



Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County
June 13, 2024 Meeting

The 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), Kent Herman (KH), 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)

Public Guests: David Bernini, Grayson Golter

ABSENT

Frank Kane (FK), Steve Neratko (SN)

AGENDA ITEMS

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

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS – None.

Review and Approval of Minutes of May 2, 2024 Meeting

No questions or concerns; 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

Five bills: The Gulotta Group \$1,766.30, Kings Spry \$714.00, Zelenkofske Axelrod \$800.00, USI Insurance Services \$685.00 (renewal of fidelity bond premium) and \$2,745.00 (for the liability insurance premium) totaling \$6,710.20. Catasauqua will be billed for reimbursement of \$62.50 of The Gulotta Group's bill for CG's services on the Ironworks Project. CG's bill also includes advance costs paid to the Morning Call for June through December meeting dates

advertised of \$276.11. CG asked for questions regarding the bills; there were none. MY had previously reviewed the bills and given his approval; MY asked for a motion to approve said bills, OG made the motion; seconded by DW. No questions, comments, or concerns. Unanimous voice approval to pay five bills.

OLD BUSINESS – None

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

IRON WORKS PROJECT

Two proposals on the Iron Works project were received on the due date of June 10, 2024. One, from Urban CoLab, an affiliate of Artefact, an architectural firm in Bethlehem, and the other proposal from VM Development of Easton. The proposals were shared with the advisory committee comprised of representatives of the Borough of Catasauqua and the RALC for their review of the proposals and for their recommendation to the RALC board. The RALC board makes the final decision on which entity is the preferred developer; however, the advisory committee does weigh in and share their recommendation. There is a meeting of the advisory committee scheduled for June 19 to review the proposals, get preliminary comments, and most importantly, begin to list questions about the proposals so that CG can go back to the firms and get answers. According to CG, the process is moving ahead. CG asked for any questions; there were none.

MULTI-MUNICIPAL STATE GRANT “Blight-To-Bright”

CG has had conversations with the three municipalities (Catasauqua, Whitehall, and North Whitehall) which expressed interest. Catasauqua wants to be part of the reapplication for the state funds which deadline has not been published yet. CG had a positive conversation with Whitehall Township and he expects they will also want to participate. CG is still waiting to hear from the North Whitehall manager. CG expects the application to be due sometime in August or September so it is important for him to get feed-back from the municipalities on the matching funds component which will determine the amount of grant funds sought due to the 1:1 match requirement.

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER LEHIGH VALLEY DAIRY PROPERTY

Seeking approval of the grant agreement with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for \$120,000.00 that would be used to provide funding for environmental remediation and/or engineering studies to owners of property at the Lehigh Valley Dairy (Dairy) site. A copy of the project description was previously provided to the Board. The grant funding would not be used for demolition; demolition is at the owner’s expense. The RALC would enter into a funding agreement with the owners of the properties to the extent there is interest. This grant is

a reimbursable grant wherein after the owner/developer has incurred expenses for environmental studies, copies of the paid invoices would be submitted to the RALC for reimbursement. KH reviewed the grant agreement and raised a few issues (administrative requirements) which CG appreciated and then weighed in on: 1.) There is a requirement to invest grant funds. The full grant award of \$120,000.00 will be sent to RALC which must be invested in a separate account. Interest in excess of \$500.00 must be returned to the state. 2.) Liability insurance and fidelity insurance are also requirements within the grant agreement; however, RALC already has those insurance coverages. 3.) RALC will adopt non-discrimination and sexual harassment policies along with written business integrity policies to comply with the ethics requirements of the grant agreement. Before the July 11th RALC meeting, CG will confer with the Housing Authority to see whether the language in their policies could be borrowed by the RALC and the wording of those policies could be presented to the Board at the July 11th meeting. 4.) Audit requirement. CG anticipated this cost and budgeted \$2,000.00 of the \$120,000.00 grant toward the project audit. MY opened it up for questions and asked CG if there were any updates on the parcel adjacent to the Dairy; CG was not aware of any new information concerning that property owner or the site toward the rear of the Dairy. With no further questions, DW made a motion to approve the grant agreement with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania pertaining to the funding of environmental engineering services in connection with the redevelopment of the former Lehigh Valley Dairy site; motion was seconded by OG. Unanimous voice vote in favor of the grant agreement.

A motion was made by DW to set up a separate interest-bearing money market account at Embassy Bank for the purpose of depositing the \$120,000.00 state grant funds. RG seconded the motion. No questions, comments, or concerns relative to same. Unanimous voice approval

CG asked for the following approval to be tabled by the Board until the July 11th meeting: CG was at the Dairy site on June 12th; Mr. Elias is moving ahead with the demolition of the property. CG forwarded pictures to the Board which he took of that demolition. Whitehall Township provided CG with a letter that the demolition is 50% completed and the draft agreement which had been provided to Elias Property Group stated that 50% demolition would be the catalyst for the RALC to provide funding. CG forwarded the KH drafted funding agreement to Mr. Elias whose attorney has not yet had time to make a review. CG and Mr. Elias agreed to use this interim time of four-weeks (until the July 11th board meeting) to solicit proposals from environmental engineering firms for Phase II environmental work for which Mr. Elias is proposing to use the RALC-provided funding. CG will provide consultation to ensure the three proposals which are solicited are complete and that it is an “apples to apples comparison” of the work proposed. MY asked CG about the time constraints put upon the funding by the state. CG stated that the RALC has until June 20, 2026 to spend the funding. CG and Mr. Elias have had discussions about spending the funds within 120-days. CG assured the Board that this is an [an|CG1] effort to ensure that Phase II quickly happens. Nothing is jeopardized by tabling this agreement until July 11th. No other questions.

MISCELLANEOUS - None

RESOLUTIONS – None

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

NEW BUSINESS - None

COMMENTS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

CG was invited by the Emmaus Borough Manager, to attend the June 17 Emmaus Borough meeting to share general information about LERTA (Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance) program that allows municipalities to phase in taxes on improvements to properties in deteriorated areas.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – David Bernini asked CG which developers submitted proposals to redevelop the Catasauqua Iron Works site: VM Development Group, Easton PA, and Urban CoLab affiliated with Artefact, Inc., a Bethlehem architectural firm. No other questions from the public.

MY called for questions or comments from the board; there were none. MY entertained a motion by DW and seconded by RG to adjourn the meeting. Unanimous voice approval; meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia L. King