

**REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM
JANUARY 25, 2024**

Town Hall
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, January 25, 2024 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
Christopher Spadoni (via phone)

The Chairperson called a quorum present.

Also present were:

Laura Collins, Director of Community and Economic Development
Hilary Kwiatek, City Council Liaison to the RDA
Tony Hanna, Consultant to the RDA
Heather M. Bambu-Weiss, Board Secretary
Michael E. Riskin, Esq., Solicitor

RDA Board Member, Tracy Samuelson, contacted the RDA office prior to the meeting to indicate she was unable to attend. RDA Board member, Earl Bethel, did not attend the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Heckman made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 28, 2023 regular meeting of the Redevelopment Authority. The minutes were emailed earlier to each member of the Board. Mr. Spadoni seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously and the minutes of the September 28, 2023 regular meeting of the Redevelopment Authority were approved.

CASH REPORTS

Mr. Heckman made a motion to approved the cash reports for the months ended August 31, 2023; September 30, 2023; October 31, 2023; and November 30, 2023. These cash reports were emailed earlier to each member of the Board. Mr. Spadoni seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously and the cash reports for the months ended August 31, 2023; September 30, 2023; October 31, 2023; and November 30, 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.

REAFFIRM EMAIL VOTES

Ms. Oscavich indicated that the Board has been asked to reaffirm the following email votes:

- 1) **2022 CDBG Agreement and Amendment** – Ms. Oscavich indicated that this agreement and amendment authorized the RDA to enter into an Agreement and Amendment with the City of Bethlehem for 2022 CDBG Funds. These funds were provided for costs incurred by the RDA as part of the blight remediation program and the funds will expire December 31, 2024.
- 2) **Resolution Number 1509** – Ms. Oscavich indicated that Resolution Number 1509 authorized the RDA to submit an application for Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE) Grant funds for blight remediation as supported by the Blight Remediation and Mitigation Plan.
- 3) **Use Permit Agreement – Christmas City Village** – Ms. Oscavich indicated that this item authorized the RDA to enter into a Use Permit Agreement with the Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce and use the RDA portion of the Sun Inn Courtyard property as part of the Christmas City Village event during the 2023 holiday season.

As there were no further discussion regarding any of these above items, Mr. Spadoni made a motion to reaffirm the email votes for the 2022 CDBG Agreement and Amendment; Resolution Number 1509 and for the Use Permit Agreement pertaining to the Christmas City Village. Mr. Heckman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

As a result, the RDA Board reaffirmed the email votes approving the 2022 CDBG Agreement and Amendment; approving Resolution Number 1509; and approving the Use Permit Agreement pertaining to the Christmas City Village during the 2023 holiday season.

The adopted Resolution Number 1509 is as follows:

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Program (“PHARE”) was established by Act 105 of 2010 to provide a mechanism by which certain funds would be used to assist with the creation, rehabilitation and support of affordable housing throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania;

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

WHEREAS, the RDA and COB 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, Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (“PHFA”) administers the PHARE program and has announced a Request for Proposals inviting applications to be submitted for 2023 PHARE program funding;

WHEREAS, the RDA desires to submit an application for 2023 PHARE funding to be used for blight remediation as supported by the Blight Remediation and Mitigation Plan;

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WHEREAS, the RDA has identified the City as a partner for the submission of this PHARE 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. In partnership with the City of Bethlehem, the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Bethlehem desire to submit an application for 2023 PHARE program funding 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 and directed to execute a Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE) fund application.

(Resolution Number 1509)

RESOLUTION NUMBER 1510

Ms. Oscavich indicated the RDA Board has been asked to review and consider Resolution Number 1510, which authorizes Laura Collins to replace Alicia Karner as Executive Director of the RDA.

Ms. Collins indicated that this was an interim appointment as they City is planning to hire a new Deputy Director of Economic Development. Ms. Collins also noted that after a replacement is hired, it will be decided if Ms. Collins will remain as the RDA Executive Director or if this duty will be transitioned to the new Deputy Director of Economic Development.

Mr. Spadoni asked about the status of a replacement being named for Ms. Karner. Ms. Collins indicated that the Deputy Director of Economic Development position has been posted and applications are being reviewed as received for this position.

Following this presentation, Mr. Spadoni presented the following resolution and moved for its adoption by the Board:

WHEREAS, the CITY OF BETHLEHEM, is a municipal corporation being a City of the Third-Class, subject to the Optional Third-Class City Charter Law, organized and existing under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, its constituent parts being split by law between Northampton County and Lehigh County, Pennsylvania with principal administrative offices at City Hall, 10 E. Church Street, Bethlehem, PA 18018 (hereinafter referred to as “CITY”); and

WHEREAS, the REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM, is a municipal authority organized and existing under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with principal administrative offices at City Hall, 10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, PA 18018 (hereinafter referred to as the “RDA”); and

WHEREAS, the RDA was created pursuant to Resolution 4624 enacted on January 13, 1953 by the City Council of the City of Bethlehem to exercise powers authorized by the Urban Redevelopment Law. 35 PS §2701 et seq; and

WHEREAS, the RDA has completed many projects since its creation and continues to own and maintain certain improvements and performed certain actions authorized under the Urban Redevelopment Law; and

WHEREAS, the RDA is entering a phase under which its projects and resources are more limited in scope, but its value remains important; and

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WHEREAS, the City and RDA recognize that a partnership between them is mutually valuable for the purpose of ensuring continuity in staffing and maintaining RDA operations with respect to the subjects and operations hereinafter identified; and

WHEREAS, the City wishes to provide continued executive leadership to the RDA following the departure of former Executive Director, Alicia Miller Karner.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Laura Collins, currently serving as the Director of the Department of Community and Economic Development for the City, will act as Executive Director for the RDA.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Ms. Collins will serve for no additional compensation and without benefits until such time as she no longer serves as Director of the Department of Community and Economic Development or other arrangements are made by the RDA or the City.

(Resolution Number 1510)

Mr. Heckman seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed. As a result, Resolution Number 1510 was adopted by the RDA Board.

RESOLUTION NUMBER 1511

Ms. Oscavich indicated that the RDA Board has been asked to review and consider Resolution Number 1511, which authorizes the RDA to enter into a Consulting Agreement with Tony Hanna for the period of January 2024 through June 2024,

It was noted that the monthly fee for these consulting services has been decreased to \$1,000 per month. Mr. Hanna indicated that he agreed with the decreased rate. Ms. Oscavich indicated that the agreement being considered is only for a 6-month terms. Mr. Hanna stated that in his opinion the projects he is currently working on should be completed within 6-months. It was noted that an extension of this timeline can be considered if it is determined additional time would be required for Mr. Hanna to complete these projects.

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

WHEREAS, Tony Hanna retired as employee, and former Executive Director, of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Bethlehem, on March 31, 2021; and

WHEREAS, the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Bethlehem approved a Consulting Agreement with Mr. Hanna effective April 1, 2021; and

WHEREAS, said agreement was extended multiple times, through amendments, with the most recent extension ending December 31, 2023;

WHEREAS, the RDA desires to continue to receive consulting services from Mr. Hanna for as detailed in a new Consulting Agreement for the period of January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024.

WHEREAS, said new agreement details all terms and conditions of these services, including the monthly fee of One Thousand and 00/100 (\$1,000.00) Dollars to be paid for such services.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the RDA and Consultant agree to all terms and conditions contained within a Consulting Agreement for the period of January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson, is authorized to execute the Consultant Agreement on behalf of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Bethlehem, same to be attested to by the Secretary.

(Resolution Number 1511)

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Mr. Spadoni seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. As a result, Resolution Number 1511 was unanimously adopted by the RDA.

AMENDMENT TO AGREEMENT – 723 BROADWAY

Ms. Oscavich indicated that the RDA board has been asked to review and consider for approval Amendment Number 3 to the Cooperation Agreement between the RDA and Community Action Lehigh Valley (CALV) for the renovations of 723 Broadway. Ms. Oscavich reminded the Board that the RDA received Blight Remediation Program grant funds to be used towards the renovation of this blight certified property. She noted that due to the post-bidding cost being greater than the estimated project costs, Amendment Number 3 will provide an additional \$137,658.80 of Blight Remediation Program grant funds to this project, resulting in a total renovation cost of \$293,818.80. If acceptable, this amendment can be approved via motion.

The RDA Board questioned the difference between the original estimates and the post-bidding cost for the project and why such a discrepancy occurred between the two values. Ms. Bambu-Weiss indicated that she was not clear exactly why such a larger difference existed for this project, but did note when renovations are done on blighted properties it is not uncommon for unforeseen issues to be discovered after property rehabilitation begins. She noted that at time such discoveries can result in additional costs being incurred to address such issues. Ms. Bambu-Weiss explained that a comparison was made between the original costs estimate and the post -bidding costs and noted that these items were detailed as an attachment to the proposed amendment. Ms. Bambu-Weiss reminded the Board of the condition of this property when the RDA acquired it the property was filled with a lot of debris, which required removal.

Following an extensive discussion by the RDA Board regarding the price difference and reason for the amendment to provide these additional funds, Mr. Heckman made a motion to approve Amendment Number 3 to the Cooperation Agreement between the RDA and Community Action Lehigh Valley (CALV) for the renovation of 723 Broadway. Mr. Spadoni seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. As a result, the RDA Board approved Amendment Number 3 to the Cooperation Agreement between the RDA and CALV for the renovation of 723 Broadway.

AUTHORITY FUND CLOSURE

Ms. Oscavich stated that the RDA Board has been asked to review and consider the closure of the TIF Authority Fund investment account through the payment of uncollected project management fees to the RDA. It was noted that the amount of uncollected project management fees is in excess of the Authority Fund balance available and payment of the RDA for these fees will fully utilize all remaining Authority Funds. It was noted that after this payment is completed, the Authority Fund account can be closed. If acceptable, this payment of remaining Authority Funds and the closure of the account can be approved via motion.

Ms. Bambu-Weiss explained that because the RDA was providing construction management services to the TIF Phase II / Hoover-Mason Trestle and other projects at the TIF site, the RDA was entitled to collect a fee. She also explained that while the RDA did collect some of the fees due to it for these services, it was unable to continue collecting the fees due to the immediate need for the TIF funds to be used toward the payment of the construction and other project specific costs incurred at that time. Although not able to immediately collect, the RDA tracked the amount of such fees due to the RDA in the event residual funds remained when all TIF costs were satisfied and the TIF expired. As a result, the RDA is requesting the balance of funds available in the Authority Fund account be paid to the RDA to recover a portion of the total uncollected project management fees due to it.

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Following this discussion, Mr. Heckman made a motion to approve the closure of the TIF Authority Fund investment account through the payment of uncollected project management fees to the RDA and the closure of the account after such payment has been made. Mr. Spadoni seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. As a result, the closure of the TIF Authority Fund investment account through the payment of uncollected project management fees to the RDA was approved as well as the closure of this account after the payment of these fees is completed.

MEMORIAL BENCH

Ms. Oscavich stated that the RDA Board was asked to review and consider for approval the payment, from RDA General Funds, a memorial bench located on the Hoover-Mason Trestle. She noted that this bench is dedicated in memory of former RDA Board member, and Chairperson, H. Frances Doyle whose years of service included the formation of the TIF and its earliest years contributing to TIF projects at the Steel Stacks site. If acceptable, Ms. Oscavich stated this payment can be approved via motion.

Mr. Hanna reminded the RDA that this memorial was discussed in 2018 but has taken some time to complete. Mr. Hanna noted that originally the plan was to increase the number of benches on the Trestle; however, when it was discovered that the cost of such benches had doubled from the original cost, the idea was abandoned. Mr. Hanna noted that while the bench chosen for this memorial does not match the others, it does complement the other benches and was able to be purchased for under \$2,500.

Mr. Heckman made a motion to approve the payment, from RDA General Funds, of the memorial bench located on the Hoover-Mason Trestle in memory of former RDA Board member, and Chairperson, H. Frances Doyle. Mr. Spadoni seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. As a result, the RDA Board approved the payment, from RDA General Funds, of the memorial bench located on the Hoover-Mason Trestle, in memory of former RDA Board member and Chairperson H. Frances Doyle.

ANNUAL MEETING

Chairperson Oscavich turned the meeting over to Mr. Riskin, who temporarily assumed the office of Chairman for the 2024 Annual Meeting and the election of officers.

Mr. Riskin reviewed the 2023 slate of officers for the RDA. Mr. Spadoni made a motion that the current slate of officers remain the same for 2024. Ms. Heckman seconded the motion. As there were no other nominations for officers of the RDA, the nominations were closed. As there were no other motions made a vote was taken of RDA Board members. The RDA Board unanimously approved the slate of officers for 2024.

As a result of this motion and the unanimous vote, the following slate of officers was created for the Redevelopment Authority for 2024.

Redevelopment Authority of City of Bethlehem	
Slate of Officers – 2023	
Chairperson	Tracy Oscavich
Vice-Chairman / Treasurer	Earl Bethel
Secretary	Heather M. Bambu Weiss
Assistant Secretary	Tracy Samuelson
Assistant Treasurer	Christopher Spadoni
Assistant Secretary / Assistant Treasurer	Ronald Heckman

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Ms. Oscavich resumed the meeting as Chairperson and asked that the next item of business be the re-appointment of Michael E. Riskin, Esq. as Solicitor for the Redevelopment Authority. Mr. Spadoni made a motion to re-appoint Michael E. Riskin, Esq. as Solicitor for the Redevelopment Authority. Mr. Heckman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved and Michael E. Riskin, Esq. was re-appointed Solicitor for the Redevelopment Authority.

Ms. Oscavich asked that the last item of business for the annual meeting was to reaffirm the meeting schedule of the RDA for 2024. Mr. Heckman made a motion for the RDA Board to meet on the fourth (4th) Thursday of each month at 5:00 PM in Town Hall. Mr. Spadoni seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting schedule for 2024 will be the fourth (4th) Thursday of each month at 5:00 PM in Town Hall.

ADJOURNMENT

As there was no further business, Mr. Heckman made a motion to adjourn the January 25, 2024 RDA Board meeting. Mr. Spadoni seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously carried. As a result, the meeting adjourned at 5:40 P.M.

Submitted by,

Heather M. Bambu-Weiss
Board Secretary