



Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County
November 7, 2024 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 October 3, 2024 Meeting

No questions or concerns; motion for approval made by RG; seconded by DW. No opposition; all in favor. Minutes approved.

Financial Report and Approval of Bills – See Tab B

Four invoices totaling \$5,619.80 to be paid: The Gulotta Group \$3,773.07 with the Borough of Catasauqua being billed, as per the RALC MOA, for \$2,031.25 for the Executive Director's time on the Iron Works project; King Spry \$1,003.00 with \$714.00 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; and a new bill for T-Mobile \$43.73. CG previously shared with MY and OG the need for the RALC Executive Director to purchase a separate phone to conduct RALC business as the previous 2-line set-up with his existing phone did not provide voice mail to the RALC phone line. The T-Mobile bill will be monthly debited from the account.

CG reviewed the financial statement for the period October 1 through October 31, 2024: Total Assets \$225,099.63 broken down to the Money Market Account \$54,353.68, Checking Account \$50,169.18, and the LV Dairy Project (State) Grant \$120,576.77 which contains interest*; Liabilities \$67,000 which is a grant amount payable to the Elias Property Group for predevelopment work, specifically the completion of the Phase II Environmental Assessment at the former Lehigh Valley Dairy Co-Op site; Revenues Year-to-Date \$158,222.86, Expenditures \$112,311.03 which include the grant expense for the Elias Property Group with a remaining net income of \$45,911.83, Fund Balance beginning 12/31/23 \$112,187.80 and currently at \$158,099.63.

CG discussed the Operating Fund balance being the Money Market Account and the Checking totaling \$104,522.86. The Lehigh County Board of Commissioners will be approving \$25,000 in the 2025 budget for the RALC.

* CG noted that the interest is required to be returned pursuant to the grant agreement and noted that perhaps the accountant should be booking the interest as a liability.

MY asked OG whether Catasauqua was up-to-date on the renumeration of outstanding amounts; OG responded affirmatively.

MY asked if there were any questions; there were no questions, comments, or concerns. MY asked for a motion to approve the financial report and the bills. OG made the motion which was seconded by RG. Unanimous voice approval.

OLD BUSINESS - None

STATUS REPORTS - Executive Director's Report - See Tab C

IRON WORKS PROJECT

CG reported RALC is continuing to negotiate the letter of intent with the VM Development group to which good progress is being made. CG expected to receive an updated letter of intent reflecting recent conversations with them which letter was not received yesterday in time for today's meeting. CG previously distributed the letter to the board which letter has been shared again along with updated notes from recent discussions and which will be discussed more deeply in Executive Session at today's meeting. The RALC has the opportunity to apply for a predevelopment grant for \$50,000.00. Senator Miller and his staff indicated that the RALC should submit a request [for this grant funding] to their office and they, in turn, forwarded that request to the PA Department of Community & Economic Development (PA DCED). Yesterday, CG received an email from PA DCED inviting RALC to apply for the \$50,000 grant funding. CG will timely submit the paperwork to the state. The plan is to provide those funds to the developer for predevelopment costs, specifically engineering costs associated with the redevelopment of the Iron Works site.

BLIGHT-TO-BRIGHT INITIATIVE

CG reported the reapplication for funding to the Main Street Matters program is almost complete. That grant funding would be for \$352,500.00. North Whitehall Township pledged \$75,000.00 over three-years in matching funds rather than \$150,000.00. Whitehall Township pledged \$150,000.00 over three-years in matching funds and the Borough of Catasauqua pledged their local match of \$52,500.00. In addition, RALC has \$75,000.00 in Community Block Grant Development (CDBG) funding. All of these funds combined will allow the RALC to apply for this grant. Approximately \$32,000.00 for administrative costs is included in this grant application.

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER LEHIGH VALLEY DAIRY PROPERTY

The owner reported to CG that the Phase II Environmental Study work was completed as of October. The written report should be received by the end of November. This report will give the RALC an idea of any recognized environmental conditions or environmental issues that need to be resolved. The

next step is for the owner to contract with a civil engineering firm for a sketch plan for proposed development. CG and Senator Miller have conferred on the balance of the state grant of \$120,000.00 which, at this time, is roughly \$53,000.00 with a few thousand dollars of that amount being reserved for audit, but which remaining balance might be provided as an additional grant to the Elias Property Group. CG is putting together a spreadsheet of all the proposals received which will help to identify which firm is best suited to undertake this work. No action is required this month until CG prepares the spreadsheet and also confers with the owner. A sketch plan is the next step which is essentially a preliminary land development plan and also included in that would be preliminary engineering related to traffic improvements at the intersection of MacArthur Road.

MY asked CG what is involved in the \$32,000.00 administrative fee in the Blight-To-Bright initiative. CG replied that as each municipality looks to spend the funding, they are required to provide information to CG to make certain the property meets the definition of “blighted;” specifications being crafted by the municipality for the proposed work would also be required to be submitted to CG for review so he can make certain that all the required state grant specifications are being met by the municipalities’ specifications, for example, the Pennsylvania wage rates. CG would authorize them to receive bids and after awarding a bid, the municipality would pay the contractor after which the RALC would requisition the funds and reimburse the municipality for that work. The RALC would have a subrecipient grant agreement with each municipality which basically outlines that the RALC would provide them with a certain amount of funding for their use either for rehabilitation or demolition of blighted properties.

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

RESOLUTIONS – Tab D - Resolution Authorizing Submission of Main Street Matters Grant Application to PA DCED

This resolution is a state requirement indicating that the Board of the RALC supports CG submitting a grant application in the amount of \$352,500.00 as referenced in the Executive Director’s report under “Blight to Bright Initiative.” The resolution references the availability of the matching funds which was explained at today’s meeting and the fact that the RALC would enter into subrecipient agreements with each of the three municipalities. RG would sign the resolution and send it to CG if the Board passes the resolution. MY called for questions or comments. DW suggested beginning 2025 that the resolutions be marked with year and the chronological number of the resolution for that year.

This numbering method would facilitate tracking. No further questions or comments. MY asked for a motion; DW made a motion to approve the resolution inclusive of DW's suggestion which was seconded by RG. Unanimous voice approval. Motion passed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – Real Estate Matter

MY asked for a motion to go into Executive Session. OG made the motion which was seconded by DW. With unanimous voice approval, only members of the RALC, Solicitor, and Executive Director went into Executive Session. JS made a motion to leave Executive Session which was seconded by RG.

NEW BUSINESS - None

COMMENTS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

MY called for questions or comments from the board; there were none.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – None

The next meeting of the RALC is Thursday, December 5, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom. MY asked the Board to stay alert for emails calling for another meeting prior to the December 5 regularly scheduled meeting which topic would be relative to the Iron Works Project. MY will be unavailable for the December meeting; DW, Vice-Chair, will lead the next meeting. MY entertained a motion made by RG and seconded by OG to adjourn the meeting. Unanimous voice approval; meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia L. King