

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

August 25, 2020

Chairman Glenn Yeager called the meeting of the Board of the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Berks to order at 3:02 P.M. on August 25, 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 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 7/28/20:

Upon motion made by Glenn Yeager and seconded by Diodato Bassano, all members of the Board present voted to approve the July 28, 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 July 31, 2020. A copy of said report is attached to these Minutes. Upon motion by

Glenn Yeager and seconded by Eileen Kastura, 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 August 1, 2020 through August 26, 2020. A copy of said report is attached to these Minutes. Upon motion by Glenn Yeager and seconded by Thomas Ruth, 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 Miller then gave a brief report on the "Next Step Program." There are ten (10) contracts which will be paid through December 31, 2020. Ms. Miller advised that the majority of tenants are paying rent on time. The ones who are struggling to pay rent are trying to get approved for the Rental Relief Program. The Authority is receiving approximately 85% of their normal rental income.

Ken Pick advised that two (2) tenants recently moved out of the Schaeffer Street rental property in Boyertown. Mr. Pick was working with NAI Keystone who was able to find a tenant. Currently, NAI is in discussions with a salt therapy business that

will occupy all three (3) rental spaces. As proposed, the tenant will pay for all renovations and will have a five-year lease with a 3% rent escalator.

b. Colebrookdale Railroad:

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

- i. Mr. Pick advised that Nathaniel Guest is getting inquiries about freight each week. Mr. Guest has recently had to turn down a 20 carload train because Colebrookdale cannot accommodate the storage of train cars between each load.
- ii. Mr. Pick advised that they are working on an application with PennDOT for a \$3,500,000 project, in which \$2,500,000 in funds are being asked from the state. This project will consist of renovating bridge access across Philadelphia Avenue to transload facility.
- iii. Mr. Pick advised that he and Mr. Guest received a draft of the R.L. Banks & Associates report and made additional comments and corrections. Mr. Pick expects a finished product by September 4, 2020.
- iv. Mr. Pick advised that the railroad plans to do limited runs this fall, but they are still struggling with how to make things work with social distancing and COVID issues.

c. Armorcast R.A.:

Mr. Pick advised that there is no update, they are still working towards board of view.

d. Housing Programs:

Thomas Dachowski advised that:

- i. 203 Cinder Street. This property was sold and settlement was held last week.
- ii. 310 N. 4th Street. The project has been completed.
- iii. 544 S. 6th Street. This is a future rehab project. Cleanup of all debris, inside and out, has been completed. The garage was in disrepair and had to be demolished.
- iv. 614/616 Spruce Street. This is a future rehab project and clean up will begin soon.
- v. 367 Mohrsville Road. The drywall has been hung.
- vi. 1408 Meade St. The drywall has been hung.
- vii. Floret Ave. This will be a one floor ranch consisting of 3 bedrooms and 2 baths. Construction will begin soon.

e. Blighted Property Review Committee:

Tom Dachowski advised that there was no meeting this month. He advised that they are still in pursuit of 1951 Woodvale Avenue. This property sustained damage from a fire, is currently sitting vacant, there is a hole in the roof and leaking. Mr. Dachowski advised that at a future time, the Authority will have to decide whether the house should be rehabbed or demolished.

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

i. SBRG Program: Peter Battaglia advised that 16 applicants were awarded grant funding, of which 14 have actually collected the money. Mr. Battaglia advised that he does not expect the Program will come close to awarding all the money that was allotted to the Program. Mr. Battaglia is not sure if the money can be reallocated. Mr. Pick advised it is anticipated that the County will be coming out with another assistance program for small businesses on September 10th, which is easier to follow. The Authority may need to reevaluate these programs before the end of the year.

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. Mr. Battaglia advised that they have spent a couple of weeks to meet the requirements of DCED. Mr. Pick reported that there are currently 15 homeless veterans who reside in hotel rooms using housing vouchers because they cannot find

rental units. Mr. Pick is currently looking at purchasing additional rental units to be used for homeless veterans.

g. Miscellaneous Items: None

h. Rent Relief Program: Mr. Pick advised that there are 240 applications, of which approximately 45 have been approved at the current time. Mr. Pick advised that most of the applications are incomplete with missing and incorrect information. The deadline to accept applications is September 30, 2020.

7. **New Business**:

a. Approval of grant agreement with Opportunity House providing \$185,000 from the ESG-CV Program for operations and maintenance of non-congregate emergency shelter. Mr. Pick advised that when COVID hit, the Commonwealth provided funds to the County Department of Human Services to assist veterans who tested positive with COVID-19 by taking them out of shelters and placing them into hotel rooms. On August 17, 2020, the Commonwealth discontinued this program, so Mr. Pick had a meeting with County and State officials and suggested the Opportunity House take over this program. Accordingly, the County Commissioners agreed to take \$185,000 from the ESG-CV to fund this program.

Upon motion made by Eileen Kastura and seconded by Diodato Bassano, all Board members present voted in the affirmative, except Pellegrino Orlando in who opposed the motion.

- b. Approval of grant agreement with Opportunity House providing \$40,000 from the ESG Program for operations and maintenance of an emergency shelter.
Upon motion made by Glenn Yeager and seconded by Thomas Ruth, all Board members present voted in the affirmative.
- c. Approval of a grant agreement with Berks Connections/Pre-Trial Services providing \$15,000 from the ESG Program for homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing. Mr. Pick advised that this is a program for individuals coming out of jail. Upon motion made by Glenn Yeager and seconded by Thomas Ruth, all Board members present voted in the affirmative.
- d. Approval of a grant agreement with Berks Coalition to End Homelessness providing \$28,173 from the ESG Program for operations and maintenance of family emergency shelters. Upon motion made by Eileen Kastura and seconded by Diodato Bassano, all Board members present voted in the affirmative.
- e. Signature Stamps. Kathy Miller advised that she has purchased signature stamps for the Board members to be used to sign documents on behalf of the Board members. The stamps have been given to the auditor for safekeeping. Upon motion made by Glenn Yeager and seconded by Thomas Ruth, all Board members present voted in the affirmative to approve the use of the signature stamps.

8. **Adjournment:**

There being no further business of this Authority, a motion was made by Glenn Yeager to adjourn the meeting of this Authority. The motion was seconded by Eileen Kastura and all members of this Authority present voted in the affirmative. This meeting was adjourned at 4:16 p.m.

Pellegrino Orlando, Secretary