Minutes
Greater Syracuse Property Development Corporation
Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
8:00 AM Tuesday, May 18, 2021
Via Zoom

Board Members Present: Patrick Hogan, Mike LaFlair, Nancy Quigg, Jonathan Link Logan, El Java Abdul Qadir
Others Present: Katelyn Wright, John Sidd, Luke Avery-Dougherty, Terri Luckett, Jeanne Mitchell, Patrona Jones Rowser, Sam Rowser, Kevin Cook, Rich Puchalski, Ted Jeske, Gary Campbell

I. Call to order
Mr. Hogan called the meeting to order at 8:01 A.M.

II. Roll Call
Mr. Hogan noted that all board members were present.

III. Proof of Notice
Mr. Hogan confirmed that public notice of the meeting had been adequately posted.

IV. Minutes
Mr. Hogan asked if everyone had read the minutes. Jonathan noted a typo on page six and that some information was missing: Mr. deVito's response when Mr. LaFlair asked whether they planned to apply for HFA funds in 2021 of 2022. Ms. Wright noted that she would add his response that he'd stated he planned to apply for HFA funds as soon as possible.

Mike LaFlair moved to approve the minutes from the April 20 meeting as amended. Nancy Quigg seconded this motion. **ALL BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 20 MEETING.**

V. Executive Summary & Financial Statements
Ms. Wright noted that the statements through the end of February are attached. Mike LaFlair noted that as the Treasurer he reviews these statements thoroughly each month and only raises questions here in the board meeting if something seems unusual.

VI. Old Business
A. Application to purchase 1641, 1631, and 1623 S Salina St, and 104 E Kennedy and 112, 116-118, 122-124 and 128 Delaware Street
Ms. Wright noted that this item was tabled in April so that Mr. deVito could have more time to conduct community engagement and respond to the concerns being raised by neighbors. She noted that they have received many emails, phone calls, and letters from neighbors expressing their opposition and that their concerns seem to fall into two categories – the buildings are too large and out of context with their

surroundings and that they concentrate poverty since they're not mixed-income and only house people below 50% and 60% of Area Median Income. She noted that she wasn't sure if Mr. deVito knows these are the neighbor's concerns because he hasn't yet held any community meetings. She informed the board that Mr. deVito has asked for this item to be tabled again to give him time to conduct community outreach as the board requested of him. She asked him to provide as much advance notice as possible of the meetings he's scheduled so that the Land Bank can advertise them via social media and try to make sure they're as well attended as possible. She indicated that she'd share the feedback they've received so far with him so that he can respond to it.

Mr. Hogan indicated that the weather has been too bad to schedule public meetings outdoors. He said that he'd attend Westside TNT tonight and ask them to contact Mr. deVito and that he'd ask Councilor Allen about helping him schedule something on the Southside. He noted that he'd like to get this done in the coming month so hopefully it can be voted on in June.

Mr. LaFlair suggested that in the future developers planning big projects like this should do more community outreach than just community meetings, but also meet individually with neighbors and concerned stakeholders to build support for and awareness of the project since people might not be able to make the one public meeting.

Ms. Wright noted that Patrona Jones Rowser, who is on the Land Bank Citizens Advisory Board, held a meeting over the previous weekend so that people could learn more about the project and voice their concerns and that one of the attendees suggested door to door outreach at least to people who live in a one-block radius of the proposed project should be required. She also noted that she and Mike LaFlair have discussed requiring this outreach be done before putting a large project like this on a board meeting. Mr. Link Logan suggested that Southside and Westside TNT should both be engaged.

Nancy Quigg moved to table the item. El Java Abdul Qadir seconded this. All board members voted unanimously to table the item.

Mr. Sidd noted that there is no requirement that this be carried on the agenda each month as old business. El Java Abdul Qadir and Pat Hogan said that they thought it should remain on the agenda so that the public will know it is still on the table and has not been acted on or withdrawn. Jonathan Link Logan agreed.

Jonathan Link Logan also stated that he believes the community should not have to reach out to the developer or convene meetings in situations like this, but that it should be on the developer to schedule this outreach and bring forward a project with demonstrated community buy in. El Java Abdul Qadir noted that it is in developers' best interest to remain engaged with the neighbors throughout the whole development process as they often have good suggestions and that proposals should respond to or incorporate those community suggestions.

VII. New Business

A. Authorize sale of multiple properties

Ms. Wright summarized the offers received this month. Ms. Wright noted that out of town landlords have to show on their application that they have a local property manager and then they have to obtain a Rental Registry Certificate before the Land Bank will discharge the enforcement mortgage and to do that the City requires they have a local property manager. There was some discussion of whether the Land Bank can/should recommend property managers. She noted that the staff and the Citizens Advisory Board recommend the board reject the purchase offer on 113 and 115 since the home's design doesn't fit into the neighborhood, but that they may have lots in neighborhoods where a ranch-style home would fit in and that they could recommend some of those sites to the applicant. El Java noted that the CAB's recommendation provides meaningful justification for their decision.

El Java Abdul Qadir noted that although there are many out of town buyers on today's agenda, the Land Bank does prefer to sell to local people as opposed to out of town buyers and prefers owner-occupants over investors. Ms. Wright confirmed that's true when there are competing offers and that in these cases there was no one local and no owner-occupants submitting offers.

El Java Abdul Qadir moved to authorize the Land Bank to sell multiple properties. Mike LaFlair seconded the motion. **ALL BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO AUTHORIZE THE LAND BANK TO SELL MULTIPLE PROPERTIES.**

B. Authorize sale of 206 W. Matson

Ms. Wright explained it was not listed because it was categorized as a demolition candidate. They were approached by Willie Clayton, who has purchased from the land bank before, and Gary Campbell, a general contractor, and she also noted that this is not the same Gary Campbell applying to buy 117-29 Fabius. She said explained that they show they have the qualifications and financial capacity to renovate the property and they plan to sell it to an owner-occupant, and sale would save the Land Bank the cost of demolition so it appears to be a win-win.

Nancy Quigg moved to authorize the Land Bank to sell 206 W. Matson. Jonathan Link Logan seconded the motion. **ALL BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO AUTHORIZE THE LAND BANK TO SELL 206 W. MATSON.**

C. Authorize sale of 117-29 Fabius

Ms. Wright summarized the information contained in the proposed resolution, explaining how this property came to be seizable and how the Land Bank has worked with the current owner and the City to facilitate a sale that would enable someone to buy the building and the business, for the tax liens to be extinguished, and to allow the business to remain in operation, preserving existing jobs. She went on to explain that the fact that the buyer has to purchase both the property from the Land Bank and the business from the current business owner necessitates a noncompetitive sale and that for this reason they are proposing to sell for appraised value since fair market value isn't being established via open competition. She also noted that the Land Bank is further facilitating this transaction by directing nearly $70,000 of their $600,000 EPA brownfield assessment grant toward a Phase I and II here and obtaining a "no further action" letter from the DEC, which they needed to close.

Ted Jeske described his existing business, 110 Metalworks; his background; how they came to get involved with this property; and their plans for renovating the existing building, demolishing part of it, and expanding the business. He noted that they plan to improve working conditions and provide benefits to existing and new employees and that at his other business 17% of their workforce are New Americans. He explained that he and Gary will be partners in a yet to be formed LLC and that his succession plan is for Gary to take over the business when he eventually retires.

El Java Abdul Qadir clarified that the business and the building would be closing simultaneously and that Ted Jeske and Gary Campbell are buying the business from its current owner, Ken Abramson who still owns the business and the tax-delinquent property, and the property from the Land Bank. Ted noted that they currently have an operating agreement to operate the business during the transition while preparing to close. Ms. Wright expanded that the City is waiting to foreclose until the Land Bank has an accepted purchase offer and confirms that that they are ready to close.

Pat Hogan noted that this is a great example of the kind of work the Land Bank does to reposition difficult properties.

El Java Abdul Qadir moved to authorize the Land Bank to sell 117-29 Fabius Street to Ted Jeske and Gary Campbell for appraised value. Jonathan Link Logan seconded this motion. **ALL BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO AUTHORIZE THE LAND BANK TO SELL 117-29 FABIUS ST.**

D. Authorize the sale of 209-11, 215-17, and 317-19 Garfield Avenue

Ms. Wright explained that Home HeadQuarters plans to build a single-family home on each lot as part of the Resurgent Neighborhoods Initiative. She went on to explain that this is located within a block of three homes being built on Woodland and two homes being built on Baker.

Jonathan Link Logan moved to authorize the Land Bank to sell 209-11, 215-17, and 317-19 Garfield Avenue to Home HeadQuarters, Inc. for $1,000 each. Mike LaFlair seconded this motion. **ALL BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO AUTHORIZE THE LAND BANK TO SELL 209-11, 215-17, AND 317-19 GARFIELD AVE.**

E. Authorize the acquisition of certain properties from the City of Syracuse

Ms. Wright turned their attention to the last page of the packet that outlines the Land Bank's strategy for each property.

Nancy Quigg moved to authorize the Land Bank to acquire certain properties from the City of Syracuse. Jonathan Link Logan seconded this motion. **ALL BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO AUTHORIZE THE LAND BANK TO ACQUIRE CERTAIN PROPERTIES FROM THE CITY OF SYRACUSE.**

F. Authorize the Land Bank to contract for multiple demolitions

She noted that in April they discussed the $513,225 that the City awarded to the Land Bank for demolitions that will be replaced with affordable housing and that the board voted then to award contracts for four demolitions. She explained how they put additional properties out to bid over the previous month – one bundle of 10 properties to be bid on in aggregate and another five requiring a price on each house in case there wasn't enough funding available to cover all five so they could award less than the whole five. She reviewed the bids received and asked for the board's authorization to award these to the lowest bidders.

Nancy Quigg moved to authorize the Land Bank to contract with the lowest bidder in each case for multiple demolitions. Jonathan Link Logan seconded this motion. **ALL BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO AUTHORIZE THE LAND BANK TO CONTRACT WITH THE LOW BIDDERS FOR MULTIPLE DEMOLITIONS.**

VIII. Discussion

A. 2021-22 City Budget

Ms. Wright explained that since their last meeting the Common Council has passed the City's 2021-22 budget. The budget presented to them by the mayor included $500,000 for the Land Bank and the Council voted to add another $250,000 for demolitions. She noted that it was unusual for them to vote on how the funds can be used at this point, since that usually occurs when they vote on the funding contract, and that she's communicating with the City to see if they can get under contract as soon as possible after the fiscal year starts on July 1. She noted that they've also requested that the City allocate some of their ARPA funds to the Land Bank for demolition and stabilization of blighted homes.

B. Release of 2020 County funds

She informed the board that the County Legislature voted in early May to release $200,000 to the Land Bank, ½ for demolitions and ½ for stabilization. She explained that they would be able to deploy those demolition funds very quickly as soon as they get under contract and that the stabilization funds might be used to do more "shells" where the Land Bank puts a new roof, siding and windows on a property prior to sale or that it could be used at 541 Seymour.

She stated the City should be foreclosing soon on this 39,000 sq. ft. industrial property on the Near Westside and that they are interested in locating an architectural salvage store here and leasing our most of the building to other tenants. This seems like an ideal opportunity because they are unlikely to generate enough architectural salvage sales to cover market rate rent somewhere. She explained that they would know more once they get title and can do a thorough inspection and noted that they are using the EPA grant for a Phase I and II here. Mike LaFlair asked if they might also locate their offices there. She agreed that might be a good idea and certainly more efficient to locate next to the store so they can keep an eye on things. She said they should also discuss that the Land Bank previously provided a letter of support to Jubilee Homes saying that they were interested in being an anchor tenant at 416 W Onondaga where they plan to locate a construction business-training center. This project is now being spearheaded by Housing Visions, who would like a similar letter to make their Low Income Housing Tax Credit application more competitive. El Java Abdul Qadir stated that it would make good business sense to locate in a free location next to the Land Bank's store.

Jonathan Link Logan asked whether any of the ARPA funds can be used for preventive maintenance or "shells." She stated that she is not entirely sure, but that is one of the things that they asked the mayor's office to consider funding with ARPA funds. Mr. Link Logan noted that the stabilization work would create more jobs than demolitions might. Mr. Abdul Qadir agreed that emphasizing job creation should be part of their advocacy for funding.

Mike LaFlair asked whether the City has increased the pace of foreclosures and how the Land Bank is doing following up on defaulted enforcement mortgages. Ms. Wright stated that they have not seen the volume increase at all despite the fact that the City assigned another attorney to help with the work. John Sidd stated that everyone who needs a notice of default has received one, but that they have not commenced any lawsuits or foreclosure actions largely due to COVID making court proceedings more difficult. Ms. Wright stated that they're also reluctant to file any actions due to the optics of doing so during COVID. She said there are also many who are behind, but that are paying fines on time and making an effort. Pat Hogan asked how many are in default and Ms. Wright said that about six probably will get a foreclosure action filed in the future. Ms. Wright noted that buyer are also struggling to get stuff done due to backlog in the construction industry and they are trying to be sensitive to that. Mr. LaFlair stated that he was more concerned about more flagrant defaults where the buyer doesn't intend to comply with the Land Bank's requirements. Mr. Sidd stated that he has received default notices and they are speaking with his attorney, but that they would probably be safe to file an action against this particular property owner. He indicated that they would review the list again and see which ones may be ready for legal action, but reminded the board that as a percentage they have very few defaults.

Mr. Hogan reiterated that the Land Bank is unique in that it has shovel ready projects ready to deploy ARPA funds.

IX. Adjournment

El Java Abdul Qadir moved to adjourn the meeting. **ALL BOARD MEMBERS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO ADJOURN AT 9:03 A.M.**