

Land Bank Advisory Committee Meeting Notes
Cook County Dunne Administration Building
69 West Washington Street, 34th Floor Conference Room
October 29, 2012

The third meeting of the Cook County Land Bank Advisory Committee was opened by the Chair, MarySue Barrett who summarized the LBAC activities to date and outlined the day's agenda.

ULI - TAP

The first portion of the meeting was devoted to a detailed summary of the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) convened on October 23rd & 24th and the recommendations from that panel. ULI TAP resulted in recommendations to:

- include minor amendments to the proposed land bank's mission statement drafted by the LBAC to better align with the charge from President Preckwinkle and the County Board.
- structure the land bank as a quasi-government authority with power to: hold land tax free; assist in clearing title; operate independent of the existing County government; operate in a manner that is nimble, flexible, responsive, efficient and decisive.
- organize governance of the proposed land to include a nine-member Board, a short term Implementation Task Force and a Permanent Advisory Committee.
- initially staff the proposed land bank with: a full time executive director, a general counsel, a portfolio manager, two asset managers, 2 acquisition managers, a demolition specialist and an administrative assistant.
- budget \$10.5 million for year-one staffing and operations.
- acquire 850 properties in the first year and a total of 2,550 properties over three years.
- consider a list of finance options including fees for the sale of land bank owned/controlled properties, delinquent tax fees, demolition fees, donations, value recapture and fees for professional services.
- employ a strategic and targeted approach to property acquisition to include a range of high to low value properties in specified geographic areas in cooperation with local municipalities.
- prioritize a proactive asset management strategy that adds value where the real estate market fails to do so. The recommendation strongly emphasizes selection of a highly capable inventory management system.
- emphasize strong property maintenance and management functions including property security, a broad spectrum of intermediate uses (community gardens, storm water management, etc.), comprehensive insurance.
- partner with outside organizations and vendors for redevelopment services including site preparation, clearing title and environmental remediation.
- manage disposition of land banked properties in accordance with local and regional plans, the capacity of local partners, requests from local governments and neighboring residential, commercial and industrial stakeholders.

- **Mission, Powers, Priorities & Principles**

Second on the agenda was a review of the most recent draft of the document outlining the mission, powers, priorities and principles of the proposed land bank. The discussion resulted in a shift in focus away from a detailed reference to powers typically assigned to property owners broadly, instead only specifying powers to be uniquely granted to the proposed land bank.

There was also a consensus determination to strike the entire “Priorities” section out of concern that such specific references might effectively limit consideration or execution of potentially plausible land bank activities. Critical areas of focus for the proposed land bank would instead be referenced in the section on “Principles.”

There was also a consensus agreement to form a subcommittee of select LBAC members and Working Group participants to reconcile the question of whether or not to specifically express a preference for affordable housing as a foundational principle for the proposed land bank.

A newly edited draft of the document is to be distributed to LBAC members and the Working Group prior to the next LBAC meeting on November 5th where this discussion will be resumed, with a focus on the document’s concluding section on “Principles.”

Cook County State’s Attorney’s Opinions

The third agenda item was the presentation of findings and opinions from the Office of the Cook County State’s Attorney comparing key powers and capabilities of a potential land bank based on three distinct organizational models – an independent non-profit entity; a separate County-government empowered agency; and a Housing Authority of Cook County (HACC) empowered agency. There was a consensus determination to focus on the County government empowered agency model because of its close alignment with the organizational model recommended by the ULI TAP. It was noted that this particular model would require any property held by the proposed land bank would have to do so in the name of Cook County government in order to realize the benefits of clearing title and holding property on a tax exempt basis. Concerns about the potential risks and perceptual challenges with the County government empowered agency model resulted in a request for further review by the Office of the State’s Attorney of establishing such a County government empowered agency.

Budget & Funding Options

Following lunch, Amy Hovey from the Center for Community Progress made a brief presentation outlining sample budget details from several established land banks, particularly focusing on their start-up budgets.

Amy’s presentation stressed the need to procure as much in-kind support as possible. She also emphasized the importance of establishing the proper balance of internal functions with a newly established land bank with contracted services. She cited examples of start-up land banks that eventually developed more complex and diverse functions and large staffs and budgets (such as Cayahoga County, Ohio) as well as those with relatively small and basic operations and minimal staffing and budgets (such as Fulton County, Georgia).

Amy also stressed the importance of early investments in critical support systems including a highly capable inventory management system as detailed in the ULI TAP recommendations. She recommended a conservative estimation of the expected revenue to be generated by land and property sales and diligent exploration of statutorily established revenue streams enabled by government policy makers. Amy also recommended diligent pursuit of federal grant money administered by the County and other agencies, despite the dwindling availability of such resources.

At the meeting's conclusion, Chairman Barrett indicated that the budget and financing options briefly summarized by Amy would be discussed in greater detail at the next LBAC meeting on Monday, November 5th along with a review of the revised Mission, Powers, Priorities and Principles document and recommendations on governance and geographic purview.

Land Band Advisory Committee Members in attendance October 29, 2012

MarySue Barrett
Jeff Bartow
David Chandler
Pam Daniels-Halisi
David Doig
Julie Dworkin
William Goldsmith
Calvin Holmes
Katie Ludwig for Michael Jasso
LaVon Johns
Mary Kenney
Craig Mizushima
Rich Monocchio
Kathleen Ransford
Jeff Sherwin
Julia Stasch
Gene Williams
Herman Brewer (ex-officio)