LAND BANK AUTHORITY MINUTES

Time: Wednesday, May 14th, 2025, 12PM - 1PM

Place: Annex 1st Floor Conference Room, 420 10th St.

Call to Order: Steve Anthony, 12:09pm

Board Members Present: Steve Anthony, Tomeika Farley, Michelle Williams
Board Members Absent: Sherrie Aaron, Carson Cumming, Deidre Tilley

Community Reinvestment Staff: Aysia Merritt, Robert Scott, Kimberly Mitchell
Guests: 1

1. **Approve Minutes from January 8th, February 12th, and March 12th, 2025**

   The minutes from the January 8, February 12 and March 12 meetings were not approved due to a lack of quorum.

2. **Director's Report**

   The department held a bus tour of CDBG-funded projects during National Community Development Week (April 21-25). Members of the Tax Commissioner's office staff attended the bus tour. Director Scott expresses hope that the land banking process will restart by December.

   The newly appointed LBA member Reynolds Bickerstaff introduces himself. Mr. Bickerstaff states that he has been in real estate since 2004, including work in brokerage, property management, etc. He adds that he has served several city boards. Mr. Bickerstaff states that he hopes to use his knowledge and skills to further the mission of the board. Mr. Anthony shares that Mr. Bickerstaff will be a great asset to the LBA board. Director Scott states that the board is looking forward to him joining.

   Director Scott gives Mr. Bickerstaff an overview of the Land Bank. The director shares that the goal of the Land Bank is to transform a vacant space into a vibrant place. The properties acquired through the Land Bank are vacant properties and must have severe property, demolition or grass liens. Director explains the eight land bank "opportunity zones." Mr. Anthony shares that the properties acquired by the Land Bank are typically residential but occasionally are also commercial.

   Director Scott states that members of the general public can petition the board to acquire a property. The applicant must provide a proposal and show a capital stack. Historically, people were acquiring properties and not making any improvements on the site. The board makes a decision to move forward with a proposal and the Real Estate Specialist works internally to complete the judicial in rem foreclosure.

Mr. Bickerstaff asks if the next fiscal year will be busier than this year. Director Scott says this is likely. The LBA board is giving the new Tax Commissioner at least 12 months to wrap his arms around the program. The Real Estate Specialist, Ms. Merritt, will meet with Mr. Bickerstaff after his swearing-in to talk more about the activities of the board. Director Scott states that the board can use this downtime to work on the opportunity zones and other aspects of the board's work. Mr. Bickerstaff suggests that the board pursue additional funding for infrastructure. Mr. Anthony adds that the goal is to beautify our neighborhoods.

Ms. Farley inquires if the board or staff have analytics on past properties, indicating the "why" behind the properties being selected by the LBA. She says that her family has heir property that was damaged during a recent storm. She notes that some properties have no intent for redevelopment, but if there is an effort to address it, Ms. Farley asks whether the board should be taking it. Director Scott says the LBA board must decide if they want to add those considerations. He adds that he does not want to take family wealth. Mr. Anthony comments that the property must be delinquent.

Ms. Farley states that this is important if the board is going to establish itself as helping the community. She states that the board needs to give ample notice, or for the property owner to have a "path to green." Director Scott says that with a demo lien, the property owner has many chances. The City gives the property owner installment plans. Mr. Anthony states that the property owner must demonstrate a consistent pattern of delinquency. He adds that the Heirs workshop is a good tool.

Director Scott shares an update on the Estate Planning activities, highlighting that 13 of the 30 applicants will participate in Signing Day to finalize their estate plans. The LBA paid for the workshop and CDBG paid for the estate plans to be completed.

Ms. Farley states that the board needs written policies to stand behind. Director Scott states that the board will operate with transparency and accountability. Mr. Anthony shares that a typical Land Bank meeting will have some procedural pieces and then at least one presentation from an applicant. He notes that the LBA is "not land grabbers."

Director Scott shares that the Tax Commissioner says he needs more financial capacity in his budget to support the Land Bank. Mr. Bickerstaff asks about who can advocate for budget items. Director Scott states that it is usually staff. Ms. Merritt adds that Mr. Bickerstaff can advocate as a private citizen.

3. Curtis Street Update

Ms. Merritt reached out to Josh Nicholson on May 7th to request an update on construction funding. She stated that she had not yet received an update from Mr. Nicholson. The board members share the history of the property with Mr. Bickerstaff. Ms. Williams shares that the property had squatters twice and had the copper ripped out. She adds that during the last meeting, he said he needed the unrestricted deed to get a construction loan to finish the project. The board released the restrictions on the deed. Director Scott commented that the board does not want the property back. Ms. Farley inquired whether the board had any ability to compel Mr. Nicholson to finish. Without the deed restrictions, Ms. Merritts states no. Ms. Merritt states that she is connected with the Savannah Land Bank and will inquire about how they handle these issues.

4. **Board Empowerment Opportunity**

Director Scott inquires whether there are particular areas of training or development the board members believe would be valuable in strengthening the board's effectiveness and advancing the land bank's vision. Ms. Merritt is scheduled to attend a Land Banking conference in Detroit in September.

Ms. Merritt asks the board to consider things they may want to learn more about. She suggests the Center for Community Progress (CCP) website. She advises the board members to explore the website to see what they might benefit from learning more about. Director Scott adds that staff will see what trainings CCP can bring to the board and asks for suggestions.

Ms. Farley asks what recourse an applicant has if they petition the board for a property and the board denies their application. Ms. Anthony states that they can reapply. Ms. Farley shares that on her prior boards, the applicant could take the entity to court. Mr. Anthony states that they have board member insurance that protects them as private citizens. He states that prior to the process slowing down, there were properties that people put down earnest money on. The applicants could either get a refund and get a first right of refusal or the board could hold the money in escrow.

Ms. Williams adds that after the completion of the project, the applicants are asked to come back and share their success stories. Mr. Bickerstaff asks if the applicant is able to demolish a structure themselves. Director Scott states that the LBA pays for the demolition. The price of the purchase would include the demolition price. In a lot of cases people go above the asking price. Director Scott states that the City has the ability to demolish properties using the City's on-call vendors.

Mr. Anthony states that the goal is to cover expenses and break even, but the board can also make a modest profit. Ms. Farley shares that this allows the board to promote other activities, such as the Invest in Columbus workshop. Director Scott states that there are about $200,000 in reserves. He adds that the board can also use affordable housing funding to develop lots.

Call to Adjourn, 1:01pm