



Pittsburgh Land Bank [PLB] Minutes

April 8, 2022

Convene:

The Vice-Chair called meeting to order.

Roll Call:

Emily Kauchak [PLB Coordinator] called the Roll. Members Present: Dr. Jamil Bey; Senator Wayne Fontana; Wanda Wilson; and Karen Brean.

The PLB did not have quorum.

Public Comment:

Gordon Davidson [Executive Director MWCDC] commented on the outreach process performed by the Pittsburgh Land Bank. The PLB did not contact him after his previous public comment but participated in a Vacant Property Working Group (VPWG) meeting. Though a start, he hopes to open a dialogue with PLB staff in the future.

Approval of Minutes:

◇ Motion to approve the March 2022 Board meeting minutes. Could not be performed without quorum.

Chairman's Report:

Councilman Burgess sponsored legislation before Pittsburgh City Council to establish an affordable housing committee. The committee will include the mayor, the City's Chief Economic Development Officer, the director of City Planning, the executive director of the Housing Authority, the executive director of the URA, the executive director of the PLB, and up to four City Council members. If approved, the committee would explore financial tools that encourage private and public investment in affordable housing, host regular public meetings, and provide quarterly reports detailing findings and recommendations.

Executive's Report:

- Departure of Executive Director -- Dr. Diamonte Walker

Departure of Deputy Executive Director (URA) and Executive Director (PLB) Dr. Diamonte Walker for a new opportunity in the non-profit sector. Diamonte has been a driving force behind the URA and PLB's growth and success in empowering people while transforming place. Through her work, the URA's MWBE program was expanded and spurred opportunities for growth and capacity building in Pittsburgh. She

also facilitated partnerships with influential corporations, nonprofits and community stakeholders, government agencies, and others to create a more equitable city for all. As the first Black woman to become the URA's Deputy Executive Director, she shaped a new vision and direction for the URA and PLB by creating a more community-driven focus while addressing the City's economic and development challenges.

PLB Staff Updates:

- GRB Law Agreement
 - The first set of Petitions to Quiet Title were filed by GRB on March 18th and include the following properties: 14-G-290, 24-F-63, 14-G-228, 14-G-227, 14-B-370, 32-G-287, 15-D-87-B, 125-C-46, 24-E-185, 15-H-335, 174-N-91, 50-M-90.
 - GRB is in the process of finalizing the second set of petitions for the following properties: 15-H-273, 3-N-160, 14-B-239, 174-F-270, 14-A-283, 24-N-161, 24-C-133, 24-F-268, 15-H-340, 15-H-341.
 - The PLB, in cooperation with the City, has requested the addition of three properties to the GRB Law Agreement. These properties, intended for the Pittsburgh Property Reserve, did not make it into the PPR before it closed in January 2020. The registered community group – Hazelwood Initiative – is not represented among the many CDCs included in the Agreement: 56-C-239, 56-C-240, and 56-C-240-A.
- Authorization to Engage GRB Law in Drafting 3 Taxing Bodies Agreement
 - The Pittsburgh Land Bank is drafting an agreement among the three taxing bodies – City, County, and School Board – about how they will handle, and potentially forgive, back taxes on distressed parcels of land. The PLB will engage GRB Law in the initial drafting of this agreement.
- Proposed Revision in Policies and Procedures to allow for Directed Sales
 - The PLB is pushing to adopt a Pol Pro revision to allow for directed sales to both individuals and community groups in the City of Pittsburgh. This will allow the Land Bank to process unproductive properties and get them into the hands of qualified end users and community groups in a more efficient manner.
 - The following conditions may qualify for a directed sale: side yards, greenspace, affordable & mixed-income or workforce housing, development assemblages (where the applicant owns a significant portion of the development site), properties in the Pittsburgh Property Reserve, community-based facilities, and a sale approved by a 2/3 majority vote of the entire Board of Directors.

Director Wilson wanted more clarification on the process for properties in the Pittsburgh Property Reserve and how that process will look in the future for CDCs that identify properties. Nathan Clark [Chief Legal Officer] clarified that this would quickly address the PPR and remain an option for community groups moving forward.

- Update on Pittsburgh Land Bank's 'Qualified End User' Considerations Scorecard(s)
 - These Scorecards allow PLB/URA Staff to select an appropriate end user based on the following categories: general considerations, priority guidelines for properties, additional considerations for properties, and discretionary information.

- Board members may request a demonstration of each of the four scorecards. In addition to this, the PLB will be engaging the VPWG for recommendations moving forward.

Finance Report:

- Joe Karlovits [Outgoing Director of Finance] reviewed the March 2022 Expenditures

◇ Motion to approve the March 2022 Expenditures. Could not be performed without quorum.

Director Wilson would like to see the financial reports included in the Board packets moving forward.

Legislative Updates:

Senator Fontana discussed the following:

- Municipal Claims Tax Lien Law (MCTTL)
 - Passed the Urban Affairs and Housing Committee unanimously. Currently, in the Appropriations Committee and waiting to be scheduled for a vote.
 - Senator Fontana has drafted a similar bill for the House Urban Affairs Committee to move the bill expeditiously.

New Business:

- There was no new business.

Public Comment:

Becca Simon [Land Use Policy Manager at Grounded] commented on the desire for a better partnership between the Land Bank and community organizations such as Grounded Strategies. She expressed concern over the lack of continuity and acknowledgment of the work already done for the Land Bank by community groups in the City. She would like the Land Bank to reach out to organizations and be honest about its shortcomings pertaining to staffing and capacity. She would like to see a MoU finalized between the VPWG and PLB.

John Boyle [Researcher at Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group] commented on the need to highlight concerns from the VPWG meeting earlier that day. He believes that numerous organizations have been working with the Land Bank for years, however, there has been little continuity in changes requested by these organizations due to issues with staffing and support. He recommends that the PLB secure outside support from other organizations/experts for land banking, provide more clarity with the intended use of the ARPA funding, and adopt a public process for input on how funds are to be allocated. Additionally, he called for more responsibility in managing the PPR 2.0 and accepting input on the 'Qualified End User' Considerations Scorecard(s). Finally, he stated that the VPWG supports the Land Bank but would like to formalize their partnership through an MoU.

Adjournment:

The Chair called for adjournment.

◇ Motion to adjourn. **[Fontana/Bey]** Passed unanimously.