Omaha Municipal Land Bank Board

MINUTES

Wednesday, June 10, 2015

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

Meeting Minutes: This document states the minutes before the Omaha Municipal Land Bank Board at their Public Hearing and Administrative meeting held on Wednesday, June 10, 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, June 3, 2015.

Members Present: Tom McLeay, Chairman
                    Ken Johnson
                    Cathy Lang
                    Scott Semrad
                    Randy Lenhoff
                    John Heine
                    Julie Stavneak
                    Julia Plucker
                    Mike Riedmann (arrived at 9:05)
                    James Thele, Planning Director

Members Not Present: Jamie Berglund, Vice Chair
                    Diane Battiato

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 9:00 am, 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 9 board members present (Mike Riedmann arrived at 9:05; Jamie Berglund and Diane Battiato were absent). McLeay explained the procedures of the meeting.

McLeay informed the public that a notice of the meeting was published in the Daily Record on June 3, 2015 and was verified by Debbie Hightower, Recording Secretary.

Motion by Cathy Lang to approve the minutes from the May 13, 2015 meeting. Ken Johnson seconded the motion.

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

Semrad reported that the Executive Director Search Committee along with the consultant, Ted Webb, will conduct the first round of interviews with six candidates on June 16th and 17th at the Chamber of Commerce. He stated that the field of candidates will be narrowed with the anticipation of bringing two to four finalists to the board for final interviews at the end of June or early July. In response to McLeay, Semrad stated that the start date for the Executive Director will depend on the scheduling of the final interviews and the individual’s.

In response to Lang with regard to the announcement of the final candidates for the Executive Director position and Johnson with regard to privacy and the Open Meetings requirement, Alan Thelen, City Law Department, suggested talking to the committee and setting some ground rules before moving forward. He further explained that the Executive Session is meant to protect the applicant but anyone who applies for a public job can expect that their life is an open book.

Semrad verified that the entire interview will be during a public session but at times the board can go into executive session as needed. He stated that the candidates will remain private until they become public finalists. Johnson stated that the search committee is still shopping the list and will end up with three possible candidates to bring before the entire board. McLeay pointed out that the search consultant has been productive and more candidates have been identified through a full search.

McLeay reported that the Walter and Suzanne Scott Foundation have granted $600,000.00 in funds for the Land Bank at $150,000.00 per year. They have indicated that they would like to see the 501(c)(3) designation in place before providing the funds however some funding would be provided if needed. Mutual of Omaha provided funding for training and the executive search and will provide additional funding in upwards of $200,000.00. The Peter Kiewit Foundation will be making a decision in June regarding the grant. The Dougherty Foundation has asked several questions pertaining to the 501(c)(3) designation, the Executive Director search status
and other questions regarding the organization. There are additional organizations that are being pursued for more programmatic funding versus operational funding.

McLeay suggested that there be a protocol or a way to lay the groundwork for the strategic plan by: 1) creating a committee to determine the strategic plan and report back to the full board, or 2) involve the full board by scheduling multiple meetings in August and September. He questioned if there are other steps that can or should be taken before the Executive Director is in place such as reaching out to neighborhood associations/alliances and other organizations such as the Land Reutilization Commission, City, County and other stakeholders. A list of neighborhood associations/alliances for each district was distributed by the secretary.

Lenhoff suggested that the full board be involved initially in the strategic plan. Stavneak agreed and suggested that a firm be hired to facilitate with the strategic plan. Johnson pointed out that the City has staff that is very good with strategic plans therefore someone from the outside would not necessarily need to be hired. Lang stated that she was under the impression that the City seemed adamant about not being part of the process. Lang further stated that Jennifer Taylor, City Law Department, has looked at strategic plans from other organizations and those will be made available. Lang stated she likes the idea of hiring someone to assist with the facilitation of the strategic plan to set the groundwork initially.

In response to Lenhoff, McLeay answered that he was not sure if the Chamber would have knowledge about the process of creating a strategic plan for the Land Bank. Lang suggested that the Center for Community Progress from Atlanta come back and assist with the strategic plan. Lang volunteered to get a proposal from the Center for Community Progress at the suggestion of Heine.

McLeay suggested scheduling a full board meeting for several hours in August. Semrad asked if the date could be flexible with regard to the start date of the Executive Director. McLeay suggested setting a date in late August and bringing the Executive Director in for the afternoon and evening.

Thele stated that the strategic plan for the Land Bank needs to be thought of as larger; not only the necessities of the corporation but also the strategic redevelopment of neighborhoods where there are distressed properties. The strategic interest of the Land Bank may not be in the strategic interest of a particular neighborhood redevelopment; the benefits will be maximized by the Land Bank when taking this into consideration. He further added that the wishes of the neighborhoods are incorporated through the planning process and have been approved by local representatives of the people. It is important to bring in the neighborhoods but there is an overall plan for the City and there are redevelopment plans for specific neighborhoods that need to be taken into consideration and included as decisions are made. It may be advantageous that a property be rezoned from commercial to residential consistent with the redevelopment of that area. There are some inherent conflicts that need to be worked out and addressed within the strategic plan.

McLeay agreed that the creation of the Land Bank was, by definition, designed to be a separate entity from the City. He stated that the City has its planning process with regard to zoning and
redevelopment but is not the function of the Land Bank. He stated that the neighborhood associations and citizens want to be heard and have some input on the strategic plan. Lenhoff suggested holding a public meeting in the evening for the neighborhood alliances and associations to solicit their input before completing the strategic plan.

Johnson pointed out that all neighborhood associations do not buy into the alliance system therefore all neighborhood associations and their representatives need to participate in the meetings. There is a separation between the City, the Planning Department and the Land Bank and there will be conflicts with the Land Bank and the City.

Lenhoff stated it is not possible to meet with all neighborhood associations. He suggested dividing the City and hold two or three evening meetings. McLeay added that the neighborhood association/alliance list could be used to solicit representatives and members to the meeting.

Johnson suggested holding a meeting at a location that works for a broader group of people. Lenhoff stated it would make sense to have a meeting in each board member’s district. The secretary stated the contact information for each representative for the neighborhood associations/alliances are in a spreadsheet and labels could be easily made.

Kyle Keith, Program Director for North Omaha Neighborhood Alliance, stated that 20-30% of the neighborhood associations in north Omaha are active on a consistent basis.

McLeay suggested that a letter be drafted and sent to the neighborhood associations with the assistance of the secretary. The letter should identify a location and a short time line and hopefully the Executive Director will be available to attend.

Joel Cota, Community Relations, Mayor’s Office, stated that the alliance leaders have an initiative called One Omaha which meets once a month. The South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance, the North Omaha Neighborhood Alliance and the Midtown Neighborhood Alliance are the most active of the alliances. Cota suggested having a session with One Omaha to provide information. Johnson added that the message needs to be heard at the lowest level.

McLeay stated it is important to make an effort to invite each neighborhood association representative to an initial informational meeting. McLeay proposed that he would provide a letter to each board member to be used for a meeting within their district in early August. Plucker volunteered to work with Heine and McLeay to facilitate a meeting in the South Omaha district that is currently vacant. In response to Stavneak, McLeay stated the agenda for the neighborhood association meeting would be a very basic informational session to discuss the Land Bank and the upcoming strategic planning session.

Lang provided the Mission Statement that was used in the grant applications. She stated that Thele provided some edits and the secretary provided other examples of the Mission Statement from other Land Banks.
Motion by Ken Johnson to adopt the Mission Statement as, “To facilitate the return of vacant, abandoned, tax-delinquent or under-utilized property to an appropriate and productive land use”. Randall Lenhoff seconded the motion.

In response to Riedmann regarding the term under-utilized, Trevor Fitzgerald, Legal Counsel for Urban Affairs Committee of the Nebraska Legislature, stated the Land Bank has the authority to purchase properties consistent with their mission and their goals, therefore the term under-utilized properties would be consistent both in the statutory language and the by-law language. Fitzgerald further confirmed that the Land Bank is explicitly denied the power of eminent domain.

AYES: Lenhoff, Semrad, Johnson, McLeay
MOTION CARRIED: 4-0

There were no public comments.

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

Debbie Hightower, Planning Department
Recording Secretary