



BUFFALO ERIE NIAGARA LAND IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
January 23, 2025 – 2:30 PM
Brisbane Building Conference Room 521
403 Main St. Suite 602
Buffalo, New York 14203

Call to Order by Board Chair, Scott Bylewski

ATTENDANCE:

Board Members *Present*: Scott Bylewski, Daniel Castle, Raymour
Nosworthy, Catherine Amdur, Adam McNeill,
Cavette Chambers, Scott Bylewski, Jeremy Toth,
Karen Utz

Board Members *Excused*: Debbie Gable, Nadine Marerro

BENLIC Counsel *Present*: John Sidd

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

HAND OUTS:

Agenda; Minutes of December 2024 Board Meeting; December 2024 Treasurer's Report;
Resolution #2024-23 – Disposition of 531 Roanoke Avenue – Side Lot Sale

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Roll Call

Board Chair Scott Bylewski announced a new focus on collaboration between BENLIC and the City of Buffalo and Erie County. He clarified the need for strong communication between all parties to ensure the successful execution of BENLIC's projects and mission.

Regarding recent concerns over the ARPA project, Chair Bylewski explained that the County and City executives want to see the highest value realized for the community. He noted that the bidding process for the City of Buffalo portion of the ARPA project will begin following further direction from the Mayor of Buffalo and Erie County Executive.

As two new board members were in attendance, everyone present at the meeting introduced themselves.

2. Approval of December 2024 Minutes:

The minutes of the December 19th, 2024 Board of Directors meeting were presented and reviewed.

A motion to approve the December 19th, 2024 Board of Directors meeting minutes was made by Adam McNeill, seconded by Daniel Castle, and unanimously carried as approved.

3. Treasurer's Report:

BENLIC provided the December 2024 Treasurer's Report in advance of the meeting. Executive Director Jocelyn Gordon presented the Treasurer's Report to the Board. She explained how the Treasurer's report has been redesigned to show each BENLIC account's activity arranged by program. BENLIC's total combined assets totaled \$6,276,224.46 on December 26th, 2024.

A motion to approve the September Treasurer's report was made by Catherine Amdur, seconded by Karen Utz, and unanimously carried as approved.

4. **Resolution #2025-1** – Select Preferred Builder(s) for Cheektowaga ARPA Infill

On December 2, 2024, BENLIC released a bid package for the construction of four houses in the Town of Cheektowaga as part of the ARPA Infill Initiative. Six complete bids were received by the due date of January 13, 2025, and the two lowest bidders were interviewed by BENLIC staff, and representatives from Erie County and the City of Buffalo. BENLIC staff recommended awarding two houses to each of the lowest bidders.

Board Chair Scott Bylewski stated that Erie County required more time before awarding these

projects. The County asked BENLIC to request a “best and final” offer from each of the bidders. In order to achieve a lower final price, County staff opined that the resolution be tabled for now, and that a “best and final” offer be solicited from each of the bidders. To increase the likelihood of receiving lower bids, Scott Bylewski noted that the County wishes to explore alternative construction specifications.

Executive Director Jocelyn Gordon explained the bid solicitation process that BENLIC staff followed. The bid packages were sent out to a total of 175 construction firms including 17 modular builders. The Construction Exchange website was also utilized to distribute bid packages. A Q&A session was held with BENLIC staff as well as the project’s architect, Kevin Connors of EcoLogic Studios. Seven addendums were released to all construction firms via email in response to the questions that BENLIC Staff received.

Construction Specialist John Good discussed BENLIC’s methods for soliciting lower bids by asking bidders to provide an “alternative” bid price for building the homes under modified specifications that would offer some cost savings. He noted that the bid prices BENLIC received are in line with current construction prices.

Program Manager Ben Brown explained the rubric that BENLIC staff used to rank the finalists. This rubric considered factors such as each firms’ capacity, liquidity, experience at scale, and proposed M/WBE utilization plans.

Board Chair Scott Bylewski stated that one reason Erie County desires to see lower bids is so that the initiative remains focused on affordable housing and is supported by the public. Public support may not be as strong if the cost of constructing the homes is higher.

Daniel Castle noted that Erie County had received lower bids from contractors for comparable construction bid packages. Construction Specialist John Good responded by noting some of the cost differences that may have been present between the different projects.

BENLIC Staff and Board members agreed to meet the following week with the project’s architect for a working session on how to lower building costs.

A motion to table the resolution to select a builder for the Cheektowaga ARPA Infill sites was made by Scott Bylewski, seconded by Jeremy Toth, and unanimously carried as approved.

5. Executive Director’s Report

Program Manager Ben Brown presented a phasing plan for the ARPA Infill Initiative in the City of Buffalo. It is now a “blended program” with twenty of the proposed homes to be built using modular construction and the remaining twenty-seven to remain stick-built homes. Buffalo Construction Consultants, BENLIC staff, and representatives from the City of Buffalo and Erie County met to discuss milestones, design considerations, and potential cost savings that can be achieved. Scott Bylewski noted that it was a productive and robust meeting.

Jocelyn Gordon announced that the Adams Street financing is scheduled to close Thursday, January 30th. The final contract between Evans Bank and NYS HCR is being finalized.

Construction Specialist updated Board Members on the current progress on each of BENLIC's sixteen current sites under development. Twelve sites make up the Adams Street Infill Initiative new builds and the remaining four are rehabilitations financed by the NYS HCR Land Bank Initiative. The first two LBI rehabilitations are expected to be completed at the end of February.

6. Executive Session

Daniel Castle, Chair of the Personnel Committee, requested to enter Executive Session in order to discuss the report issued regarding the employment of individuals.

A motion to enter executive session was made by Daniel Castle, seconded by Adam McNeill, and unanimously carried as approved.

Regarding the resolution proposed in executive session, a motion to approve was made by Karen Utz, seconded by Daniel Castle, and unanimously carried as approved.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Scott Bylewski, seconded by Daniel Castle, and unanimously carried as approved.

NEXT MEETING: Board of Directors Thursday, February 20th, 2025, 2:30 p.m.

Location: Conference Room 200, Brisbane Building 403 Main Street, Buffalo NY 14203

Recorded by: Matthew Azzano, BENLIC Staff

Submitted for Approval: Jocelyn Gordon, Executive Director

Adopted by BENLIC Board Members on _____