Omaha Municipal Land Bank Board

MINUTES

Wednesday, January 13, 2016

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 the Public Hearing and Administrative meeting held on Wednesday, January 13, 2016.

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, January 6, 2016.

Members Present:  
Jamie Berglund, Chair  
Cathy Lang, Vice Chair  
Tom McLeay  
Ken Johnson (arrived at 9:07)  
Randy Lenhoff  
Antonio Zarazua  
John Heine  
Julie Stavneak  
Mike Riedmann  
Diane Battiato  
James Thele, Planning Director

Members Not Present:  
Scott Semrad  
Julia Plucker

Director Present:  
Brittany Jefferson

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

Jamie Berglund, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:02am.

Roll call was taken with 11 board members present (Scott Semrad and Julia Plucker were absent). Ken Johnson arrived at 9:07am.

Berglund stated that the Nebraska Open Meetings Law is in effect and a copy is available in the room for review. She further stated that copies of the agenda are located in the corner of the room. Berglund explained the procedures of the meeting.

Motion by Randy Lenhoff to approve the minutes from the December 9 and December 10, 2015 meetings as submitted. Tom McLeay seconded the motion.

AYES: McLeay, Lenhoff, Lang, Zarazua, Berglund
MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

Motion by Cathy Lang to nominate Antonio Zarazua as Treasurer of the Land Bank. Randy Lenhoff seconded the motion.

AYES: McLeay, Lenhoff, Lang, Berglund, Zarazua
MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

Jefferson stated that the Audit/Finance Committee met on December 16, 2015 and reviewed and reconciled all transactions from January 2015 to November 2015 for submittal of the November 2015 financial statement. Berglund requested that the accounting firm format a report to show budget vs. actuals and year-to-date and month-to-month. Jefferson referred to the submitted financial report and stated that the net revenue is $329,262.01 as of November 30, 2015. In response to Lang, Jefferson confirmed that the consultant fees of $49,100.00 was for training and fees paid to Resolution Partners.

Motion by Cathy Lang to approve the financial report for November 2015. Randy Lenhoff seconded the motion.

AYES: McLeay, Johnson, Lenhoff, Lang, Zarazua, Berglund
MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

Jefferson requested that the agreement with Bland and Associates be extended through March 2016 to assist with the operational budget as well as the monthly financial statements. The estimated cost for the extension is $1,500.00.

Jefferson reported that the grant disbursement was received in December 2015 from the Scott Foundation and the second disbursement for 2015 was received from the Peter Kiewit Foundation. The City of Omaha has requested an expenditure summary from the first $75,000.00 disbursement before the second $75,000.00 can be requested.
Jefferson stated that progress reports were submitted on December 18, 2015 to the Peter Kiewit Foundation and complimentary reports were sent to Mutual of Omaha and the Robert B. Daugherty Foundation in January 2016. She added that an annual report was submitted to the City of Omaha and the Revenue Committee. Lang requested that a pdf of the packet of the statutorily required reports and all other reports be sent to all board members.

Jefferson thanked everyone who attended the first strategic planning session on December 10, 2015 and looks forward to the next session to finalize everything that was discussed and move toward the working parts of those objectives. She stated that she met with Amanda Brewer with Habitat for Humanity and Mike Gawley with Holy Name Housing and was able to question how the Land Bank can truly partner with them and what role the Land Bank can play and put into action. Jefferson added that she has an upcoming meeting with Omaha Economic Development Corporation and will be reaching out to the Nebraska Investment Financing Authority (NIFA). She further added that she will be speaking to the North Omaha Neighborhood Alliance on January 28, 2016 and will meet with Kim Howe with Co-Creative Lab as a community engagement resource which will be of assistance on how to reach out to the community. She stated that she also met with a member of the Suburban Rotary Club which has requested a presentation for their group in the spring. There is a standing meeting on the first Thursday of each month with the Executive Committee to finalize the agenda and go over other items. She added that she had meetings with individual board members and the Governance Committee. Jefferson stated that she met with Trevor Fitzgerald and worked with Rachel Myer with the Nebraska Legislature to assist with the submittal of the annual report.

Jefferson further stated that she met with Aimee Melton and Garry Gernandt and are working to schedule a meeting with the other City Council members. She stated that she has been in contact with two companies that offer land banking software and will have more information as proposals are received. Jefferson indicated that she was in contact with the Center for Community Progress specifically about depository agreements. She stated that she will be meeting with a staffing agency and hire someone who can assist with the day-to-day operations and who has the knowledge and capacity to help with the programmatic activity. Jefferson stated that Resolution Partners is assisting with the contacting of branding companies. She further stated that she spoke with a biologist from the Nebraska Roads Department who would like to give an environmental presentation at a board meeting regarding Phase I, asbestos, etc.

Berglund addressed LB 699-Land Bank Act amendments and asked for feedback. She stated that the hearing will be at 1:30pm on January 19, 2016 and is important that Jefferson and one board member attend to present testimony. Lenhoff offered to present testimony to the Nebraska Legislature for the Land Bank Act.

Jefferson recommended that the board members vote on the LB 699-Land Bank Act amendments.

Motion by Cathy Lang to support LB 699. Ken Johnson seconded the motion.

AYES: McLeay, Johnson, Lenhoff, Lang, Zarazua, Berglund
MOTION CARRIED: 6-0
Lang reported that the procurement policy draft is in-progress and will be brought back to the board at the next meeting.

Berglund stated that the March 2016 Tax Sale was discussed during the Executive Committee meeting after receiving an inquiry from City Council President Gray as to whether the land bank will be participating. She asked the board for further dialogue, questions and discussion. In response to Lenhoff, Berglund answered that the land bank would be remise to not participate because the land bank would be in a position of waiting to participate in the bargain sale in May which is not a very strategic position to be in. The organization has been operational for over one year and has a healthy budget to allocate resources on a small scale by participating in the tax sale. Lenhoff agreed. Berglund stated that there is no data in place but the board has a general feel about the kinds of properties and location. She suggested bringing together a small group of people, identify potential partners within the community, decide on a budget and organize a plan of attack, in short order, for the tax lien sale in March. Battiato agreed that the land bank needs to start somewhere but cautioned that there is a lot involved.

Jefferson stated that the County is willing to sort tax lien certificates by certain boundaries. She added that in order to use the automatic bid there is criteria that has to be met such as the need to know if there are utilities, code enforcement violations, or if the property is vacant, abandoned or unoccupied and title work and any other encumbrances would need to be looked at. She added that a definite dollar figure would need to be determined and the more definite we are about what we are doing and what we need, the more buy in we would have. Thele added that the City has redevelopment plans in place for a number of these areas and it might be a good idea to think about targeting those areas where the City will be acquiring property in order to assist public purpose.

Berglund stated there are so many different data points to overlay including the City, current non-profits and where nearby recent investments are happening will paint some clear opportunity areas. Battiato agreed that it will send a very positive message by working with other non-profits.

David Schreiner, Director of the Land Reutilization Commission, stated that the tax sale ends the first Monday of March 2016 but the bidding starts some time in February therefore the time is shorter for a priority bid for identified property. Thele added that it makes a lot of sense to go ahead with property that the City has already identified for redevelopment. He further pointed out that the City needs the assistance of the Land Bank to prevent the loss of tax money because there are certain people in the community that buy up property and will “stick a gun in our ribs” when the City tries to buy the property for redevelopment.

The board further discussed other options with regard to the tax sale in March. The board agreed to partner with the City and Habitat for Humanity with regard to the tax sale. Heine and Stavneak volunteered to work with Jefferson on the Tax Sale Committee with the oversight of Lenhoff and the assistance of Johnson and Lang. Berglund concluded that the Tax Sale Committee will bring a recommendation to the board at the February meeting.
Jefferson stated that a tentative date for the Strategic Planning Session II was January 20th but there are issues with publication of the meeting and a location. She added that another option for the planning session would be January 26th but a revised doodle will be sent out.

Vince Furlong, 120 S. 49 Avenue, appeared before the board. Furlong asked if any of the board members have a financial interest or contribute money to the program or work with vendors or suppliers that do work for Habitat for Humanity. In response to Johnson, Furlong stated that he is a citizen of Omaha and wants to know who the players are in town. All board members confirmed that they do not work directly or indirectly with Habitat for Humanity therefore there is no conflict of interest. Stavneak pointed out that the land bank will be collaborating with other non-profits in the future. Lang further added that each board member signed a conflict of interest document which is filed in the Mayor’s office.

Candice Price with Douglas County, appeared before the board and asked the board if they have considered prior purchasers of tax liens.

Motion by Cathy Lang to go into Executive Session at 10:03. Randy Lenhoff seconded the motion.

AYES: McLeay, Johnson, Lenhoff, Lang, Zarazua, Berglund
MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

Motion by Cathy Lang to end the Executive Session at 11:40am. Randy Lenhoff seconded the motion.

AYES: McLeay, Johnson, Lenhoff, Lang, Zarazua, Berglund
MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

It was the consensus of the Board to adjourn the meeting at 11:40am.

Debbie Hightower, Planning Department
Recording Secretary