



Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County
December 5, 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). Quorum obtained.

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

County Staff: Cyndi King (CK)

ABSENT

Virginia Haas (VH), Frank Kane (FK) Michael Yeager (MY)

Public Guests: None

AGENDA ITEMS

CALL TO ORDER at 9:00 a.m. by DW

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS - None

Review and Approval of Minutes of November 7, 2024 Meeting

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

Financial Report and Approval of Bills – See Tab B

Four invoices totaling \$6,450.54 to be paid: The Gulotta Group \$5,091.93 with the Borough of Catasauqua being billed, as per the RALC MOA, for \$2,312.50 for the Executive Director's time on the Iron Works project; King Spry \$493.00 with \$289.00 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 T-Mobile \$65.61.

DW asked if there were any questions; there were no questions, comments, or concerns. DW asked for a motion to approve the financial report and the bills. RG made the motion which was seconded by JS. No opposition. Financial report and bills approved as presented.

OLD BUSINESS - None

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

IRON WORKS PROJECT

RALC took action on the Letter of Intent (LOI) with VM Development at the Special Meeting held 11/26/24. The Borough of Catasauqua will be acting on that LOI at their 12/16/24 Council meeting which CG plans to attend.

On 11/26/24, RALC filed the application for \$50,000 Keystone Communities Initiative funding which, if approved, will be provided to the developer for legal and other professional services in conjunction with the redevelopment of the Iron Works site. As soon as CG receives the signed grant agreement from the state and the Borough has approved the LOI, RALC will move ahead, most likely at the January RALC meeting, to contract those funds with VM Development Group.

RALC also filed a Local Share Account (LSA) application for \$1,000,000.00 with the Commonwealth to construct a retaining wall in conjunction with the widening of Front Street to make it a 2-way street with 5-foot-wide sidewalks on each side of the street along with an amenity strip to include street trees and street lights. LSA applications take a while for the state to process. The Borough does have funds in place to do the actual streetscape work as soon as the retaining wall funding is approved.

BLIGHT-TO-BRIGHT INITIATIVE

On 11/15/24, RALC refiled the application with the state which, if these funds are approved, would provide funding to Catasauqua, North Whitehall, and Whitehall to rehabilitate and demolish blighted properties. CG believes notification about the application will arrive in Spring 2025. CG requested these municipalities to contact the state representatives to send letters of support to PA DCED in favor of said application.

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER LEHIGH VALLEY DAIRY PROPERTY

On 12/2/24, CG spoke with the owner of the site who has not yet received the Phase II report which was due in November. CG believes that report will be received shortly. The Phase II report will identify any hazardous or recognized environmental conditions that need to be resolved. Assuming there is no major environmental remediation involved, the next step in moving ahead (which was the impression given to CG) would be to contract with a civil engineering firm to do a sketch plan or concept plan of the ten-acre property in terms of what the uses would be and how that would lay out. In conjunction with that, an opinion of probable costs on infrastructure improvement build-outs such as streets, street lighting, and underground utilities could be obtained. CG noted that proposals from three engineering firms have already been obtained. Of those three, the property owner indicated that he would like to hire Ott Consulting Group and award them the project. CG noted that the RALC is not awarding the contract so the award does not have to go to the lowest bidder. Instead, RALC is providing the \$15,000.00 funding for the owner to contract for the work. Ott Consulting's proposal was for \$14,500.00 but they also indicated possible reimbursables up to \$500.00 bringing the total of the grant award to \$15,000.00. The source of funds for the \$15,000.00 is the remainder of the \$120,000.00 state grant.

The owner is receiving proposals from traffic engineering firms, which would require an additional contract with the RALC, for preliminary work on what traffic engineering would be necessary at the intersection where the former dairy site property abuts MacArthur Road which situation is important with PennDOT. As soon as those proposals are received, CG will share them with the RALC. There is the possibility that the RALC will be asked to provide additional grant funding to

the Elias Property Group for the preliminary traffic engineering piece of the redevelopment.

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

RESOLUTIONS – None

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

NEW BUSINESS

2025 PROPOSED BUDGET – TAB D

\$96,000.00 in income with \$75,670.00 in projected expenses with a budgeted surplus of \$20,330.00. CG also noted that \$50,000.00 has been budgeted for a payment by Catasauqua Borough pursuant to the MOA when the Iron Works site has closing. CG budgeted those funds for 2025 because of the substantial likelihood that there will be a closing on the land by the end of 2025. No questions or comments on the budget. OG made the motion to approve the budget which was seconded by RG. No opposition; proposed budget is accepted as presented.

LEHIGH COUNTY CDBG GRANT AGREEMENT FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING

CG submitted an application to the County of Lehigh for \$75,000.00 in 2024 CDBG funding which would be made available to municipalities throughout Lehigh County for the demolition of blighted properties. That application was approved. KH has reviewed the grant agreement. The language is the same as the \$150,000.00 2023 CDBG funding grant agreement. None of the CDBG funds have been spent yet but some municipalities have shown interest about using this money and CG is hopeful the RALC will receive applications in early 2025. No questions or comments on this grant agreement. JS made the motion to approve the grant agreement which was seconded by RG. No opposition; agreement is approved as presented.

CONSULTING CONTRACT WITH THE GULOTTA GROUP

The 2025 proposal was distributed by email separately from the December Board Packet earlier this week after CG realized that his contract would expire at the end of December 2024 and that he had already distributed December's Board Packet.

The hourly rate remains unchanged with approximately 25-hours per month which is reflected in the 2025 budget which was just approved. No questions or comments on the contract. JS made the motion to approve the contract extension which was seconded by OG. No opposition. The contract extension is approved as presented.

\$15,000.00 GRANT TO ELIAS PROPERTY GROUP FOR CONCEPT DRAWINGS

The grant would be a maximum of \$15,000.00 made to the Elias Property Group consistent with the terms of the funding agreement provided to them by the RALC for the Phase II work. It is a reimbursed grant to be paid out to the Elias Property Group only after the work has been completed and the RALC has been invoiced with copies of cancelled checks for that work. The source of the grant would be the state funds that were awarded to RALC earlier this year. No questions or comments on the reimbursable grant. RG made the motion to approve the grant which was seconded by OG. No opposition. The reimbursable grant to Elias Property Group is approved as presented.

2025 MEETING DATES and TIMES

Distributed separately from the Board Packet earlier in the week, CG proposed to maintain the monthly meeting on the first Thursday of each month except in January and May of 2025 wherein those two meetings would be held on Thursday in the second week of each month. Discussion ensued. April's meeting will be in-person at 9:00 a.m. at the Lehigh County Government Center. No further questions or comments. JS made the motion to accept the 2025 meeting dates and times which was seconded by OG. No opposition. 2025 RALC meeting dates and times have been approved as presented.

COMMENTS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

DW called for questions or comments from the board. OG asked CG to provide him with the name and contact information of the person within the Borough of Catasauqua who mails checks to the RALC so he can update the address where the checks should be mailed. CG will send OG an email with that information.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – None

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

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia L. King