



Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County  
January 9, 2025 Meeting

The regular meeting of the Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County was held at 9:00 a.m. by Zoom video conference. A recording of this meeting is available at: <https://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Community-Economic-Development/Lehigh-County-Redevelopment-Authority>.

**ATTENDING**

**Board Members:** Oscar Ghasab (OG), Ricky Gower (RG), Jill Seitz (JS), David Weinstein (DW), Michael Yeager (MY). Quorum obtained.

Also in attendance representing the Authority, Chris Gulotta (CG) and Kent Herman (KH)

County Staff: Virginia Haas (VH), Cyndi King (CK)

**ABSENT**

Frank Kane (FK)

Public Guests: None

**AGENDA ITEMS**

**CALL TO ORDER at 9:00 a.m. by MY**

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS - None**

**Review and Approval of Minutes of Special Meeting on November 26, 2024 and Regular Meeting on December 5, 2024 Meetings**

No questions or concerns on minutes from either meeting; motion for approval made by DW; seconded by JS. No opposition; all in favor. Minutes approved.

## **Financial Report and Approval of Bills – See Tab B**

Five invoices totaling \$55,786.96 to be paid: The Gulotta Group \$3,968.75 with the Borough of Catasauqua being billed, as per the RALC MOA, for \$687.50 for the Executive Director’s time on the Iron Works project; King Spry \$799.00 with \$629.00 being billed to the Borough of Catasauqua for the Solicitor’s time on the Iron Works project as per the RALC MOA; Zelenkofske Axelrod \$800.00 for accounting services; T-Mobile \$65.61, and Elias Property Group \$50,153.60 which will be paid out when Elias Property Group provides the RALC with a cancelled check for \$51,153.60. CG asked OG whether RALC was up-to-date on reimbursements from Catasauqua to which OG replied “We are.”

CG reviewed the Financial Report for the month ending 11-30-24. Year-To-Date revenue \$158,625.65, Total Expenditures \$117,952.71 which includes the grant funding payable to the Elias Property Group of \$67,000.00, Net Income \$40,672.94, Fund Balance beginning January 1, 2024 \$112,187.80, through November Fund Balance of \$152,860.74, Operating Fund Balance is Cash-Money Market Account \$54,463.91 and Cash-Checking \$44,575.52. CG asked for questions. VH commented that the RALC should receive the \$25,000 from the County for FY 2025 within two-weeks. DW questioned whether the date on the bottom Fund Balance 12/31/2023 should be 2024. CG replied that was the fund balance entering [into] the year 2024. CG reminded the Board this is a November 30, 2024 financial statement and not a year-end financial for 2024.

MY asked if there were any questions; there were no questions, comments, or concerns.

**OLD BUSINESS - None**

**STATUS REPORTS - Executive Director’s Report - See Tab C**

### **IRON WORKS PROJECT**

Catasauqua Borough Council took action on the Letter of Intent (LOI) with VM Development at a Special Meeting held 12/16/24. The next step is to approve an agreement of sale with the developer which CG expects to receive next week.

The state has approved the Keystone Communities Initiative \$50,000.00 grant funding to be applied to predevelopment costs of the VM Development Group for

engineering and other professional services in conjunction with the redevelopment of the Iron Works site. A funding agreement will not be voted upon until RALC receives an executed agreement of sale. CG reported having a good meeting earlier this week with Senator Nick Miller and State Representative Jeannie McNeil about funding for the \$3.6 million dollar request sent to the state on 12/6/24 for mixed-use housing. RALC is hoping to receive a portion of that money to move ahead enabling a larger first phase of the project which, at a minimum, is going to be townhouse development or apartment development or mixed-use development. CG noted the tremendous momentum for this project and reinforced how desirable it would be for Phase 1 to be larger if additional funding could be received now rather than later.

### **BLIGHT-TO-BRIGHT INITIATIVE**

Last month, RALC refiled the application with the state for \$352,500.00. If these funds are approved, funding will go to Catasauqua, North Whitehall, and Whitehall for rehabilitation and demolition of their blighted properties. CG believes notification about the application will arrive in Spring 2025. On 1/7/25, CG reached out to Lehigh County municipalities (except Allentown, Bethlehem, and Lower Milford) to see if they were interested in applying for the CDBG funding for blight remediation. CG said if the municipalities do not show interest in CDBG funding by March 17, he will have to consider asking the County to decommit those funds or perhaps discussing with the County how the RALC might use those funds for another eligible purposes. These CDBG funds do not need to be spent until the end of September but CG does not want to wait until the last minute so he is proactively looking at this matter.

### **REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER LEHIGH VALLEY DAIRY PROPERTY**

Phase II environmental has been received. Elias Property Group has contracted Ott Consulting for a sketch plan. The RALC approved a \$15,000.00 grant to Elias Property Group for that work to move ahead.

MY asked whether VM was a part of the meeting with Senator Miller and Representative McNeil. Yes, they were and Catasauqua Borough Manager,

Borough Council President, and the Borough's Engineer Chad Helmer were also present.

MY asked CG'S opinion on possible reasons why municipalities' appeared reluctant to accept blight remediation funding. CG speculated that because the money was to be used solely for demolition of buildings unfit for human inhabitation that municipalities might not want to go through the International Property Maintenance Code process to demolish those blighted structures. In general, perhaps the municipalities do not know about the process or do not have a comfort level with the process. KH observed that CG's inclination is probably correct in that the local boroughs, townships, and governments have never utilized that tool. KH questioned whether a brief but comprehensive outline of the process to the borough managers might be in order. As a follow-up, CG agreed to compile the information into an outline and send it out to the managers in addition to having conversations with the municipal managers that he is already familiar.

No further questions or comments on the Executive Director's Report.

**RESOLUTIONS – None**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION – None**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**2024 ANNUAL REPORT – TAB D**

After the Board approves the annual report, CG will send it to the municipalities so they are aware of what the RALC has been doing and what its capabilities are. He will also send the report to county government and the legislative delegation from Lehigh County so they have an understanding of what the RALC has accomplished. CG reflected that it was a good year with substantial progress for the Iron Works Project. The RALC resubmitted the application under the Blight-To-Bright initiative for Whitehall, Catasauqua, and North Whitehall. Substantial progress has also been made on the former site of the Lehigh Valley Dairy. CG believes the RALC has demonstrated its value to municipalities during 2024.

MY asked for questions or comments to the 2024 Annual Report. MY offered that the report was very well done, was very comprehensive, and MY appreciated CG's input. There being no further questions or comments, MY entertained a motion to

accept the 2024 Annual Report as presented. DW made the motion which was seconded by RG. Unanimous voice approval. The annual report has been accepted and CG given authority to disseminate it.

### **GRANT AGREEMENT WITH PA DCED FOR \$50,000 IRON WORKS PROJECT**

Senator Nick Miller advocated for RALC to receive this funding for engineering costs associated with the Iron Works Project. RALC has received the grant agreement; KH has reviewed that agreement. There are obligations that RALC is required to meet in terms of insurance requirements which are identical to the \$120,000.00 funding received last year. CG noted that this funding will be distributed as a lump sum so the RALC will not be required to requisition the funds. CG recommends the RALC approve the grant agreement. MY clarified and CG agreed that this is the grant agreement which is predicated on the RALC first receiving the executed agreement of sale before the funds are provided to VM. MY asked whether VM Group was already aware that the \$50,000.00 had been awarded to the RALC. CG affirmed that he had indicated during the meeting with Senator Miller that the grant had been approved. MY expressed his pleasure that VM Group is aware of RALC's continued role in advocating for them and arduously working to move this project forward while looking for many avenues of support and participation for them. MY asked for questions or concerns about this grant agreement. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to accept this grant agreement. OG made the motion seconded by DW. Unanimous voice approval.

**COMMENTS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS - None**

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – None**

The next meeting of the RALC is Thursday, February 6, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom. MY entertained a motion made by RG and seconded by OG to adjourn the meeting. No opposition. Meeting is adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cynthia L. King