BUFFALO ERIE NIAGARA LAND IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
July 16th, 2026 – 2:30 PM
Brisbane Building Conference Room 521
403 Main Street
Buffalo, New York 14203

Call to Order by Board Chair, Scott Bylewski

ATTENDANCE:

Board Members *Present*:	Scott Bylewski, Daniel Castle, Jeremy Toth, Thomas Baines, Michael Milks, Rosa Pizzi, Louis Petrucci, Karen Utz
Board Members *Excused*:	Adam McNeill
BENLIC Counsel *Present*:	John Sidd
BENLIC Staff:	Jocelyn Gordon, Benjamin Brown, Matthew Azzano, John Good
Guests:	Monica Boutin, Zachary Evans

HAND OUTS:

Agenda; Minutes of May 2026 Board Meeting; Minutes of May 2026 Board Meeting; May 2026 Treasurer's Report; June 2026 Treasurer's Report; **Resolution 2026-4** Authorize Acquisition and Non-Competitive Disposition of City-Owned Vacant Lots for 5/14 Memorial Project; **Resolution 2026-5** Disposition of 702 Norfolk; 1603 Kensington Note and Mortgage Discharge Letter; 93 Lake Note and Mortgage Discharge Letter

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Roll Call
   Call to order by Board Chair Scott Bylewski.

2. Approval of May 2026 Minutes:
   The May 2026 meeting minutes were made available for review by the board prior to the meeting. Board Chair Scott Bylewksi noted an amendment to the Executive Session section, clarifying that the session was convened for matters regarding the employment history of a particular individual in accordance with Public Officers Law requirements.

   A motion to approve the amended May 2026 meeting minutes was made by Jeremy Toth, seconded by Michael Milks, and unanimously carried as approved.

3. Treasurer's Report:
   BENLIC staff provided the May and June 2026 Treasurer's Reports to the Board of Directors in advance of the meeting. Executive Director Jocelyn Gordon presented the Treasurer's Report to the Board. The Treasurer's Report was presented to the Board. BENLIC's total assets were reported to be $8,531,325.41 as of May 31, 2026 and $7,558,136.24 as of June 30, 2026. The Board also received an update regarding the remaining balances of City and County ARPA/BBR construction accounts and progress toward full expenditure of project funds by November 2026.

   A motion to approve the May and June 2026 Treasurer's Reports was made by Scott Bylewski, seconded by Rosa Pizzi, and unanimously carried as approved.

4. Amendment to **Resolution #2025-8** Disposition of ARPA Infill Initiative Properties by Lottery Process
   The Board discussed amending **Resolution #2025-8**, which originally authorized the disposition of Build Buffalo Roots homes through a lottery process. Staff reported that after several rounds of lottery administration, the process extended the amount of time homes remained in inventory and created challenges when selected buyers were ultimately unable to complete a purchase. Staff further reported that the lottery process reduced flexibility in responding to market demand and often delayed closings compared to traditional residential sales.

   Representatives of the City of Buffalo and BENLIC explained that all existing program requirements would remain unchanged, including income eligibility requirements, affordability restrictions, fixed sale prices, homebuyer education requirements, and third-party qualification review by Belmont Housing Resources. The amendment would only modify the method of buyer selection, allowing qualified purchasers to acquire homes on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Board discussed applicant participation levels to date and reviewed procedures established by Belmont Housing Resources to timestamp and document applications to ensure fairness and transparency.

A motion to amend **Resolution #2025-8** to authorize the disposition of Build Buffalo Roots homes on a first-come, first-served basis to qualified purchasers under existing program requirements was made by Board Chair Scott Bylewski, and approved by unanimous voice vote.

5. **Resolution #2026-4** Authorize Acquisition of Non-Competitive Disposition of City-Owned Vacant Lots for 5/14 Memorial Project
   Chad Houston, Executive Director of the 5/14 Memorial Foundation, provided an overview of the proposed *5/14 Living Memorial and Healing Center* planned for the southwest corner of Jefferson Avenue and Best Street. The project will include a memorial and community healing space intended to honor the victims of the May 14, 2022 tragedy while promoting healing and remembrance.

   Chad Houston explained that the project site will consist of eighteen parcels, including fourteen City-owned lots. Under the proposed resolution, BENLIC would acquire the City-owned parcels and subsequently transfer them to the Foundation. Staff noted that the transaction is consistent with BENLIC's mission and authority as a land bank to return vacant land to productive use.

   Discussion included the site selection process, community engagement efforts, and coordination with private property owners involved in assembling the project site.

   A motion to approve **Resolution #2026-4** authorizing the acquisition and non-competitive disposition of City-owned vacant lots for the 5/14 Memorial Project was made by Thomas Baines seconded by Karen Utz, and unanimously carried as approved.

6. **Resolution 2026-5** – Disposition of 702 Norfolk Avenue
   Executive Director Jocelyn Gordon presented **Resolution #2026-5** regarding the disposition of 702 Norfolk Avenue, a property rehabilitated by BENLIC using NYS HCR Land Bank Initiative grant funding. Staff reported that a previously approved sale did not proceed to closing and the property was subsequently relisted in May 2026.

   Following relisting, BENLIC received three purchase offers. Staff recommended approval of the highest offer of $190,500 and the second-highest offer of $180,000 should the primary transaction fail to close.

   A motion to approve Resolution #2026-5 authorizing the disposition of 702 Norfolk Avenue to Ronald Hargrove for $190,500 was made by Jeremy Toth seconded by Rosa Pizzi, and unanimously carried as approved.

7. Note and Mortgage Discharge (Action Item)
   Staff presented requests for mortgage discharges related to two properties rehabilitated through BENLIC's Vacant to Value Program. Under the program, BENLIC maintained a $50,000 lien on each property until specific property improvements were completed by the owner.

   Construction Specialist John Good reported that both rehabilitation projects were successfully completed and both properties are currently occupied. Staff recommended authorizing the discharge of BENLIC's liens on both properties.

   A motion to authorize the mortgage discharges for 1603 Kensington Avenue, Cheektowaga and 93 Lake Street, Angola was made by Michael Milks, seconded by Karen Utz, and unanimously carried as approved.

8. Executive Director’s Report
   Board members recognized Executive Director Jocelyn Gordon for her leadership and service to BENLIC as she prepares to transition from the organization. Daniel Castle highlighted BENLIC's accomplishments during Jocelyn Gordon’s tenure, including the acquisition and disposition of hundreds of properties, rehabilitation of many vacant and abandoned houses throughout Buffalo and Erie County, development of affordable housing initiatives, construction of 64 new homes, and securing nearly $37 million in funding.

   Ms. Gordon thanked the Board, staff, project partners, and New York State Homes and Community Renewal for their support and expressed her commitment to assisting with the upcoming leadership transition.

9. Executive Session
   The Board entered Executive Session pursuant to Public Officers Law §105(1)(f) to discuss matters leading to the employment of a particular person and the employment history of a particular person. A motion to enter Executive Session was made by Daniel Castle, seconded by Thomas Baines, and unanimously carried as approved.

   The Board subsequently returned to regular session. The Board approved a $5.00 per hour salary increase for Program Coordinator Matthew Azzano in recognition of additional responsibilities assumed during the organizational transition, including grant administration, property management oversight, and utility account management. A motion to approve the salary adjustment was made by Daniel Castle, seconded by Thomas Baines, and unanimously carried as approved.

   The Board also approved revisions to BENLIC's banking and signatory authority during the Executive Director transition period. The action authorized Treasurer Adam McNeill to be added to BENLIC's banking and financial accounts for purposes related to account administration, payments, wire transfers, investments, and other routine financial transactions as necessary. A motion to approve the banking and signatory authority changes was made by Rosa Pizzi, seconded by Jeremy Toth, and unanimously carried as approved.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

NEXT MEETING: Board of Directors Thursday, August 20th, 2026, 2:30 p.m.

Location: Conference Room 521, 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 August 20th, 2026.