

GRIFFIN SPALDING COUNTY LAND BANK AUTHORITY

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Newton Galloway
Patty Beckham
Sharon King
Bruce Ballard
Pansy Copeland

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Virginia S. Church

AFTER AGENDA SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

January 6, 2022

A. Determination of Quorum

Mr. Galloway opened the meeting at 12:08 pm and determined that there was a quorum as all board members were present.

Mr. Galloway moved to amend the agenda to discuss the executive director's close out as Item B. Second by Ms. King. Motion passed 5-0.

B. Executive Director Close Out

Mr. Galloway asked Ms. Church what could be accomplished as far as closings prior to her departure. Realistically, there are 6 properties that can close by the end of January. As far as financial tasks, right now it is just general items such as paying the monthly bills and getting the Quickbooks information to Ms. Shirley for reconciliation. Mr. Galloway asked that the following lists be prepared for next week's meeting: the outstanding title work; the amount of funds needed from the City and County over the past 5 years; the amount generated from sales over the past 5 years; the deed-restricted properties where the purchaser is suspected of violating the restriction.

C. Mr. Galloway stated that this meeting is intended as an internal discussion/workshop for the board members. He would like for them to come up with any proposals or recommendations for next week's meeting, at which time the public can comment. Ms. King questioned if Roberts' Rules were being used and Ms. O'Conner noted that there was nothing on the agenda calling for a vote.

Mr. Ballard stated that it has been a rocky year with three new board members trying to get up to speed. Considering what has been going on he still thinks the LBA is a viable organization. There is a lot at stake with the current properties and dealing with dissolution would be a complicated process. He also does not see a temporary stoppage and re-start as a viable alternative because of the loss of momentum and inherent difficulty in the process. He thinks the Board should recommend either going forward or dissolution.

Mr. Ballard believes the LBA has made progress with better processes and better tracking of properties and better transparency, along with development of the website. The downside he sees is the lengthy time to get properties to closing and stated that we need to look at ways to expedite that process. There are also issues with properties that the Land Bank never should have taken into inventory. He noted that the goal of owner occupancy

has always been an objective, but with the new IGA, it became a requirement; however, the policy is not really feasible in areas that are all rental. He suggested that the Board and City and County may want to look at the owner occupancy requirement, perhaps considering offering additional incentives for ownership, but allowing properties to be utilized as rental.

Ms. King stated that she was not opposed to that idea. Mr. Ballard also noted that we need contracts that don't need to be monitored. Ms. King replied that we need to make sure that the contractors are vetted and doing what they are supposed to be doing. Mr. Galloway asked what the criteria could be for developers and stated that he does not trust anyone doing development in the county except for the Griffin Housing Authority. Ms. Copeland agreed. He said that the quality of rental properties in Griffin is what is creating most of our problems. He also asked the Board to think about what policy should be in place if the owner-occupancy restriction is lifted.

Ms. Beckham noted that she is in favor of people being able to own properties, that she is not a fan of rental. She believes in the Land Bank and points out that we have gotten a number of properties back on the tax rolls. Mr. Ballard said he thinks the LBA should continue operating.

Ms. Copeland agreed and said that helping slum lords doesn't improve our community. She stated that ownership takes education because first time owners don't know that they have to do things like set money aside for taxes. Not giving them the knowledge they need is setting them up for failure.

Ms. Copeland doesn't think most people know what the Land Bank is and what it does. We need to get out into the community, but we have to be organized and have the necessary structure in place. She stated that she has left every meeting feeling negative, but she wants to help improve our community. Mr. Galloway asked her if she agreed that the problem is a lack of pride and not affluence. Ms. Copeland agreed and said that one owner occupied house generates pride, and the neighbors start wanting to own their houses, too. But she thinks it is time to step outside of the box.

Ms. King referenced the one-year and 5-year plans that she had sent out and stated that everyone knows where she stands. She believes the LBA can help communities and that it isn't done yet.

The question of how dissolution would work was raised. Ms. O'Conner noted that O.C.G.A. §48-4-61 gives us no guidance as to what to do with the properties owned or held by the Land Bank, so we look to the IGA. It calls for property to be distributed pro rata (50/50) between the City and the County, depending on appraised value. This is not a workable method, and she would work to get the IGA amended again to call for a different method of distribution, where the City takes all the properties in the City and the same for the County. It was noted that, whether the Land Bank continues or is dissolved, a new executive director will be needed.

Mr. Galloway stated that he is probably the most frustrated of the 5 board members. He noted some things that he thinks are working reasonably well: the side-lot program is allowing the Land Bank to increase lot sizes; our coordination with the City, County, and Housing Authority for areas of redevelopment has gotten better; we have had some success with the lots given to Square Foot Ministries.

The Land Bank has one real task under statute: conveying tax-free property. This Board originally took on the owner-occupancy restriction which he believes is the key to success. He thinks that the LBA has failed in promoting the restriction and that at least half of the proposals we get have no intention of following it. That leaves the Land Bank having to prosecute, which costs \$5,000-\$10,000 for each case, and only if there are no problems with the case. He asked if the local governments would be willing to put more money into the LBA to pursue these suits, and guessed that the answer is likely 'no.'

Mr. Galloway stated that we are currently dependent on people coming to us and feels that we should be aggressively promoting ownership. If the City and the County publicly encouraged that goal, it would expand our pool of buyers. Currently, there is nothing on either government's website which does that. He said that they also need to zoning regulations and decisions that encourage ownership and noted that there is no opportunity zone or TAD for residential areas.

Mr. Galloway believes that, if the Land Bank is to succeed, it needs joint activity between the two governments to promote owner-occupancy, direction from them as to future redevelopment areas, and the ability to coordinate with the Housing Authority. He believes that the lack of owner occupancy is our greatest deficit to economic development. If we can move in the direction with the support he has outlined, let's move forward. If not, let's dissolve.

D. Adjourn

Mr. Ballard moved to adjourn at 1:35 pm, second by Ms. Beckham. Motion passed 5-0.