

City of Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority
Monthly Meeting – Minutes
Wednesday, November 16, 2016 9:00 a.m.

City of Valdosta – City Hall Annex, Engineering Conference Room

Members Present: Jason Dove, Commissioner Joyce E. Evans, Frank Morman, Jack Oliver, Burke Sherwood, and Sandra Tooley

Others Present: Vanassa Flucas, Carmella Braswell, Christopher Brandon, Sarah Lowe

The meeting was called to order by 9:07 a.m. with a moment of silence requested by Mr. Morman.

The newest Land Bank Authority Member, Mr. Jack Oliver introduced himself. Mr. Morman welcomed Mr. Oliver and provided a brief history of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority.

Meeting Minutes from the October meeting were reviewed. One possible discrepancy was discussed. The recording will be reviewed and appropriate corrections will be made. Also noted was the need to correct the spelling of a visiting guest's name. Mr. Morman called for a motion to approve the October Meeting Minutes with the noted changes and corrections. Mr. Sherwood moved to Approve with corrections. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Evans. October minutes were approved with the corrections.

The City Appointments for the Land Bank Authority were discussed. Councilwoman Tooley was given clarification on the appointments with the history leading up to the Authority's decision on their appointment by Mr. Morman.

Ms. Flucas shared the City's appointment of attorney Ms. Karla Walker, however since this is a recent appointment Ms. Flucas is waiting for the official letter to be submitted to Ms. Walker by the Mayor before bringing her into the meeting. Ms. Flucas will be meeting with Ms. Walker before the end of the year and will provide her with resources so she will be ready to start when we return to meet in January.

Overview of the Georgia Land Bank Meeting held in Augusta, Georgia was presented by Ms. Flucas and Ms. Braswell. Ms. Flucas highlighted some of the information which could be implemented in our community.

- Funding Sources: CDBG funds could potentially be utilized to help support the Land Bank Authority. There may be some restrictions but it will still help sustain the Land Bank Authority. Ms. Flucas is planning to share this with the City Mayor and Council at their upcoming retreat.

By adopting the 2012 legislation we were given the ability to self-sustain the Land Bank Authority. It is important we find funding sources as the money we are currently operating with is dwindling.

- Ms. Flucas shared the need to maximize our ability to extinguish taxes and liens to help utilize delinquent and blighted properties. More information will be gathered and brought to the Authority for review.
- Insurance for the Directors and Officers of the Land Bank Authority. There is insurance on the parcels maintained by the Authority, but we need to ensure the Land Bank Authority's directors and officers are covered also.

- The usage of In-Rem Judicial Tax Foreclosures was discussed. More research will be shared with the committee. This process takes longer but is another tool we could potentially use.

Ms. Braswell had one additional question from attending conference regarding Title Insurance on the parcels. Mr. Sherwood addressed the concern, stating the parcels we currently have already went through Title Opinions, therefore it would not be necessary. This would be additional protection but would be needed more in the event we do hold any In-Rem processes to obtain said parcel.

Mission Statement for the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority was reviewed and briefly discussed. The Mission Statement proposed:

“The Valdosta/Lowndes County Land Bank Authority’s mission is the conversion of vacant, abandoned, and tax delinquent properties into productive use, with an emphasis on creating and promoting affordable housing and enhancing the appearance of the community”

Mr. Morman called for a motion on the Mission Statement. Councilwoman Tooley moved to accept and approve the Mission Statement as written. Mr. Sherwood seconded the motion. The Mission Statement was accepted and approved. This will be added to the City website.

Current Inventory of Parcels under Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority were reviewed and discussed. Current parcel appraisals and maps were pulled from the Lowndes County Assessors website and used to distribute to all present. Parcels included are:

822 E Brookwood Drive
830 E Brookwood Drive
808 First Avenue
106 W MLK Drive
303 Wisenbaker Lane

Each parcel was discussed for the Authority members to be better informed on their status. Ms. Flucas is planning to arrange a tour of all the parcels during the February meeting. Ms. Braswell was encouraged to gather information on potential parcels within the county. If we are unable to fit them into the tour in February we can plan a second tour for later in the spring.

The Authority will be setting up meetings in the New Year with the new Lowndes County Tax Commissioner and also with the School Boards. Ms. Flucas will work to arrange for the Tax Commissioner to attend our next meeting or to at least get us on his agenda. Ms. Flucas mentioned the City School Board would prefer to have the Land Bank Authority come to the School Board retreat to present agenda items and believes they would be open for discussions. Ms. Flucas restated the purpose is to get these delinquent properties back onto the tax digest. Currently we may be able to have the City and the County to forgive the delinquent taxes, but we need to come up with a blanket agreement to include the School Boards so these taxes can also be forgiven. By removing these tax liens, it will then potentially make the parcels more marketable to developers. The School Board retreat will take place in March.

Last item on agenda was to discuss the attendance of legal representation. The concern addressed by Ms. Flucas was regarding the cost associated with having legal representation at each meeting. Commissioner Evans suggested we go through and confirm if it is required to have legal representation and if so the parameters for this requirement within the bylaws. Ms. Flucas will go through the bylaws and report back to the Authority.

Open Discussion was held.

Commissioner Evans had a question on the Land Bank Authority's policy on Open Records.

Ms. Flucas addressed this concern and stated meetings and records are operated under the open records policy. The Authority is not bound to making public notices in the newspapers, but all meeting dates as well as ratified minutes are posted to the City's website for public review and access.

Ms. Flucas reflected back on the recent meeting in Augusta and from the Conference stating how much other communities are accomplishing through Land Banking. A lot of these communities have learned to think outside the box to get things accomplished and the Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority has the same potential.

Ms. Flucas let each of the new members know of the various educational opportunities through the Center for Community Progress (CCP). This is the organization that provided the conference this past fall and offer e-newsletters and information.

Reminder of the next meeting was given. We will meet again on January 18th at 9:00 a.m.

There were no additional items for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.