



Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County
March 6, 2025 Annual 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), David Weinstein (DW), Michael Yeager (MY). Quorum obtained.

Also in attendance representing the Authority, Chris Gulotta (CG)

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

ABSENT

Kent Herman (KH), Frank Kane (FK), Jill Seitz (JS),

Public Guests: Amy Unger, WFMZ

AGENDA ITEMS

CALL TO ORDER at 9:03 a.m. by MY

Review and Approval of Minutes of February 6, 2025 Meeting

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

Financial Report and Approval of Bills – See Tab B

Four invoices totaling \$5,945.73 to be paid: The Gulotta Group \$4,281.12 with the Borough of Catasauqua billed, as per the RALC MOA, for \$500.00 for the

Executive Director's time on the Iron Works project; King Spry \$799.00 with \$408.00 billed, as per the RALC MOA, 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 \$65.61 phone bill for the Executive Director's use specifically for RALC business.

OG and MY reviewed the bills for payment prior to the Board meeting and signed off on payment subject to board approval. RG made a motion to approve the bills as presented; seconded by OG. Unanimous voice approval.

CG reviewed the Revised Financial Report for December 1 through December 31, 2024 which was revised to include the accountant's fee for the month of December. The year ended with a balance of \$150,298.96.

The January statement reflects total assets of \$239,836.09. There is grant money in the money market and checking account from the DCED grant for the Lehigh Valley Dairy project, as well as the grant monies from the County Liabilities which is the money booked for the Elias Property Group's environmental studies. The Fund Balance is \$172,836.09. Revenues for the month are \$28,170.49 which includes appropriation from the County of Lehigh for fiscal year 2025; program services fees are fees paid by the Borough of Catasauqua for RALC time on the Iron Works project. There is also Interest Income. Expenditures for the month include Contract Services charged by The Gulotta Group, Accounting Services by Zelenkofske & Axelrod, Legal Fees for Kings Spry, and the Executive Director's work cell phone expense bringing total expenditures to \$5,633.36. Net Income for the month is \$22,537.13.

The Fund Balance ending December is \$150,298.96 with the Net Income for January added for a current fund balance of \$172,836.09.

CG asked OG whether the RALC received \$50,000.00 from the PA state grant for the Iron Works project; OG agreed that it had been received which amount will be reflected in the February statement.

CG made OG aware that he billed Catasauqua for his work on the Iron Works project for two months, December and January, because the amounts of hours for each month were nominal.

MY asked for comments, questions, or concerns on approval of the bills or the financial reports as of December 31 or January 31. There being none, MY asked

for a motion of the bills being paid. RG made the motion seconded by DW. Unanimous voice vote of approval.

OLD BUSINESS - None

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

IRON WORKS PROJECT

CG had a good Zoom meeting with VM Development, the Borough of Catasauqua, and the attorneys with the plan being to have the agreement of sale on the Borough council's agenda for the April meeting. It will be necessary for the RALC to enter into an agreement of sale with the Borough wherein the Borough would convey the property to the RALC because under state law, the Borough is required to sell to the highest bidder except under a provision by the Redevelopment Authority Cooperation Law Act which allows boroughs to sell properties directly to redevelopment authorities. Therefore, the first conveyance would be from the Borough to the RALC and then the second conveyance from the RALC to VM Development Group. CG's thought is that this will be a contemporaneous transfer because the RALC does not want to hold real estate for any period of time because it would have to insure it. A draft of the agreement of sale will be available for review at the April meeting with no action to be taken until the Borough approves the agreement of sale at their April meeting which is subsequent to the RALC's April meeting. There is a state grant for \$50,000.00 to be put toward engineering costs provided to VM Development Group. The RALC will enter into a funding agreement to provide them with those funds and this will be something the RALC can do at the April meeting with the caveat that the Borough would approve the agreement of sale with the RALC.

MY asked when is the Catasauqua Borough Council's meeting. CG replied that the working session is April 7 but they will not be approving the agreement of sale on that date. CG requested VM Development Group attend that April 7 meeting to answer any questions from Borough Council about the agreement or the project. The plan is to have Council approve the agreement of sale at the regular meeting on Monday, April 21.

MY asked whether VM Development Group had to own the site for them to receive the state grant money for engineering. CG replied they did not have to

own it; they would need to have equitable title which they would by virtue of an executed agreement of sale. No further questions on the project.

BLIGHT-TO-BRIGHT INITIATIVE

CG received an application for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from one of the communities that he met with as part of the outreach program. CG met with them and looked at the property; it appears to be a good candidate for the program. He received their application subsequent to his visit so he will go through the application and perhaps have something for the RALC to act on at the April meeting. The CDBG funding totals \$150,000.00 with the available maximum grant amount being \$50,000.00 per community.

CG reported there does not appear to be any further interest from municipalities at this time so there will be remaining money which the RALC will ask the County to reprogram for a purpose consistent with the RALC's mission.

OUTREACH PROGRAM

CG "really ramped up" RALC's outreach program with visits to municipalities such as Slatington, Upper Macungie, and Coplay to discuss RALC programs and resources. CG is meeting with Salisbury today and will be meeting with Lehigh Valley Planning Commission on March 21. CG plans to schedule more meetings between now and the end of June. CG believes the outreach program has been very helpful in connecting with municipalities and making them aware of the capabilities of the RALC. CG has provided municipalities with a lot of information on addressing blighted properties which was appreciated by them.

CG noted that the RALC was referenced in the remarks by the County Executive at the State of the County event on February 20 indicating the good work of the RALC.

CG is planning a quarterly electronic newsletter with the first edition coming out at the end of March or early April. He plans to include information on the types of tools available to communities to deal with blighted and deteriorated properties with the opportunity to ask questions about how those tools work.

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER LEHIGH VALLEY DAIRY PROPERTY

CG will speak with the owner of the property this afternoon to talk about the next steps from his perspective. He continues to look at a number of development options.

RESOLUTIONS – None

NEW BUSINESS

CG issued the Request for Proposals (RFP) for Accounting Services in February. The proposals are due Friday, March 31. The RFP was sent to five firms in addition to Zelenkofske Axelrod. RALC will be able to act on that matter at the April meeting.

COMMENTS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

CG commented that the RALC did receive two nice digital articles last month from WFMZ on both the Iron Works project and the Dairy project.

CG discussed the 1977 enactment of the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act (LERTA) which encourages redevelopment of a blighted site within a municipality with the enactment of an ordinance allowing for a phase-in of real estate taxes on improvements. A new tool similar to LERTA has also emerged and become available which allows a taxing authority to designate a blighted property and any improvements to that blighted property may have the taxes on those improvements phased-in over a period of years. CG gave a presentation on these topics last year to one local municipality which is now working on a LERTA project.

MY congratulated CG on bringing all these redevelopment tools together and congratulated the Board and the County for supporting RALC's growth. MY is excited about the future of the RALC moving forward. RG agreed and added that the RALC has "assembled a lot of irons in the fire and are continuing to expand its impact across [Lehigh] County." VH concurred on behalf of the County.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS - None

The next meeting of the RALC is in-person in Room 436 of the Lehigh County Government Center on Thursday, April 3, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.. MY entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting made by RG and seconded by OG. No opposition. Meeting is adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia L. King