



Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County
December 7, 2023 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 is available at: <https://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Community-Economic-Development/Lehigh-County-Redevelopment-Authority>.

ATTENDING

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

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

Public Guests: Ron Beitler, Lehigh County Commissioner; Kim Brubaker, Catasauqua Borough Council; Deb Mellish, Vice-President Catasauqua Historical Preservation Association

ABSENT

Frank Kane (FK)

AGENDA ITEMS

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

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS – None

Review and Approval of Minutes of November 2, 2023 Meeting

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

Financial Report and Approval of Bills – See Tab B

CG received and forwarded a revised Tab B to the board which included bills from King Spry for \$1785.00, the Gulotta Group for \$2669.54, and an invoice from Zelenkofske Axelrod, LLC, accounting firm for the months of October and November for \$1,600. These bills total \$6,054.54. These specific invoices were provided to MY and OG who reviewed and approved same. No questions or comments; MY ratified that the invoices were approved and payment is in order. Included in the Board Packet is the Financial Report through October 31 prepared by Jeff Weiss with Zelenkofske Axelrod, LLC, showing total assets \$117,118.14 including cash in the money market account and checking account. Interest income of \$154.75; two expenditures in October for contract services and legal fees totaling \$2952.80. Year-to-Date factoring in October's expenses including October's interest income for a fund balance of \$117,118.14. Because of the September 18 MOU with Catasauqua, RALC is billing the borough for legal time and consultant time on the Iron Works Project. Bills were approved for this month totaling \$6,054.54; a little over \$3,000 of that amount will be reimbursable to the RALC from the Borough. CG asked OG whether RALC received reimbursement from the Borough for September. OG responded that those funds were deposited into the account. It will appear in next month's statement. Any further reimbursement funds will appear in the November and December statements. CG asked Jeff Weiss for suggestions on auditors to conduct an end-of-year audit. Mr. Weiss is checking into that request at no cost to the RALC. MY asked for a motion to approve the bills for payment as presented along with the current financial report; OG made the motion, DW seconded. Unanimous voice vote of approval of the current financial report and payment of the bills presented this month.

OLD BUSINESS – None

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

IRONWORKS PROJECT

On November 3, RALC issued email to over 50 developers, architects, engineers, and others of its Notice of the Request for Proposals (RFP). More than 50 contacts expressed interest in the project and more than 20 development firms requested and received the RFP. CG was encouraged at so much interest. A non-mandatory pre-proposal conference was held on November 14 with seven developers in attendance. It is possible that other developers may also present proposals. Proposals are due January 12, 2024. Questions were raised at the pre-proposal

conference to which CG prepared an addendum Question-and-Answer sheet which has also been sent out and is attached to the Executive Director's report. (The list of pre-proposal conference attendees along with the Question-and-Answer sheet are posted on the website at

<https://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Community-Economic-Development/Redevelopment-Authority-of-Lehigh-County>). CG asked for questions; there were none.

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

Multi-municipal venture between Borough of Catasauqua, North Whitehall Township, and Whitehall Township where each municipality put up matching funds that will allow the RALC to access up to \$500,000 in state grant funding. CG is hoping to hear something this month from the state on the application. This project would be included in the RALC portfolio moving forward.

CG is working with a prospect interested in redeveloping a site for multiple uses in Whitehall Township. CG is not at liberty to share details at this time but hopes to share with the Board in the near future.

CG and MY asked for questions on the Executive Director's report. There were no questions.

RESOLUTIONS – None

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of the 2024 Budget – See Tab D

In August, when the insurance company asked for a projected budget, CG requested Board approval of a tentative 2024 budget. He modified that same approved tentative budget to produce the budget being presented now. For 2024, the County appropriated \$25,000, interest income, hopes to generate income from grant administration fees including the Blight-To-Bright grant, reimbursement of \$30,000 from Borough of Catasauqua for project expenses consistent with the MOU between RALC and the Borough with total revenue of \$106,000.00. Under Expenses, \$45,000 for the Executive Director with \$20,000 being reimbursable from Catasauqua for his work on the Iron Works Project. \$25,000 for general projects other than the Iron Works. \$10,000 in legal expenses reimbursable from

Catasauqua and \$5,000 general legal work for a total of \$15,000. Monthly accounting expenses at \$800/month for a total of \$9600.00/year. CG included \$6,000 for an audit and hopes that it will not be that much but today, regardless of the size of an audit, the audit will cost a certain amount. \$5,000 is included for Other Expenses; \$1,500.00 for travel. CG continues to suggest \$400 to join the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies (PAHRA) which is included in the \$700 budgeted for Memberships and Conferences. D&O insurance and the Crime Policy for \$4,000 along with the \$500 fidelity bond, Legal Advertising \$1,500.00. CG noted that legal advertising expenses paid by the County are reimbursable by the RALC. There are no costs associated with Website and Maintenance because the County added the RALC to its website. Miscellaneous costs \$1,500.00. Total expenses \$90,300.00 showing a surplus budget of \$15,700.00 with a projected carry-over of at least \$100,000.00 from 2023. Original projected surplus was \$44,250. However, that figure will be closer to \$100,000.00. MY asked for questions or comments relative to the 2024 proposed budget. Hearing none, MY made the comment that has worked very closely with CG and has no problem with the projection of the numbers he has generated and reminded that it is a proposed budget for 2024. As things move forward and escalate, those figures can be updated and the Board informed. MY called for a motion to accept the 2024 budget proposal as presented; SN made that motion, seconded by DW. No questions or comments. By unanimous voice vote, the motion passed.

Approval of Extension of The Gulotta Group Contract – See Tab E

MY said it has been a pleasure to work with CG over the last couple months. His professionalism and expertise are obvious and evident to everyone but in particular to himself, the County of Lehigh, the Borough of Catasauqua and the RALC solicitor, KH, who also speaks very highly of CG. The transparency of this operation and CG's communication with the CHAIR are excellent. MY yields the floor to CG. CG reports the hourly rate [for his contract] remains the same. The contract essentially remains the same: a one-year contract extending to 12/31/2024 which may be renewed by mutual agreement of the parties and may also be terminated by either party with 30-day notice. The contract covers, basically, the same scope of work as provided this year by continuing to add to the portfolio of projects. These are exciting times for the RALC; CG has enjoyed working with everyone and is looking forward to continuing to be part of this initiative. MY called for questions or concerns relative to the approval of the contract extension. Hearing none, MY called for a motion. RG made the motion, seconded by OG. Unanimous voice vote in favor of the motion.

COMMENTS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Guest, Deb Mellish, said the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L Trail) organization has been interested in the foundry (on the site of the proposed Iron Works Project) and toured it several years ago along with several Pennsylvania state historians who were impressed with the original design and the entire building structure but were saddened to hear that it would be torn down. The desire is to have a pictorial documentation made of the foundry before it is raised. Gary Heller, owner of Historic Rescue Photography, has volunteered to do this at no cost. Ms. Mellish attested to his good quality work and that he has often worked with many other historical societies. By Ms. Mellish's observation, insurance coverage would be the only issue with getting him in [the foundry] to do that work. She did also state that previously, the Borough deemed [entrance into the foundry] to be too unsafe; yet Ms. Mellish and other want to see the foundry be documented before it is destroyed.

Over the last year, Ms. Mellish has been associated with the University of Pennsylvania (U of P) Department of Historic Preservation in its Architecture School along with the D&L Trail and 15-20 U of P graduate students looking at Catasauqua and [its areas of potential for historic preservation and restoration]. This venture has produced many ideas in terms of what may be valuable to the town in historic preservation at that site which may also be of interest to the RALC when it comes time to select a developer for the proposed project.

While no definitive answers could be offered, MY assured Ms. Mellish that CG will be in contact with the Borough and the RALC Board and that the RALC will keep her ideas and suggestions in mind to hopefully move forward with those ideas proposed this date. Conversation among the Board ensued. KH offered that Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's Executive Director, Becky Bradley, might be a resource for more information and insights on the U of P initiative should CG or the Board desire. Ms. Mellish offered that she has been working with Martha Capwell Fox from D&L and Liz, who runs the Tow Path program.

CG took the opportunity to recognize OG for his good work at keeping the RALC books. Although there are not a lot of monthly payables, OG has been diligent at taking care of that and at making certain the accountant receives what he needs in order to prepare the financial statements. MY acknowledged OG's recognition and also thanked him.

VH thanked the RALC Board for its hard work in 2023 with everyone doing a fantastic job. The County is appreciative of all the RALC efforts and assistance. MY thanked VH and expressed that it has been a privilege and an honor to get [the RALC reconvened and operating]. MY acknowledged CG's contributions to RALC's efforts and accomplishments.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – None

MY asked for a motion to adjourn the last meeting of 2023. OG made the motion; seconded by DW. Motion passed by unanimous voice approval.

Next regular meeting is January 4, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia L. King