Omaha Municipal Land Bank Board

**MINUTES**

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

**Regular Meeting:**
9:00 AM, Jesse Lowe Conference Room – 3rd Floor
Omaha/Douglas Civic Center
1819 Farnam Street

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**Meeting Minutes:** This document states the minutes before the Omaha Municipal Land Bank Board at their Public Hearing and Administrative meeting held on Wednesday, May 13, 2015.

**Certification of Publication:** Omaha Municipal Land Bank Board Administrator certifies publication of this agenda in the Daily Record, the official newspaper of the City of Omaha on Wednesday, May 6, 2015.

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**Members Present:**
Tom McLeay, Chairman
Ken Johnson
Cathy Lang
Scott Semrad
Randy Lenhoff
John Heine
Diane Battiato
Julie Stavneak

**Members Not Present:**
Jamie Berglund, Vice Chair
Julia Plucker
Mike Riedmann
James Thele, Planning Director

**Staff Present:**
Alan Thelen, City Law Department
Jennifer Taylor, City Law Department
Debbie Hightower, Recording Secretary
PUBLIC MEETING:

Tom McLeay, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00am, introduced the voting and non-voting board members, as well as the City staff. He stated that the Nebraska Open Meetings Law is in effect and a copy is available in the room for review. He further stated that copies of the agenda are located in the back of the room.

Roll call was taken with 8 board members present (Jamie Berglund, Mike Riedmann, Julia Plucker and James Thele were absent). McLeay explained the procedures of the meeting.

McLeay informed the public that a notice of the meeting was published on May 6, 2015 and was verified by Debbie Hightower, Recording Secretary.

Motion by Cathy Lang to approve the minutes from the April 8, 2015 meeting. Ken Johnson seconded the motion.

AYES: Johnson, Lenhoff, Semrad, Lang, McLeay
MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

Semrad reported that Ted Ford Webb, the consultant conducting the search for an Executive Director, is still tracking but the search is going well and the schedule is still attainable. McLeay added that Webb is conducting a search to identify candidates and will not be making any determinations. Semrad further added that Webb will bring the best qualified candidates to the board through his national search with the goal of by the middle of June the Search Committee will do interviews and following that process the candidates will then be brought to the board for final interviews. A July 1st date has been set to complete the search and be through the board interviews but there is some concern with scheduling interviews with the board.

In response to Battiato, Semrad stated that Webb has started to narrow the field but the exact number of candidates between 3 and 10 which includes the candidates that were given to Webb. Johnson added that approximately 36 resumes were received before Webb was hired and they have been woven into the process. McLeay further added that the purpose of the search is to get the broadest swath of candidates possible. Semrad stated that the Search Committee will review all viable candidates that are pre-qualified by Webb.

Lang reported that the grant applications were prepared for the Dougherty Foundation, the Kiewit Foundation and the Scott Foundation. She further stated that she has been working with the Mutual of Omaha Foundation but has held off on filing with the Lozier Foundation because it appears their interest will be programmatic and not operational. McLeay added that the Land Bank is seeking operational funds with a request to make a commitment for multiple year contributions from each foundation. He further stated that the director of the Peter Kiewit Foundation has received and completed the application process and will review and report back by June for a commitment. It is anticipated that funds dedicated and received this year will be for operations with additional funds for the next three years from all foundations.
McLeay reported that the application for the 501(c)(3) was received by the Federal government and is still on-going and will be a long process, as anticipated. There are other philanthropic groups that would be willing to dedicate funds for more programmatic but a step will be taken back until there is a more clear vision of the strategic plan.

Jennifer Taylor, City Law Department, reported that the grant agreement was presented and the resolution was approved by the City Council on May 12, 2105. The initial $75,000.00 funding will be disbursed upon the signing of the grant agreement and the remaining $75,000.00 will be disbursed at the end of June 2015.

Lang stated that the approved operational budget was submitted for the Kiewit Foundation therefore an operational grant was requested but funds could be used for programmatic.

Battiato suggested that the County could be contacted or reached out to for additional funding. McLeay asked Battiato to identify contacts with the County. In response to Lenhoff, McLeay responded that even though the Land Bank is limited to within the city limits of Omaha, the County would not be prohibited from partnering with the Land Bank. Battiato added that Omaha is in Douglas County and the majority of properties do lie within the city limits.

McLeay stated that other revenue sources to be explored and addressed would be banks, county, state and the federal government/HUD. Johnson suggested approaching the City about block grant entitlement funds and if they would be willing to commit those funds. Lang added that NIFA could be a State source for programmatic funds. McLeay offered to contact Tim Kenny with NIFA.

McLeay asked the board to think about the process for creating a strategic plan. There have been discussions and training sessions but it will be approximately two to three months before the Executive Director is named and is ultimately involved with the strategic planning but there should be some sort of framework within the community. McLeay added that he envisions the Executive Director to bring expertise about land banking and other facets but the board may be able to bring expertise on the protocol. Lang asked if the board could reach out to the Center for Community Progress with regard to assistance with the framework and the structure of a strategic plan. Battiato agreed. McLeay agreed that the Center for Community Progress would be willing to answer phone calls and questions but there may be additional costs associated with actually creating a strategic plan.

McLeay asked if another committee would need to be set up to focus on a strategic plan and ultimately presenting it to the board. Lang suggested that the Policies and Procedures committee do some basic groundwork on strategic planning based on other Land Banks experiences and report back to the board and that there could always be the addition of a strategic planning facilitator. Lenhoff and Semrad offered to assist Lang.

McLeay stated that he recently met and spoke with the North Omaha Neighborhood Alliance (NONA) and reported that the meeting was informative regarding the desires of the Land Bank but some of the perceptions were not accurate. He suggested that the board have a discussion and a thought process to make a more concerted effort to meet with neighborhood associations.
and/or groups that have a vested interest in the Land Bank’s strategic plan. Before the Executive Director is identified, each board member could think about going to and looking for invitations to neighborhood associations/alliances and other group events. He pointed out that it was helpful to listen to the NONA organization and to be able to explain what the Land Bank is all about.

Battiato agreed that the board needs to be transparent and communicative but would want to avoid not being on the same page because there is huge confusion within the community regarding the Land Bank. She suggested having a uniform message with a possible slide show to include talking points.

Lang suggested turning to the Mayor’s office for assistance to shape the talking points. Lenhoff agreed but pointed out that everyone has a different perception therefore there needs to be caution before the Executive Director is identified. Lang pointed out that the Land Bank mission/message was put together in the grant applications. McLeay added that he has experienced a lot of confusion and questions regarding the Land Bank and would like to move forward. Each member has a district and it would not be fatal if each member had a different view. McLeay stated that there are some basic structures of the Land Bank which is separate from the City of Omaha. He also indicated that he would not like to have the Mayor’s office involved. McLeay requested that a list of all neighborhood alliances and neighborhood associations be distributed at the next meeting. Debbie Hightower agreed to get the requested list for each district. Lenhoff cautioned reaching too far too fast before an Executive Director is in place.

Batiatto stated that the direction of the board should not include too much outreach before an Executive Director is in place but the board should be more prepared as people are reaching out. The facts that can be revealed are; the Land Bank is a newly created organization, the board is working on a strategic plan and there is an ongoing search for an Executive Director. Because there are so many circles, the vast majority of the citizens in Omaha have no clue that the Land Bank exists therefore the board needs to be listeners and not broadcasters until a strategic plan is in place. McLeay explained that, in reality, most people do not know about the Land Bank therefore the board has the opportunity in the next two or three months, before the Executive Director is here, to take a step forward to reach out and explain what the Land Bank is; a separate entity, the State statute, the City ordinance, who the members of the board are, how there are monthly meetings and then look for input and disseminate the gathered information for the new Executive Director. This would seem like a productive process without the fear of different responses. Battiato agreed as long as the message is unified.

Spencer Danner stated that the Mayor’s office should not be involved with the Land Bank process. He encouraged the board to initially reach out to the neighborhood alliances. The neighborhood associations within those alliances will let the board know if they are interested. Danner suggested that the board not wait for the Executive Director because there is no way to know what type of ED you will get and there is a good possibility that the ED will come from out of state and will expect the board to know the community that is being represented. He further encouraged each board member to reach out to the community and to attend neighborhood meetings with the ED. Danner indicated that the board needs to be prepared and have talking points if they decide to attend meetings but the message should be unified.
Danner asked the board to discuss the possibility of a citizen’s advisory group and the possibility of meeting in the evenings.

Lenhoff stated that he has been asked a couple of questions regarding the Land Bank from other property owners and the impact on them in west Omaha. There will be different questions from different districts. Danner stressed that many of the conversations of when the Land Bank was developed are still happening and some of it is because they were not involved in the original conversations and they see movement and an ED coming. He added that the ED position is a start-up phase therefore it would be necessary to help the ED have the dialogue that not only is it a Land Bank but they are building a complete community outreach.

McLeay summed up that time is passing and there is a need to reach out to the community. The Land Bank activity needs buy in and support from all persons within the City and, if for nothing more than recommendations on how the money from the City can be spent.

Kyle Keith, Executive Director, NONA (North Omaha Neighborhood Alliance), appeared before the board. He thanked McLeay for attending the recent neighborhood alliance meeting and reiterated the need for an evening meeting, even once a quarter would be helpful.

It was the consensus of the Board to adjourn the meeting at 10:05am.

Debbie Hightower, Planning Department
Recording Secretary