



Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, Inc.

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GREATER MOHAWK VALLEY LAND BANK - GMVLB

Minutes from: Tuesday, December 12th, 2016 @ 1:00 PM

In Attendance:

*** Attended via Conference Call**

Tolga Morawski, Interim Executive Director

Bob Albrecht, KMVB

Christina Brown

*Michael Brown, Exec. Director Rome Main Streets Alliance

Mark Domenico, City of Rome, Director of Codes

Karl Gustafson, Montgomery County

*Tammie Harris, Otsego County Planning Dept.

*Ray Johnson, Director, Herkimer County

*Margaret Kennedy, Otsego County Board of Representatives

*Joseph Marino, Treasurer

Sam Russo,

Brian Thomas, City of Utica, Comm. Urban & Economic Dev.

Joseph Caruso, Exec. Director MVEDD

Janine Thompson, Administrative Director MVEDD

Karl Gustafson called the meeting to order @ 1:06 pm followed by an introduction of those present.

- The documents provided for the meeting were;
 - ❖ Agenda
 - ❖ Minutes from GMVLB meeting held Tuesday, November 15th, 2016
 - ❖ Draft of GMVLB By-Laws
 - ❖ Draft of MOA between GMVLB & MVEDD
 - ❖ LISC grant letter to Mayor of Utica
 - ❖ Draft MOU between GMVLB & City of Utica

- Karl asked everyone to review the minutes from the previous meeting held on November 15th and if there was any discussion. The minutes were approved on a motion made by Mark Domenico, seconded by Brian Thomas. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

- Processes for GMVLB Board Meetings going forward:
 - Maintaining a quorum for meetings (esp. with winter approaching) Tolga will look at the availability of video-conference system and a designated room where the public could attend at each FGU location. Part of the grant will cover the costs if there are any, including MVEDD offices. Tolga has contacted some counties and working on confirming availability.

- Reporting back to Legislative Bodies of each FGU by following each meeting with a document (cover letter) to keep them up to date on GMVLB activities. Tolga will work with Janine on putting this together and sending information out.
- Review steps to incorporation of the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank (GMVLB) effort:
 - Discuss and approve GMVLB Bylaws; they were previously reviewed by NYS Land Bank Association attorney John Sidd of Menter, Rudin & Trivelpiece, P.C. in Syracuse. Christina Brown sent them out to all FGU attorneys for their review, received comments, suggestions, etc. She stated that there were mostly technical type questions to work out. Motion to accept & approve the By-Laws made by Mark Domenico and seconded by Brian Thomas, motion carried unanimously.
 - Will work on adding a Policy Manual later to dive into details of procurement, conflict of interest, and other more involved subjects.
 - Need to retain a lawyer to work on the paperwork to incorporate the Land Bank. Tolga has suggested retaining Chuck Tallent of Mackenzie & Tallent Law Firm out of Canajoharie. He is used to working with Not-For-Profits. The expense is covered out of the grant funds. A motion was made by Brian Thomas to retain Chuck Talent & his firm, motion was seconded by Mark Domenico and passed unanimously.
 - As far as a 501(c)(3) filing or other tax-exempt class, the Land Bank is already considered a tax-exempt not-for-profit. Tolga will meet with Attorney Sidd to discuss and explore the pros/cons of filing 501(c)(3) then report back to the board at the next meeting. There may be a cost associated with Attorney John Sidd, which was approved up to billable 2hrs of Sidd's time.
- Growing the membership of the GMVLB in the future and the process of adding FGUs:
 - Discussion was held and decided that and we should get at least 6 months under our belt before we consider any FGU additions. Possibly looking at August 2017. The FGU would have to then make an application/letter of interest and then engage in the process. Possibly sending out a press release or letters to other FGU's within our region stating that we would be accepting applications. They would have to have a passed resolution of support in order to submit. A motion was made to have an open enrollment was made by Mark Domenico and seconded by Brian Thomas & so carried.
- Process for receiving grants going forward:
 - The City of Utica has stepped forward and unanimously passed MOU to receive funds from LISC for the land bank on December 7, 2016. As soon as the funds are received, they will be processed through to MVEDD.
 - Tolga is working with Joe, MVEDD, on draft agreement for assistance: holding and utilizing funds until incorporation, sharing space and resources. A suggestion was made to put together a committee to review the agreement and have a draft emailed out to the board for comment & approval within the next 2 weeks. The committee will consist of; Karl Gustafson, Tolga Morawski, Mark Domenico & Brian Thomas.
- Searches, Hiring, staffing;
 - AmeriCorps Grant: Hired 3 Full-time AmeriCorps Staff Members that will start on 12/15 with training in Syracuse on the 15th & 16th. Two of the hired are ready to go but the 3rd is having issue with a driver's license and may have to be replaced. The cost of the training is reimbursable by AmeriCorps.
 - Joe, MVEDD, need to come up with a list of costs to date and submit for the next board meeting
 - All other expenses will be compiled and will be put on the agenda for review and vote at the next board meeting.

- Short-Term Procurement process/discretion for attorney fees, accountant, bookkeeping, etc. for current needs through incorporation, IRS Filings, etc.
 - Looking for an approval for Tolga to spend a certain dollar amount without approval of the board if something arises between monthly meetings. A motion was made to allow the Executive Director to make decisions on items of up to \$500.00 without prior board approval until a more robust procurement process is put in place, Brian Thomas made the motion and was seconded by Mark Domenico and was carried unanimously.
 - Search Committee Report on their meeting with Bowers & Company, accountants
 - Bob Albrecht spoke for the committee; stated that they highly recommend utilizing their services. Would be \$4,000-\$7,000 for 3 months and then it would depend on the number of properties the Land Bank takes on.
 - concerns: 1-Board member could do due diligence to oversee the expenditures for reporting, 2-efficiency within the office for approvals & bill payment, 3-would there be a permanent file for the future
 - A motion was made to engage in a 3-month initial agreement with Bowers & Company, motion made by Brian Thomas and seconded by Mark Domenico, so carried.
 - Call for recommendations for Attorneys with land banking experience. Tolga recommended the inclusion of Attorney John P. Sidd to the pool, as did Chris Brown.
 - A call was also made for recommendations of local law firms able to do closings and other *local* to be compiled and emailed to the Board of Directors for consideration. The committee will be put together by Tolga and will they will compile a short bulleted list for the RFP for the BOD and the committee to review and another. Chris Brown also offered to participate.
 - attorney agency – land bank knowledge
 - local attorney in each of the FGUs, should have knowledge of real estate to assist with closings, spread out over the counties for travel/logistics
- Office Space, MVEDD, FGUs, etc.
 - Discussion was held about the fact that we are seeking work area/desk space in each of the FGUs locations', along with a space to remote in to meetings. Space is also needed at MVEDD to be available for the AmeriCorps members and/or the Executive Director or other staff to utilize. Tolga spoke that he was in the process of contacting the FGUs and will give an update at the next meeting.
- Grants/Projects:
 - Every FGU should continue to work on their Project/Property Submission forms and keep them coming in...
 - We need to have a Planning/Project Point person in each County to discuss project with:
 - Herkimer: ?
 - Montgomery: Bill Roehr/Amanda Bearcroft
 - Otsego: Tammie Harris/Karen Sullivan
 - Schoharie: Shane Nickle
 - Rome: Mark Domenico
 - Utica: Brian Thomas
 - Tolga reported on:
 - Center for Community Progress TASP Award for \$150K was due 11/17 and on 12/19 they should be announcing the selections

- NYS AG \$20million grant for project funding, due November 30th, this would be for larger projects
 - Tolga to outline how this would work for the BOD before the next meeting
 - Finalizing *internal* prioritized FGU project lists
 - Need projects placed in the LISC/Enterprise spreadsheet/timeline
 - Discuss idea of \$200K revolving fund, other NYAG “hints”
- NYS HCR HOME Local Program FY 2016 & 2017 Funding Round, due 12/16/16, discussing to look at this for next year, 2017 as it is too late for us to do this now
- Periodic (2-3 times/year) Grant Meetings across FGU Economic Development Staff (Round-table) on land bank related issues, projects. Discussion that this should be done 2-3 times per year, like MV500, gather, compile like information in working with grants

New Business:

- Land Bank Strategy:
 - Target Zone Projects vs. Emergency projects vs. Projects of Opportunity
 - NYAG’s 15% profit limit and conditional exemptions, need to have a checklist when a property is proposed
 - Develop internal Strategy Committee, consider hiring consultant for short and long-term Strategic Plan Development (along the lines of CEDS)
 - Need for Community Advisory Council of citizens, non-profits, other stakeholders
 - Keep Mohawk Valley Beautiful (KMVB) as basis
 - Discussion held – task to solidify what an agreement should look at. Tolga to put together for January’s meeting.
- Sam Russo discussed the initiatives he & Joe Caruso have been working on and they have been in discussions with Bill Raffia from the Solid Waste Authority. Video a deconstructive project, methods of and judgments being made as the process goes along
- Looking at progress that has people to do the work and getting them to work like the Veterans Center in Utica.
- Get people like the Bill Rabbia’s in each of the FGU’s that could come together and work together to teach & learn from each other
- Maybe we can get some of the KMVB members to assist. Dan Sullivan and Bob Albrecht to look into this.
- There is a bill for the NY Land Bank Association for the remainder of 2016 & for 2017 membership, looking for the okay to pay this bill, approx. \$1500.00. Karl made the motion to pay the bill, seconded by Brian Thomas, so carried.
- City of Little Falls has passed a resolution for the 5/50, where 50% of city taxes would go to the land bank for 5-years following the sale of a land bank property and they are also talking with the school board for their approval.
- On January 17th, Main Street First will hold a conference at Benton Hall @ 6:00 pm on Zombie Properties, speakers will be Karl Gustafson, Tolga Morowski, Dan Sullivan, Michael Brown of Rome Streets, Mark Domenico & Judy Wolf, President of Main Street First. Information will be emailed out for anyone wishing to attend.
- We should think about a Press Release along with a 1st mailing back to FGU’s and include US/State Representatives in the mailing to keep them up to date on the GMVLB progress
- The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 24th @ 1:00 pm @ the MVEDD office.

The motion was made by Brian Thomas to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mark Domenico, so carried.
Adjourned at 3:05 pm.