



Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County  
February 6, 2025 Annual Meeting

The annual 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**

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**Review of existing Board: MY, Chairman; DW, Vice-Chairman; OG, Treasurer; RG, Secretary**

MY asked for nominations for election of officers for the RALC for 2025.  
DW made the motion to nominate the Board that is presently serving;

seconded by JS. DW made the motion to close the slate of election; seconded by RG. Unanimous voice approval. MY asked RG to cast the ballot to which was acknowledged.

### **REAPPOINTMENT OF SOLICITOR**

**KH of King, Spry, Herman, Freund, & Faul, LLC is the current solicitor for the RALC.**

MY nominated KH and his firm to continue serving RALC as solicitor; seconded by DW. Unanimous voice approval. KH and King, Spry, Herman, Freund, & Faul, LLC will continue as solicitor.

### **REAPPOINTMENT OF ACCOUNTING FIRM**

**Zelenkofske Axelrod, LLC is the current accounting firm for the RALC.**

CG suggested retaining this firm through June 30 while the RALC requests proposals from other firms; OG agreed it would be responsible to obtain competitive quotes and not get tunnel-vision with just one firm. OG made the motion to obtain other accounting firm quotes; seconded by DW. Unanimous voice approval. MY and CG will work on obtaining proposals for consideration by the Board.

### **ADJOURNMENT OF ANNUAL MEETING**

With no further questions or concerns, MY asked for a motion to adjourn the annual meeting. RG made the motion which was seconded by JS. Unanimous voice approval.

The regular meeting of the Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County was held at 9:07 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: Deb Mellish and David Bernini, both of Catasauqua

**AGENDA ITEMS**

**CALL TO ORDER at 9:07 a.m. by MY**

**Review and Approval of Minutes of January 9, 2025 Meeting**

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

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

Four invoices totaling \$4,315.61 to be paid: The Gulotta Group \$3,042.00 with the Borough of Catasauqua being billed, as per the RALC MOA, for \$250.00 for the Executive Director’s time on the Iron Works project; King Spry \$408.00 with no time billed to the Borough of Catasauqua for the Solicitor’s time on the Iron Works project; Zelenkofske Axelrod \$800.00 for accounting services; and T-Mobile phone bill for the Executive Director’s use specifically for RALC business is \$65.61.

OG and MY reviewed the bills for payment prior to the Board meeting and agreed. DW made a motion to approve the bills as presented; seconded by OG. Unanimous voice approval.

CG reviewed the unaudited Year-End Financial Report for the year ending 12-31-24. Total assets: \$217,837.69 which includes interest earned on the grant funds. Accounts Payable: \$67,000.00 Elias Property Group has not yet billed RALC for the cost of the Phase II Environmental work. Fund Balance: \$150,837.69. Year-To-Date revenue \$162,253.14 broken down into \$25,000.00 grant funding from the County of Lehigh, \$120,000.00 grant funding from the

State of Pennsylvania, \$14,122.27 in Program Service Fees which is the Executive Director and the Solicitor's time billed back to the Borough of Catasauqua on the Iron Works Project, and \$3,130.87 in Interest Income. Expenditures: \$32,080.15 is a gross number for CG's total monthly billings which includes advanced costs and mileage in those billings; Insurance: \$3,666.00. Conferences: \$450.00. Accounting Services: \$8,800.00. Advertising: \$1,079.15. Legal Fees: \$10,353.00. Telephone: \$174.95. Grant Expenses: \$67,000.00 accrued expense of the grant to the Elias Property Group. Total Expenditures: \$123,603.25. Net Income for 2024 is \$38,649.89. Fund Balance beginning 12/31/23: \$112,187.80. The total fund balance is \$150,837.69.

MY asked if there were any questions; there were no questions, comments, or concerns. MY asked for a motion of recognition of the unaudited financial statement for the year ending 12/31/24. JS made such motion of recognition and DW seconded the motion. Unanimous voice approval.

CG asked OG whether the state's \$50,000.00 grant to the RALC had been received. OG immediately checked the account. The other expected funding is \$25,000.00 from the County of Lehigh.

### **OLD BUSINESS - None**

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

#### **IRON WORKS PROJECT**

Catasauqua Borough Council unanimously approved the Letter of Intent (LOI) with VM Development (VM) in December. A draft of the agreement of sale has been received. There was a productive meeting with the Advisory Committee on February 5 wherein they reviewed that draft. There is some commentary on the draft which will be transmitted back to VM. However, for all intents and purposes, everyone is "on the same page" in terms of the substantive terms in the agreement of sale. CG's goal is to have the fully executed agreement of sale completed by the end of the first quarter of 2025.

Prior to approving the agreement of sale, Borough Council has advised VM they would like VM to appear before the Council to answer any questions they may have on the development proposal and/or on the project. VM has agreed to do that.

Once the agreement of sale is executed, construction will not immediately begin. There is a “due diligence” period of up to 120-days wherein the developer can take a second-look at environmental issues, title issues, and related issues; there is a planning period that follows this due diligence period where they move ahead with land development approval and the need for any variances [is addressed]; and finally, there is a financing approval period where the developer would obtain financing. There is a commitment from VM to move ahead with the first phase regardless of whether there is any additional public financing brought in for the project. The first phase will be modest with ten townhomes or a mixed-use building or a commercial building. Regardless of RALC’s efforts to bring public financing into the project, VM will have 18-months after closing to begin Phase I of the development. It will take a while to break ground but CG believes everything is in a good position. Once there is a signed agreement of sale with VM, RALC can then contract the \$50,000.00 funding from PA DCED acquired with Senator Nick Miller’s assistance for VM’s use in professional engineering fees.

DW asked CG whether he thought the Agreement of Sale would be signed within the next 30-days. CG answered, “Maybe 45 with the goal being at the end of March.” CG stated he is encouraged because the initial draft of the agreement of sale is substantively in compliance with the letter of intent. The agreement of sale will require some revising but everyone is basically on the same page.

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

Last month, RALC sent an email to the municipal managers about the availability of the CDBG funds for the demolition of dangerous structures. CG intends to resend that email to include more detailed information about the process of municipalities basically declaring blighted properties dangerous structures and then, if the owner does not comply with the demolition of the structure, using the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) provisions that allow the municipality itself to move in and demolish the property. It is a process that includes due process for the owner, too. The application deadline is March 17. If the RALC does not receive any applications, CG will have a discussion with the County about reallocating those funds for another use but still related to fighting blight.

## **COUNTY DEMOLITION AND REHABILITATION FUND**

CG informed the Board of the January 14 meeting he attended along with FK, VH, and Charles Smith, Assistant Solicitor for Lehigh County and representatives from the Tax Claims Bureau and Sheriff's Department where legislation establishing a demolition and rehabilitation fund was discussed. A \$250 fee would be charged to buyers at sheriff sales/mortgage foreclosures and also at delinquent tax sales. This fee would go into a fund for demolition of blighted and/or rehabilitation of blighted properties. It is expected to generate close to \$25,000.00 which can be used to leverage state and federal grants. VH will seek sponsorship of the ordinance for the February 26 or March 12 Board of Commissioners meeting.

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

Demotion has substantially been completed. Elias Property Group is looking at a variety of development options. Further discussion will take place in Executive Session because it potentially involves the purchase of real estate.

## **2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

CG sent the annual report to the state legislative delegation, the County, partner organizations (LVPC, LVEDC) and to all municipalities. Some in-person meetings have been scheduled with municipalities this month and CG had a meeting with Slatington's new manager on strategies to address blighted properties. Coplay, Upper Macungie, and Salisbury are other municipalities scheduled for in-person meetings with CG. CG will meet with JS and Becky Bradley of the LVPC to discuss mutual objectives of the two organizations.

CG intends to start a quarterly electronic newsletter by the end of March. The intention of the newsletter is to keep the work of the RALC in front of the municipalities and the state elected delegation. CG noted that the key to redevelopment work is being at the right place at the right time.

CG had an interview with Amy Unger and WFMZ on January 17 discussing redevelopment projects.

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

**RESOLUTIONS – None**

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

DW made a motion to move into Executive Session seconded by RG.

Executive Session was called to discuss a situation relative to the possibility of purchasing real estate. No action was taken.

## **NEW BUSINESS - None**

## **COMMENTS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS - None**

## **PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

The County Executive is hosting the State of the County address on Thursday, February 20, from 4 – 6 p.m. at Coca Cola Park. VH invited the Board to attend. Contact VH to register.

RG acknowledged that KH had a milestone in his career. The Bar Association of Lehigh County recognizes attorneys who have been dues paying members for five decades. KH was recognized along with five other attorneys. Everyone congratulated KH on this achievement.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Cynthia L. King