,**

**Rochester, NY 14614**

Board Members Present: Andrea Guzzetta, Kim Jones, George Parker, Kate Washington, Carol Wheeler

Board Member(s) Absent: Gary Kirkmire, Dana Miller

Non-Board Members Present: Maritza Mejias, Rianne Mitchell, Kathy Sheets, Scott Smith

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 pm by Carol Wheeler, Board Chair.

The minutes from the last meeting were distributed. George Parker moved that the minutes be approved; Kate Washington seconded. The motion was approved by the board.

The next item on the agenda was review and approval of the Annual Report to City Council scheduled for the March 3<sup>rd</sup> Council work session. Andrea Guzzetta asked if the report should be sent to Council members prior to the meeting. Carol Wheeler answered that she would like to distribute it them ahead of time, but after the Mayor had an opportunity to review it. Carol also mentioned that Council might find it useful to have the average number of days the Land Bank held properties in inventory. George Parker suggested that the median time would be more informative. Kathy Sheets agreed noting that the holding time for 21 Straub Street was so much longer than for other properties because it was involved in three separate grant activities. Purchased originally for HOME Rochester, it was subsequently deemed unsuitable for the program; it was demolished using blight removal funds from the second round grant award then the lot transferred for use in the Neighborhood Builders program. George Parker then asked whether the CRI program had had the expected impact. Carol Wheeler noted that the influx of the AG's funds has definitely helped sustain HOME Rochester which was experiencing increasing costs for environmental remediation at the same time that the availability of City subsidy was decreasing. The CRI funds also made the Neighborhood Builders program, which is diversifying income levels in purchasers of new builds, feasible. Additionally, the funds allowed the acquisition of more than thirty properties that the RHDFC might have been otherwise unable to afford. Carol Wheeler continued that the next logical question was, other than augmenting an existing program, what else the Land Bank should be doing. There may be an opportunity to focus on specific geographic areas or other alternatives. She highlighted the importance of identifying other resources that will allow the Land Bank to continue operating without the OAG's funds. Kate Washington pointed out that it is not a question of if the OAG funds go away, but when. Kathy Sheets added that as the number of land banks grows, funds are stretched even thinner. Kate Washington said that is why it is important to make good use of the resources made available. Kate recommended that the board start looking at the Land Bank as a tool for collaborating with other developers. Returning to the report, Carol Wheeler stated that she would be creating a PowerPoint presentation to highlight some items in the fairly dense report. She asked how much time was on the agenda for the Land Bank. Andrea Guzzetta answered that the Land Bank would have an hour including time for questions.

The board then discussed the status of the activities into which the Land Bank may potentially be able to reprogram the excess acquisition funds. As a related topic, Kathy Sheets mentioned that there was the possibility that additional funding might be made available in the CRI program specifically for quality affordable rental. The director of the Syracuse land bank mentioned that this is a particular problem in her area providing the impetus for a proposed project that will assist qualified investors with costs to rehabilitate the exterior of rental properties to a level that helps values of neighboring properties. The discussion at this point is around a pilot program that would include the Buffalo, Syracuse and Rochester land banks. Rochester Land Bank's close relationship with the City allows it to provide data to which other land banks may not have access. Andrea Guzzetta asked about any proposed guidelines to structure such a program and where the money would be spent. Kathy Sheets answered that those decisions would probably be left to the land banks' discretion. The OAG recognizes such a program would require monitoring and possibly interior inspections of occupied properties. There is also a question about what would happen upon resale of the properties. Maritza Mejias noted that the type of monitoring required would probably be similar to what is currently performed for HOME Rochester. Carol Wheeler said that the Administration and Finance Office in the City's Neighborhood and Business Development Department provides monitoring for City supported rental properties as well as HOME Rochester. Kim Jones emphasized that it would be important to establish criteria by which properties and qualified developers could be chosen at the very outset of any such project. Carol Wheeler mentioned that the City could supply its specs for the façade grants provided as part of its Focused Investment Strategy (FIS) initiative. Kathy Sheets noted that standardized specifications would be particularly important if the Land Bank would be reimbursing investors for exterior work rather than contracting for it directly.

Regarding the activities the Land Bank may be able to address with current CRI funds, in addition to the two firms previously discussed, a local firm has been approached to provide an estimate for the window guards to allow for ventilation and protection from vandalism with minimal visual impact on the façade at the Pulaski Library. Regarding the multi-use property the Land Bank acquired on Conkey Ave, the local not-for-profit developer who expressed interest has been in contact with Maritza Mejias to indicate that a development proposal will be forthcoming. Discussion at the January meeting suggested that, rather than enforcing the deed restriction on 44 Aldine Street and the using the balance of the funds to fund an alternative disposition, the board would support returning 44 Aldine Street to the HOME Rochester program and providing subsidy up to \$40,000 to aid in its rehabilitation, provided the RHDFC also contributes funds. Kathy Sheets explained such a decision would not ensure that there were adequate funds to complete the rehabilitation. The most recent pro forma indicates that the Greater Rochester Housing Partnership would serve as developer and waive their fee. It also includes \$15,000 of AHC subsidy that were not previously committed. Kathy Sheets asked Carol Wheeler whether it was feasible for the City to contribute the necessary additional subsidy of \$40,000. Carol indicated that there are funds available in the current budget and noted that, in fact, no additional subsidy from the OAG's grant was needed to complete HOME Rochester rehabilitation of 44 Aldine Street. Kathy Sheets asked whether it was exceptional for the City to provide that level of subsidy to a single property. Carol Wheeler answered that it was not an unusual amount. Kathy Sheets clarified that as neither the RHDFC nor the City were requesting additional subsidy from the Land Bank, the question before the board was to decide whether to give the RHDFC an extension provided the property is completed in the HOME Rochester program or to exercise the reverter clause and find some other acceptable method of disposition. George Parker moved that we accept the RHDFC's revised pro forma for the rehabilitation of 44 Aldine Street, provided the City agreed to pay the subsidy amount listed. Andrea Guzzetta said that it she would prefer to hear from the members of the board who were unable to attend this meeting prior to a making decision. The other board members present agreed and asked that a special meeting be scheduled prior to the next regular monthly board meeting to make a final decision about the property.

Kim Jones then presented the Treasurer's Report and gave a report of the CRI grant progress.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm.

ATTEST:   
George Parker - Secretary, Rochester Land Bank Corporation