

**REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM  
AUGUST 24, 2023**

Town Hall at Bethlehem City Hall  
10 East Church Street  
Bethlehem, PA 18018

**MINUTES**

The Board of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Bethlehem met for a regular meeting on Thursday, August 24, 2023 at 5:00 P.M. in Town Hall at Bethlehem City Hall; 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The place, the hour and the date duly noted for the holding of this meeting was publicized.

Chairperson Tracy Oscavich called the meeting to order and the following members were present:

Ronald Heckman  
Tracy Samuelson

The Chairperson called a quorum present.

Also present were:

Alicia Karner, Executive Director  
Heather M. Bambu-Weiss, Board Secretary  
Michael E. Riskin, Esq., Solicitor  
Laura Collins, Director / Dept Community & Economic Development

RDA Board Members, Earl Bethel and Christopher Spadoni did not attend the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF CASH REPORTS**

Mr. Heckman made a motion to approved the cash reports for the months ended June 30, 2023 and July 31, 2023. These cash reports were emailed earlier to each member of the RDA Board prior to the meeting. Ms. Samuelson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously and the cash reports for the months ended June 30, 2023 and July 31, 2023 were approved.

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR**

Since there were no members of the public in attendance, there were no comments during the Courtesy of the Floor portion of this meeting.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Ms. Oscavich turned the meeting over to Ms. Karner for her Executive Director Report. Ms. Karner indicated she did not anything to beyond the agenda action items for the Board at this time.

**REAFFIRMING EMAIL VOTE – AMENDMENT NO. 2 TO SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT AGREEMENT**

Ms. Oscavich indicated that the RDA Board has been asked to reaffirm its email vote involving Amendment No. 2 to the Special Event Permit Agreement for Handwerkplatz and Liederplatz. She added that this amendment removes The Moon Bounce Guys, LLC as a party to the agreement and updates and identifies AKM Entertainment, LLC as the other Permittee vendor. The reaffirming of the email vote should be done via motion as has occurred in the past with similar situations.

Ms. Samuelson made a motion to reaffirm the email vote to approve Amendment No. 2 to the Special Event Permit Agreement which removes The Moon Bounce Guys, LLC as a party to the agreement and updates and identifies AKM Entertainment, LLC as the other Permittee vendor. Mr. Heckman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved and the email vote to approve Amendment No. 2 to the Special Event Permit Agreement was approved.

**RESOLUTION NUMBER 1504 – KEYSTONE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM – PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT GRANT**

Ms. Oscavich indicated that the RDA Board has been asked to review and consider for approval Resolution Number 1504, which authorizes the RDA to submit an application for a Public Improvement Grant through the Keystone Communities Program. She added that the grant funds are being requested for renovations of the blight certified property located at 401-403 and 405 East Fourth Street.

Ms. Karner reminded the Board that this property is a mixed-use property which has been vacant for a while. She noted that this property was certified as blighted and added that the RDA is submitting this application under the assumption that it will acquire the property in the near future. She explained that these funds will assist with the renovation costs associated with this property.

Mr. Heckman indicated that he supports the RDA applying for this grant, but noted the trend of private developers requesting and obtaining subsidies for projects which will generate profits. He expressed a hope that private developers will begin doing more projects independent of such subsidies in the future.

Ms. Karner indicated that the RDA evaluates each property regarding areas such as reuse, qualified developer interest and cost for renovations. She noted that having grant funds, such as this, available often makes projects which are quite costly more attractive to qualified developers due to their financial resource availability for a single project or for one of such size

Ms. Samuelson encouraged consideration be given to affordable housing in the redevelopment of this project, as well as others in the City. She noted that need of such housing in Bethlehem. Ms. Karner indicated that consideration would be given to development plans that incorporate affordable housing into this site but noted that discussions regarding this issue can further occur after a developer is selected.

Ms. Karner stated that it has been some time since access has been gained to the interior of this structure and noted that an updated evaluation of the property condition will need to be done upon acquisition by the RDA. She also noted that estimated renovation costs are based upon data previously available to the RDA and depending upon additional deterioration such costs may be greater when the property evaluation is conducted.

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Following this presentation and discussion, Mr. Heckman presented the following resolution to the Board and moved for its adoption by the Board.

**WHEREAS**, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (“PA DCED”) administers the Keystone Communities Program (the “Program”) to encourage the creation of public and private partnerships to support local initiatives such as growth and stability of neighborhoods and communities, social and economic delivery, and strong and secure quality of life;

**WHEREAS**, the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Bethlehem (“the RDA”) is a state incorporated government redevelopment authority with the powers vested by Pennsylvania Redevelopment Authority law;

**WHEREAS**, the RDA and City of Bethlehem (“the City”) have a strong working relationship toward meeting the national objective of blight removal;

**WHEREAS**, the RDA and City partnered on an eight-month planning process to develop a Blight Remediation and Mitigation Plan (“the Plan”) to address blighted properties and disinvested neighborhoods at risk of further decline with the City of Bethlehem;

**WHEREAS**, Section 4 of the Act of May 20, 1949, as amended, authorizes PA DCED to grant funds for housing development, redevelopment and the prevention and elimination of blight;

**WHEREAS**, the Program has a Public Improvement Grant to assist communities with development projects to help eliminate decline, provide gap financing as well as assist in emergency efforts to recover from a natural disaster;

**WHEREAS**, the Program has issued funding guidelines and is accepting competitive funding applications for the Public Improvement Grant program;

**WHEREAS**, the RDA desires to submit an application for a Public Improvement Grant, in an amount not to exceed \$300,000, to be used for blight remediation as supported by the Blight Remediation and Mitigation Plan;

**WHEREAS**, the RDA has identified the City as a partner for the submission of this application as well as a partner toward meeting the national objective of blight removal.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Bethlehem that:

1. The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Bethlehem desires to submit an application to the Keystone Communities Program for a Public Improvement Grant, in an amount not to exceed \$300,000, to be used for blight remediation as supported by the Blight Remediation and Mitigation Plan is hereby approved.
2. The Executive Director, on behalf of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Bethlehem, is authorized to execute any and all documents as may be required as part of the Public Improvement Grant financing, including, but not limited to, the application process and award of any funds.

(Resolution Number 1504)

Ms. Samuelson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. As a result, Resolution Number 1504 was unanimously adopted by the RDA.

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**GENERAL DISCUSSION – MARTIN TOWER / DETERIORATED AREA**

Ms. Oscavich asked Ms. Collins to begin the Martin Tower – Deteriorated Area discussion. Ms. Collins provided the RDA Board with an overview of the current status of the Martin Tower site as well as an update of the plans for the site. She noted that the Board members received a map with the proposed deteriorated area boundaries and explained that the RDA was being asked to review and provide a recommendation concerning the boundary, which could be used to provide City Council guidance with future discussions on this matter.

Ms. Samuelson inquired if any other tracts in the City of Bethlehem have been considered for an Affordable Housing LERTA to which Ms. Collins and Ms. Karner indicated that there is an area in South Bethlehem that has already received this designation. It was also noted that there are not a lot of areas where large development can occur. Ms. Collins indicated that the concept of an Affordable Housing LERTA is only being discussed for the site of the former Martin Tower and that no formal discussions have occurred to date.

Ms. Oscavich asked if the designation of a “deteriorated area” would provide any additional benefits for this site. Ms. Karner and Ms. Collins explained that such a designation can provide additional financing opportunities for a project. When projects of such greater needs exist, opportunities for additional funds are often available to encourage project development.

Mr. Heckman noted the size of the property being discussed and identified its current condition being one of blight. He commented that he has long considered Bethlehem to be a community of neighborhoods but expressed concerns about the impact the recent trend of rental housing and the transient nature of such housing can have upon the community in the long-term. Mr. Heckman noted his understanding of developers having a desire for local project incentives but cautioned the impact such incentives can have upon the overall community. He stated support for the redevelopment of the site of the former Martin Tower and noted the great potential this project site has.

Ms. Oscavich stated that this is one of the biggest development opportunities for the City of Bethlehem in recent times. She expressed her agreement of the boundaries, as identified on the accompanying map, being identified as a deteriorated area. Ms. Oscavich cited the strong infrastructure of the area and its proximity to the interchange as making this a highly attractive site for development.

Following discussion and comments by members present, the RDA Board unanimously recommended the proposed boundaries of the former Martin Tower site be identified as a deteriorated area and requested such determination be considered by City Council when this area is further discussed.

**ADJOURNMENT**

As there was no further business, Mr. Heckman made a motion to adjourn the August 24, 2023 RDA Board meeting. Ms. Samuelson seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously carried. As a result, the meeting adjourned at 5:25 P.M.

Submitted by,

Heather M. Bambu-Weiss  
Board Secretary