

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF THE REDEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF BERKS**

July 28, 2020

Chairman Glenn Yeager called the meeting of the Board of the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Berks to order at 3:01 P.M. on July 28, 2020 via a Zoom meeting.

**1. Roll Call:**

The following Board members were present during the meeting:

Glenn Yeager, Chairman  
Eileen Kastura, Vice Chairperson  
Diodato Bassano, Treasurer  
Pellegrino Orlando, Secretary

Also in attendance were:

Kenneth L. Pick, Executive Director  
Peter Battaglia, Deputy Director  
Kathy Heckman, Executive Assistant  
Kathy Miller, Fiscal Officer  
Thomas Dachowski, Housing Director  
Daniel P. Becker, Esquire of Kozloff Stoudt, Solicitor

**2. Reading and approval of minutes of the meeting of 6/23/20:**

Upon motion made by Glenn Yeager and seconded by Eileen Kastura, all members of the Board present voted to approve the June 23, 2020 minutes of the Board of this Authority.

**3. Report of Treasurer:**

Diodato Bassano presented the Profit & Loss Statement and the Balance Sheet as of June 30, 2020. A copy of said report is attached to these Minutes. Upon motion by

Eileen Kastura and seconded by Glenn Yeager, all Board members present voted to accept the report of the Treasurer, including said Profit & Loss Statement and Balance Sheet, subject to audit.

**4. Bills and Communications:**

Diodato Bassano presented the list of payments to creditors representing the period of July 1, 2020 through July 29, 2020. A copy of said report is attached to these Minutes. Upon motion by Glenn Yeager and seconded by Pellegrino Orlando, all Board members present voted to ratify the list of payments to creditors.

There were no communications.

**5. Reports of Committees:**

There were no committee reports presented.

**6. Unfinished Business:**

a. Next Step Program & Rentals:

Kathy Heckman then gave a brief report on the "Next Step Program." There are ten (10) contracts. Ms. Heckman advised that the program has enough funding and is extended through the end of December 2020.

b. Colebrookdale Railroad:

Mr. Pick gave an update on the developments of Colebrookdale Railroad:

- i. Mr. Pick explained that there is a bridge which needs about \$30,000 in repairs to continue running freight.
- ii. Mr. Pick advised that there is a new customer, no name given, which will bring more than 125 carloads of freight per year to the Railroad.

- iii. Mr. Pick advised that the Railroad ordered and received rail bikes. Mr. Pick does not believe the rail bike are up and running at the present time. Mr. Pick explained that a person or groups may rent the rail bikes and pedal downhill from Boyertown to Pottstown.
- iv. Mr. Pick advised that the Railroad is working on reopening in the fall, however, the Railroad is having difficulty finding volunteers because of COVID-19.
- v. Mr. Pick also advised of a recent meeting to discuss the R.L. Banks & Associates report. At that meeting, it was determined that a few minor tweaks needed to the report before it was ready to be released to the County Commissioners. Mr. Pick said stated that he expects to receive the revised report from R.L. Banks shortly.

c. Armorcast R.A.:

Mr. Pick advised that Attorney Joan London is in the process of scheduling a Board of View to determine the fair market value of the property.

d. Housing Programs:

Thomas Dachowski advised that:

- i. 203 Cinder Street. This project is completed. The property was listed for sale and sold quickly. Settlement is scheduled for August 7, 2020.
- ii. 1408 Meade St. This is a new construction project located in the City of Reading. Construction is in process. The roof is being installed,

plumbing has been roughed in and the windows and doors have been installed.

- iii. 310 N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Renovations are nearing completion. The contractor must finish the facade and exterior work, which is almost done.
- iv. 367 Mohrsville Road. The property has been cleaned up and cleaned out. The electrician is roughing in the electrical work and the plumber is roughing in the plumbing.

e. Blighted Property Review Committee:

Tom Dachowski advised that due to the COVID-19, the Blighted Property Review Committee had its first meeting since January 28, 2020. The Committee certified 2438 McKinley Avenue, Township of Spring and 333 N. Church Road, Lower Heidelberg Township as blighted properties.

Mr. Dachowski also advised that the Committee authorized a Resolution to certify 1951 Woodvale Avenue.

f. Small Business Restart Grant (“SBRG”) Program and DCED Emergency Solutions Grant- Coronavirus (“ESG-CV”) Program:

- i. SBRG Program. Peter Battaglia advised that there was little interest in the Small Business Restart Loan (“SBRL”) program for a number of reasons, including competing loan/grant programs and prospective applicants’ concern about their ability to repay the loan. Consequently, the Program was modified to the Small Business Restart Grant (“SBRG”) program. Mr. Battaglia explained that under

the SRBG the award amounts have increased. Applicants can now request grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Mr. Battaglia advised that the SRBG received more than 50 applications of which 14 have been approved. Mr. Battaglia explained that the application deadline has been changed. The program will be opened up until all funds are used from now through the end of December.

- ii. ESG-CV Program: Mr. Battaglia advised that this grant program is through the Department of Community and Economic Development (“DCED”). Mr. Battaglia explained that Berks County was the applicant, the Authority is the subgrantee and the Berks Coalition to End Homelessness is the subrecipient of the program funds. Mr. Battaglia advised that the County was recently awarded \$300,000, two-thirds of which will be used for homelessness prevention, and \$100,000 of which will be used for rapid rehousing.

g. Miscellaneous Items: Ken Pick discussed the following:

- i. Mr. Pick raised the concern that once the eviction moratorium is lifted there will be a large number of people facing homelessness in Berks County. The eviction moratorium has been extended to August 30, 2020. He advised that there is \$3.1M to help tenants that have been laid off or lost their jobs due to COVID-19. The monies will be distributed countywide, including within the City of Reading.

ii. Mr. Pick advised that he and Mr. Battaglia have been working remotely and the other three staff members work on rotating schedules. He explained they are limiting the number of people who come into the office. Masks are available to those who need them. Mr. Pick also thanked the staff for their efforts during this difficult time.

h. Rent Relief Program: Kathy Heckman advised that since July 6, 2020 they have received over 100 applications. Of the 100+ applications, 78 are in process, most are pending, awaiting additional documentation. Four (4) applicants have been deemed eligible and Kathy Miller will be processing the payments. Ms. Heckman explained that either the tenant or landlord may initiate the application process, however, both the tenant and landlord must participate in and be part of the application process.

7. **New Business**:

a. Resolution approving submission of grant application to the Blight Remediation Program. Peter Battaglia advised that by Resolution No. 2020-02, the Authority will make a funding request and application to the Pennsylvania Blight Remediation Program in the amount of \$75,000. If awarded, the funds will be used to assist in the creation, rehabilitation and support of affordable housing in Berks County, specifically to renovate and develop properties located at 614 Spruce Street, 616 Spruce Street and 544 S. 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

Mr. Battaglia explained that the Wyomissing Foundation will contribute an additional \$100,000; Customers Bank will provide a \$250,000 line of credit; and the City of Reading's Housing Program will contribute an additional \$150,000 to renovate and develop the properties located at 614 Spruce Street, 616 Spruce Street and 544 S. 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Mr. Battaglia advised that the budget to renovate and develop the properties is \$575,000.

Motion was made by Diodato Bassano and seconded by Eileen Kastura to execute Resolution No. 2020-02. It was approved that Chairman Yeager's signature on Resolution No. 2020-02 will be made by his stamped signature. All members of the Board present voted to approve and execute the Resolution.

- b. Resolution authorizing the sale of 203 Cinder Street. Ken Pick advised that the property located at 203 Cinder Street will be going to settlement on August 7, 2020. Mr. Pick presented the Berks County NonProfit Development Corporation Resolution No. 2020-03 which authorizes Chairman Yeager, Vice Chair Eileen Kastura or Mr. Pick the authority to execute any and all documentation relating to the sale of the property. The Resolution also authorizes the Authority to provide a loan in the amount of \$6,000, which loan shall be secured by a second mortgage on said property.

Motion was made by Glenn Yeager and seconded by Diodato Bassano to execute Resolution No. 2020-03. It was approved that Chairman Yeager's signature on Resolution No. 2020-03 will be made by his stamped signature. All members of the Board present voted to approve and execute the Resolution.

- c. Resolution authorizing the purchase of 1007 Floret Avenue. Mr. Pick advised that the vacant lot situate at 1007 Floret Avenue will be purchased for \$25,000. Mr. Pick presented Resolution No. 2020-04 authorizing the purchase of the property.

Motion was made by Eileen Kastura and seconded by Glenn Yeager to execute Resolution No. 2020-04. It was approved that Chairman Yeager's signature on Resolution No. 2020-04 will be made by his stamped signature. All members of the Board present voted to approve and execute the Resolution.

- d. Ratification of Chairman Yeager's Signature. Chairman Yeager requested that the Board ratify his signature on a funding agreement with the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency for the Rent Relief Program. Upon motion made by Diodato Bassano and seconded by Eileen Kastura, all Board members present voted in the affirmative.
- e. Grant Agreement with Robesonia Borough. Approval was needed for a grant agreement with Robesonia Borough providing \$55,000 from the CDBG Program for the Robesonia Furnace Project. Upon motion made by Eileen Kastura and seconded by Diodato Bassano, all Board members present voted in the affirmative.
- f. Grant Agreement with COCA. Approval was needed for a grant agreement with COCA providing \$300,000 from the CDBG Program for services to inmates at the Berks County Jail. Upon motion made by Glenn Yeager and



- seconded by Diodato Bassano, all Board members present voted in the affirmative.
- g. Grant Agreement with BCPS. Approval was needed for a grant agreement with BCPS providing \$50,000 from the CDBG Program for services to persons being released from the Berks County Jail. Upon motion made by Eileen Kastura and seconded by Glenn Yeager, all Board members present voted in the affirmative.
  - h. Grant Agreement with Family Promise. Approval was needed for a grant agreement with Family Promise providing \$52,516 from the ESG Program for homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing. Upon motion made by Glenn Yeager and seconded by Diodato Bassano, all Board members present voted in the affirmative.
  - i. Grant Agreement with Family Promise. Approval was needed for a grant agreement with Family Promise providing \$300,000 from the ESG-CV Program for homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing. Upon motion made by Glenn Yeager and seconded by Eileen Kastura, all Board members present voted in the affirmative.
  - j. Grant Agreement with Berks Coalition to End Homelessness. Approval was needed for a grant agreement with Family Promise providing \$1,025,000 from the ESG-CV Program for homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing, street outreach, operation and maintenance of emergency shelters. Upon motion made by Glenn Yeager and seconded by Diodato Bassano, all Board members present voted in the affirmative.

**8. Adjournment:**

There being no further business of this Authority, a motion was made by Eileen Kastura to adjourn the meeting of this Authority. The motion was seconded by Diodato Bassano and all members of this Authority present voted in the affirmative. This meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

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Pellegrino Orlando, Secretary