



Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County
February 22, 2024 Meeting

The meeting of the Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County was held at 9:00 a.m. by Zoom video conference. A recording of this meeting began at approximately 9:07 a.m. and is available at:
<https://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Community-Economic-Development/Lehigh-County-Redevelopment-Authority>.

ATTENDING

Board Members: Oscar Ghasab (OG), Ricky Gower (RG), David Weinstein (DW); Michael Yeager (MY). Quorum obtained.
Also in attendance representing the Authority, Chris Gulotta (CG) and Kent Herman (KH)

County Staff: Virginia Haas (VH), Frank Kane (FK), Cyndi King (CK)

Public Guests: Unmuted guest: "Thanks a LOT!"

ABSENT

Steve Neratko (SN)

AGENDA ITEMS

CALL TO ORDER at 9:00 a.m. by MY

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS – None.

Review and Approval of Minutes of January 18, 2024 Meeting

No questions or concerns; motion for approval made by DW; seconded by RG.
Minutes approved.

Financial Report and Approval of Bills – See Tab B

CG received bills totaling \$4,735.05 which included invoices from King Spry for legal services, The Gulotta Group for professional consulting services, and Zelenkofske Axelrod, LLC, for accounting services, and The Morning Call for legal notice advertisement. A late addition for the Bills for Payment is an additional invoice from Moring Call also for legal advertising in the amount of \$253.58. This addition would bring the total amount of the bills to be paid to \$4,988.63. The financial statement is also attached and included in Tab B. CG reviewed the Financial Statement, ending January 31, 2024. MY asked for questions and there were none. MY asked CG whether the RALC was receiving timely reimbursement from the Borough of Catasauqua. CG replied “yes” and OG agreed that he is receiving checks from Catasauqua. CG submitted an invoice on 2/21/24 to Catasauqua for reimbursement of January expenses. No additional questions or comments. The motion to pay the bills was made by OG and seconded by RG. Motion unanimous

OLD BUSINESS – None

STATUS REPORTS - Executive Director’s Report - See Tab C

IRONWORKS PROJECT

CG reviewed that no proposals were received in response to the Iron Works RFP which were due on January 12, 2024. The Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from the Borough and the RALC has met twice to discuss the reissuance of the RFP. That committee will also meet this afternoon (2/22/24) to look at a revised RFP prepared by the Borough’s consultant along with CG’s input wherein feed-back will be provided. There is a possibility that the RALC Board will be acting at its March 7 meeting to approve the reissuance of the Iron Works Project RFP. Three issues identified in conversations with the eight developers have been addressed in the revisions. Those are: 1. The RFP was issued immediately preceding the holidays in December and they felt there was not enough time to respond by the due date. 2. Some of the information requested from developers in the RFP could be streamlined. 3. Additional guidance is needed on the remediation and floodplain issues which [three points] the revised RFP addresses.

MULTI-MUNICIPAL STATE GRANT “Blight-To-Bright”

The Board Packet was sent out on Friday morning; Friday afternoon CG received an email from the State indicating that the application was not funded. CG contacted the State Regional Director for feedback and she indicated there were no problems with the application; the state simply ran out of money. CG reported the Keystone Communities Program is very competitive and the Regional Director encouraged the RALC to reapply. CG intends to contact the three municipalities (Catasauqua, North Whitehall, and Whitehall) to see if they are interested in reapplying. CG will explore other funding sources which would work for some of the elements in the application. CG referenced the \$150,000 CDBG grant from Lehigh County which was originally to be used as a match for the grant; however, the County has clarified that the grant does not need to be approved for these funds to be spent. CG has an idea to use those funds (\$50,000 to each municipality) to get started on their respective demolition projects. CG believes it will be a good way to move ahead, show progress in the interim [until state grant reapplication] and CG would make the funds available with a match [dollar-to-dollar] in effect having \$300,000 in expenditures toward demolition. CG asked for the Board's thoughts. MY asked other than requesting matching funds to the CDBG funding, would other criteria of the municipalities be required? CG replied to the affirmative and that criteria is detailed within the CDBG grant agreement for example a project engineer's cost estimate must be provided, a bid tabulation sheet, an engineer's recommendation of award, copies of contractor's bond, insurance certificates, and W9s for contractor and subcontractors. Best efforts must be documented and provided that minority business enterprises and women business enterprises were solicited. CG's approach would be to email those communities and notify them that the funds are available and then set forth the requirements. CG proposes to enter into a subrecipient agreement with each of these communities wherein the RALC would provide \$50,000 to them in exchange for them meeting the requirements that are described in the grant agreement. CG asked for any comments on this prospective approach; there being none, CG will move forward with contacting the three municipalities which expressed interested in remediating blighted properties and disperse the County's CDBG grant to the RALC.

MISCELLANEOUS

CG suggested an in-person meeting for April. In September 2023, a Mission Statement was developed. CG would like to take that to the next level by developing strategic goals and strategic direction with specific ideas in terms of how those goals are accomplished. The April meeting will be held at the Lehigh County Government Center, Room 436. Breakfast will be served.

CG is doing outreach to engage not only municipalities but also community partners in the RALC's work. CG spoke with the Lehigh County Housing Authority (LCHA) to discuss some areas of potential collaboration which he felt was well-received so he will circle back to the executive director to see if there are some specific things that RALC might move ahead on. CG also plans to meet with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, and Community Action of Lehigh Valley. CG believes there are some potential areas of collaboration. He asked the Board if there were any other community partners for him to meet and he stressed the importance of meeting municipal partners. CG received an email from Kim Brubaker who is on the Catasauqua borough council and also associated with the Catasauqua Mainstreet Program and CG has a meeting date set for 3/7/24 to get to know them and to suggest areas where the RALC could be helpful in their work. CG would make that offer good to any downtown organization in Lehigh County. MY commented that the LCHA met on 2/21/24 and reported on the positive meeting with CG and that they looked forward to potential symmetry moving forward. CG thanked MY for the update. MY asked for additional questions or comments on CG's report; there being none, MY referred back to the agenda.

RESOLUTIONS – None

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Agreement with the County of Lehigh

Previously discussed in this meeting, CG has nothing further to add other than his appreciation of the County for providing the financial support which allows the RALC to continue moving ahead with some momentum generated which, at this stage in the organization's development, is important for communities to see [the RALC] accomplishing redevelopment directives in Lehigh County. Laurie Moyer, Lehigh County Grants Specialist, answered CG's questions so he is clear on the County's expectations and he would like to move ahead in the manner described earlier in today's meeting. MY asked for motion authorizing the RALC Executive Director to execute this agreement with the County of Lehigh. RG made that motion and OG seconded the motion. Unanimous voice vote approved the motion.

COMMENTS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS – None

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS - None

MY asked for any other business. CG reminded the group of the March 7 meeting and he believes there will be important work at that meeting to approve the reissuance of the Iron Works Project RFP. MY asked for additional comments, questions, or concerns of CG, MY, or for the good of the order from any members of the RALC Board and there being none, DW made a motion to adjourn; RG seconded the motion to adjourn of 2024. There was unanimous voice approval for adjournment of today's meeting.

Next regular meeting is March 7, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia L. King