



Redevelopment Authority of Lehigh County
March 7, 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 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)

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

Public Guests: None

ABSENT

Kent Herman (KH), Frank Kane (FK), 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 February 22, 2024 Meeting

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

Financial Report and Approval of Bills – See Tab B

No financial statement for the month ending February since the month closed on Thursday. CG received the February financial from Zelenkofske Axelrod, LLC, the accountant, after the board packet was distributed; however, he will distribute

that financial statement for the April meeting. CG invoiced the County of Lehigh for the budgeted funds of \$25,000; OG confirmed that funding has come into the RALC account. For the period ending February, two invoices were received: The Gulotta Group for professional consulting services \$1736.17 (\$843.75 will be reimbursed by Catasauqua Borough for time spent on the Iron Works project), and the PAHRA (Pennsylvania Association of Housing & Redevelopment Authorities) for annual dues \$450.00. CG believes it is important for the RALC to be part of a statewide association and he does distribute the newsletter to any board member interested in receiving it. There is a PAHRA spring conference May 5, 6, & 7 at Wind Creek Event Center, Bethlehem. If any board members are interested, let CG know and he can facilitate event registration. No additional questions or comments. RG made a motion to accept the bills brought forward for payment; motion was seconded by DW. Two bills unanimously approved for payment.

OLD BUSINESS – None

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

IRONWORKS PROJECT

The Iron Works Advisory Committee met February 23 in the afternoon to review the revised Request For Proposal (RFP). RALC is represented at this advisory committee by MY, KH, CG and Catasauqua is represented by members of the Borough and all interests represented were in approval of the reissuance of the RFP which has been sent out to the Board. Chad Helmer, consultant for Borough of Catasauqua, and CG had extensive discussions with developers prior to drafting the revised RFP. There were eight 1-on-1 calls; CG provided the Board with a summary chart. CG identified three “buckets” of issues or concerns which have all been addressed in the revised RFP. 1.) Timing of RFP: The first RFP was issued November 2 and due on January 12. Five or six developers indicated that because of the holidays, there simply was not time to put together and submit a proposal. This issue has been addressed by creating a 90-day window to respond with a June 10 due date. 2.) Developers requested a more streamlined document request: First RFP requested developers’ financial statements, statement of income & expenses, projected statement of income & expenses for the development entity, along with a balance sheet for the development entity. Instead, the revised RFP asks for the proposed statement of income & expenses for the proposed developer but no balance sheets or financials are requested from the development entity. At this stage, two bank references are requested. To clarify, when a preferred

developer is selected and prior to entering into an agreement with that developer, RALC would receive detailed financial statements. However, to streamline the document requests, at this stage the requested documents have been pared back to exhibit a credit-worthy position which bank letters of reference provide. 3.) Additional guidance on the environmental remediation of flood-plain issues: The additional guidance has been received. Environmental issue: Chad Helmer (Catasauqua Borough's engineer) corresponded with Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and William Kraft with DEP in an email dated February 16, 2024, wherein the conditions in the environmental covenant which were enclosed in the supporting documents of the RFP talked about the need to cap the site pursuant to DEP requirements. Mr. Kraft indicated that the technical guidance is contained in the DEP Technical Guidance Manual and he referenced the use of additional specific information on the caps on pages 145-150 of the Technical Guidance Manual. As a general rule, there is a requirement for 2-feet of capping above the contaminated soil. If any developers have questions, they will have Mr. Kraft's email and they can directly communicate with him. CG received an email from Vanessa Nedrick, Remington Vernick Engineers for the Borough of Catasauqua, on the 100-year flood plain wherein she provided the base-flood elevation for the area which is between 278 and 280 feet. She indicated what the lowest floor level is in relation to the flood elevation number and the requirements to raise same (Paragraph E of memo). CG believes sufficient guidance has been provided but in the event that a developer does have a question, there is a preproposal conference scheduled for March 28. Vanessa Nedrick and Chad Helmer will attend that conference and if there are additional questions, CG will emphasize the importance of raising any questions at that time about these issues. CG directed the Board's attention to the revised RFP and noted that a section had been added outlining favorable attributes about developing this site – for example, no requirement for storm water retention. CG believes that the revised RFP is a good document responsive to the concerns of developers based on feedback received. MY commended CG and Chad Helmer on the enormous amount of additional work both men put forth in attempting to put this revised RFP together and to have it posted again. MY said it was a big deal for the RALC. VH agreed that the County of Lehigh, too, is very pleased. No further comments or questions. DW made a motion to reissue the RFP; the motion was seconded by RG. Unanimous voice vote to reissue the Catasauqua Iron Works Project RFP.

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

CG was given the authority to go ahead with the expenditure of the CDBG funds since the state did not commit funds [to the Blight-To-Bright program] so CG contacted the three municipalities, North Whitehall, Whitehall, and Catasauqua about the availability of CDBG funds for demolition only. Whitehall and Catasauqua are looking into processing this and North Whitehall has not responded yet. CG will have an update on this for the next meeting. By expending the CDBG funds, it will help to keep momentum going by providing a down-payment on getting started. Based on the encouraging feedback received from the regional director of PA DCED, the expectation is that the RALC will again apply for the state’s funding.

MISCELLANEOUS

CG reminded the Board that the next RALC meeting on April 4 will be in-person at the Lehigh County Government Center, Room 436. Breakfast will be served. At that meeting, after brief housekeeping items, he would like to use the time to formulate strategic objectives related to the RALC’s mission statement which was approved by the Board in October. As part of the Board Packet, CG included some questions that he asked the Board to take into consideration for the April 4 meeting. CG stressed that with this second in-person session, he is leading the RALC through a series of steps that will eventually result in a strategic plan for the RALC.

As part of the RALC’s community outreach effort, CG has scheduled an April 1 meeting with Emmaus Borough to basically talk about the RALC. CG will also attend the County sponsored Congress of Government (COG) meeting on March 13. CG is attempting to schedule meetings with two community partners: Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission to have more in-depth discussion about possible collaboratives.

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

CG is having continuing discussions with the owner of a former industrial property in Whitehall Township. CG will email the latest discussions about possible state

grants that would be provided to this owner in exchange with his moving ahead and accomplishing the demolition of that property.

COMMENTS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS – None

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS - None

MY asked for any other business. CG advertised the RALC meetings for the first 6 months; there is a meeting scheduled for June 6. However, CG will be out of the country on June 6. MY asked the Board to bring along their calendars to the April in-person meeting so that a new June meeting date can be selected. MY called for any questions or concerns on anything and there being none, RG made a motion to adjourn; DW seconded the motion to adjourn and there was unanimous voice approval for adjournment of today's meeting.

Next regular meeting is April 4, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. at the Lehigh County Government Center, Room 436.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia L. King