



BUFFALO ERIE NIAGARA LAND IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
May 25th, 2023 – 1:00 PM
Brisbane Building Conference Room 521
403 Main St. Suite 602
Buffalo, New York 14203

Call to Order by Board Chair, Brendan Mehaffy

ATTENDANCE:

Board Members Present: Brendan Mehaffy, Scott Bylewski, Jeremy Toth,
Catherine Amdur, William Reece, Cavette
Chambers, Daniel Castle, Oluwole McFoy,
Delano Dowell

Board Members *Excused*: Karen Utz

Board Members *Absent*: Deborah Skulski-Wakelam

BENLIC Counsel Present: John Sidd (remotely)

BENLIC Staff: Jocelyn Gordon, Benjamin Brown, Matthew Azzano,
Alexis Duwe

HAND OUTS:

Agenda; Minutes of March 2022 Board Meeting; March 2022 Treasurer's Report; April 2023 Treasurer's Report; 2022 IRS 990 Filing; Adams Street Parcel Map; Proposed AHOP Timeline

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Roll Call

2. Approval of March 2023 Minutes:

The minutes of the March 23rd, 2023, Board of Directors Meeting were presented and reviewed.

A motion to approve the March 2023 minutes was made by Jeremy Toth, seconded by William Reece, and unanimously carried as approved.

3. Treasurer's Report:

Executive Director Jocelyn Gordon presented the March and April 2023 Treasurer's Reports. As of April 30th, 2023, the Corporation's bank balance was \$2,594,516.63.

A motion to approve was made by Scott Bylewski, seconded by William Reece, and unanimously carried as approved.

4. **Resolution 2023-6 Accept Grant – NYS HCR Land Bank Initiative Phase II**

BENLIC is requesting to accept a \$1.7 million grant held by NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR). The Land Bank Initiative is the first time BENLIC has received a grant from HCR. This money is specifically intended for stabilization work; it will not completely pay for complete rehabilitations. The stabilization work proposed by BENLIC includes foundation repairs, new roofs, new windows and doors, and exterior siding for seven residential properties which are already in the BENLIC inventory. Five properties are located in the City of Buffalo, one in the Village of North Collins, and one in the Town of Evans.

BENLIC is requesting that the Executive Director and staff be enabled to execute the grant agreement and work towards completing the stabilization projects.

A motion to approve was made by William Reece, seconded by Delano Dowell, and unanimously carried as approved.

5. **Resolution 2023-7 Acquisition of City-Owned Vacant Lots**

In 2022, BENLIC completed a thorough Request for Proposal (RFP) process and chose a preferred developer for construction of eleven new homes on the East Side of Buffalo. Unfortunately, due to rising interest rates, BENLIC and the developer were unable to finalize a formal contract. Now, in order to revive the project, BENLIC will serve as the developer. The corporation has applied for the NYS HCR Affordable Housing Opportunities Program (AHOP) grant to secure funding to cover the gap in construction costs.

Eleven buildable lots on Adams Street are already being transferred from the City of Buffalo to BENLIC. Two remaining city-owned lots were originally intended for community green space. BENLIC is requesting that the City of Buffalo transfer these remaining two lots to BENLIC's inventory to maximize the number of homes constructed. Green space remains a part of the Adams Street project plan, this component will be moved to a different part of the block.

A motion to approve the acquisition of two additional lots on Adams Street was made by Olowule McFoy, seconded by Cavette Chambers, and unanimously carried as approved.

6. Approval of IRS 990 Filing

BENLIC's tax return was presented to the board for approval. Seth Henner and staff at Lumsden & McCormick have prepared the tax return for the 2022 business year.

A motion to approve the IRS 990 Filing was made by William Reece, seconded by Catherine Amdur, and unanimously carried as approved.

7. Real Property Dispositions

Resolution #2023-4 Disposition of 149 Lake, Angola

149 Lake in the Village of Angola was acquired by BENLIC via the 2019 Erie County In-Rem Auction. BENLIC invested \$1,200.00 towards cleaning and securing the property. It was listed for sale as part of the Vacant-to-Value program in which the buyer agrees to complete repairs according to a scope of work prepared by BENLIC's property inspector.

Both offerors are previous purchasers of BENLIC properties and are responsible property owner. The preferred buyers are Emmett & Kelly Lonergan. They have sufficient funds available to complete the scope of work and plan to complete the rehab themselves. BENLIC is requesting to dispose of the property to the buyers for \$25,000.00.

A motion to approve the disposition was made by Oluwole McFoy, seconded by Catherine Amdur, and unanimously carried as approved.

8. **Resolution #2023-9 Disposition of 95 Grote, Buffalo**

95 Grote in the City of Buffalo was acquired by BENLIC via the 2020 City of Buffalo Disposal Agreement. BENLIC invested \$23,929.00 towards securing and cleaning the property as well as replacing the roof. The house was listed for sale in November 2022 as a Vacant-to-Value at a price of \$39,900. Multiple offers were received from potential homeowners, but none of the offerors had sufficient funds and rehab experience to qualify as responsible bidders.

In April, the listing was opened to investors as well, and four new offers were received. The preferred buyer is Matthew Borowski for \$42,000.00. He will perform some work himself and hire contractors for the electrical, HVAC, and plaster work.

A motion to approve the disposition was made by Scott Bylewski, seconded by Jeremy Toth, and unanimously carried as approved.

9. **Resolution 2023-10 Disposition of Multiple Residential Lots**

Three vacant lots in BENLIC's inventory have received purchase offers as part of BENLIC's

side lot program. Two of these lots, 2070 Sherman in the Village of North Collins and 26 E. Garfield in the Village of Lancaster, will be bought by adjacent property owners, Tara Christian and Zach Repka, respectively. These neighboring property owners will combine the lots with their own. The remaining lot, 147 Rosewood in the Village of Angola has received an offer by a local resident, Brian Smith, who does not own the adjoining property. Mr. Smith owns a construction business and plans to build a tiny home on the lot and potentially operate it as an Airbnb.

10. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Jocelyn Gordon updated the board on recent BENLIC activities.

The Erie County Clerk's Office has proposed to assist BENLIC's mission to combat blight and reverse the cycle of home abandonment with funding from its budget. No funding has been accepted yet.

BENLIC may explore the possibility of a potential new pipeline for acquiring vacant properties by purchasing tax liens. If a municipality agreed to sell a vacant properties' tax lien, then BENLIC would have the ability to foreclose, take title, and return that property to productive use.

BENLIC will form an LLC which will contain the Adams Street infill properties under.

Strategic conversations are also being held between the City of Buffalo and Erie County regarding BENLIC receiving American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to start new infill housing construction throughout the City of Buffalo.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Scott Bylewski, seconded by Cavette Chambers, and unanimously carried by acclamation.

NEXT MEETING: Board of Directors July 20th , 2023, 1:00 p.m.

Location: Brisbane Building Conference Room 521, 403 Main St. Suite 602, Buffalo, New York 14203

Recorded by: Matthew Azzano, BENLIC Staff

Submitted for Approval: Jocelyn Gordon, Executive Director

Adopted by BENLIC Board Members on _____