

2/25/2019; 10 am

Special Meeting between Village of Herkimer and **Mohawk Valley Land Bank** (public welcome)

Presenter: Bob Albright; from the Mohawk Valley Land Bank

Office located on second floor of Adirondack Bank Bldg in Little Falls

Email: BobA@GMVLB.org

Office: info@GMVLB.org

Present:

Maria Fiorentino; Trustee

Ron Kopelman, Trustee

Max, Trustee

Mandi Viscomi, Village Clerk

Ralph Franco, Codes Enforcer

Jennifer Parmon, Herkimer BPA (public)

Lisa Ingraham (public)

Discussion

- Mohawk Valley Land Bank is an independent public authority
- Presently works with the following counties: Herkimer, Montgomery, Schoharie, Otsego, and C/Rome and C/Utica, (not Oneida County, nor Fulton County or C/Johnstown)
- Purpose is to restore deteriorating buildings back onto the tax rolls to help municipalities as well as the counties.
- They use funds received from “Big Banks” from “settlement of 2008” through the Attorney General – funds are public, transparent, nothing hidden behind closed doors. – Only for use for the Greater Mohawk Valley Region.
- “LISC” is the overseer of the funds used to help the communities.
- Currently Utica and Rome each just received \$150,000 grants for this purpose; Zombie Grant #1.
- “Zombie” Grant #2 has deadline of March 8th... Herkimer is one of two municipalities that were eligible for this grant, using amount of deteriorating properties within the village. The second who qualified declined to work with the Land Bank (I was not able to find out who they were, or for what reason they declined).
- This “Zombie” #2 Grant is for \$200,000; to be dedicated to a village who is willing to work with the Land Bank to be a “poster child” to deal with blight in our area. To be a model for the rest of the state to see what can be done and hope they all jump on board for future grants to help themselves as well.
- There is also additional funding is possible on top of this \$200,000 once the process is started.

Process (some things didn't make sense to me, but this is what I got out of the discussion, could be incorrect though....)

1. "Property Intake" form for each deteriorated property mailed to the Land Bank for review (anyone could do that)
2. Codes Enforcers ticket the property owners of deteriorating buildings (issue is how to find the owners, especially out of state LLCs)
3. They have 30 days to fix, respond or they have a Court date
4. Can do this for up to three months.
5. If vacant, deteriorated, and no taxes paid, and not for sale, this 3 months gives time for Village to try to acquire the property
6. Village to write letter to bank/mortgage co asking to donate property or settle on a \$ amt for Village to purchase the property. With proof of deterioration, vacant, no taxes paid, etc.
7. "County is already on board with the Land Bank and will cooperate with the process." Was stated; founding "FGU"; Land Bank would not pay taxes on these properties
8. "LIMBO List" protects County legislature and county funds; takes properties, puts them aside, if requested will transfer them to the Land Bank.
9. Supreme Court would transfer the property to the Village
10. Village doesn't want the property
11. Property would be "pending property" of the Land Bank and transferred to the Land Bank at an UNKNOWN cost to the Village; would have to be agreed upon with an MOU (Memo Of Understanding) between the Village and the Land Bank; Estimated \$10,000/negotiated per property.

NOTES:

A "19A" coordinator can be hired by the Village with the grant money to write these letters and help the process.

"550 Resolution"; Village of Herkimer passed it; When the property is returned to the tax role, at the brand new assessment, 50% of the Village Tax collected will go the Land Bank for the first 5 years to compensate the Land Bank.

Village; (Ralph) needs to update and finalize local property maintenance laws.
Needs technology to digitalize all codes records; could be done at no cost by the Land Bank

Questions/concerns:

- Grant for Residential or Commercial or Multi-use?
- Owners who are currently LLC's?
- Time of Village Employee to continue to process to try to locate property owners; above and beyond what they are currently doing (Ralph Franco and John Spanfelner); or hire someone else to help them.
- After Codes Enforcers hand out tickets to property owners, they have 30 days to fix issue. If issue not fixed, they are given a court date. However, we NEED Court to follow through ("need more TEETH") on these issues to push the property owners (Suggestion was they "needed to fill the room" during these court dates to show strength in numbers to the Court officials)

How can the public help?

Spruce up exterior of properties

Issue – property owners afraid of tax assessment if property is improved.

“Supposedly unless you are adding a deck/pool, etc, they can’t reassess your property.

A coat of paint or such would not result in reassessment.”

(John Macri is the contact person for tax purposes.)

Lowe’s/BOCES may be an option to ask for help for older, lower income property owners.

Catholic Charities sometimes has grants to help with home improvements.