



## **Rome/Floyd Land Bank Authority Minutes**

Friday, May 6, 2022

8:30 AM

Carnegie Building Training Room

### **Committee Members Present:**

Harry Brock  
J.R. Davis  
Rob Ware  
Lowery May  
David Mathis  
David Clonts  
LaDonna Collins

### **Others:**

Cindy Reed - City - Accountant, Grants/Internal Auditor  
Toni Rhinehart - City - Finance Director  
Meredith Ulmer - City - Assistant City Manager  
Joe Smith - City - City Clerk  
Kevin Payne - County - Tax Commissioner  
Bruce Ivey - County - Special Projects Manager  
Jake Hager - South Rome Alliance - Executive Director

### **Staff:**

Bekki Fox - City - Community Development Director  
Amanda Carter - City - Community Development - Rome/Floyd Land Bank Authority Manager  
Suzanne Parris - City - Community Development Grants and Housing Administrator

### **Welcome and Call to order:**

David Mathis called the meeting to order at 8:32 AM. A quorum was established.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Mathis asked for any corrections to the May minutes. Rob Ware motioned to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Lowery May. Motion carried.

### **Authority Updates:**

Bekki Fox welcomed LaDonna Collins and J.R. Davis as the newest board members for the Rome/Floyd County Land Bank Authority (LBA) as this was their first LBA regular meeting. The pair were able to attend the LBA Planning Session facilitated by guests from the Center for Community Progress (CPP).

Fox announced that the amendments to the Intergovernmental Agreement were approved by both the City and County. Amendments include staggered terms and the number of Board members being increased to seven.

Amanda Carter provided property transaction updates involving closings. Last month, two offers were approved regarding 300 Cave Spring Street (J13J048) and 13 North McLin Street (J14L037). Signatures have been received for those sales contracts. The Board reviewed and denied an offer made for 607 Excelsior Street (I13K024). As instructed, Carter reached out to Donald Sawyer, the adjacent property owner of 605 Excelsior Street (I13K023). She sent him a letter but had not received a response back.

Concerning quiet title action, Carter read an email update she received from Attorney Trey Newton. The following properties cannot be redeemed, and thus will remain with the LBA: 712 E. Boundary Street (J14O314), 410 Hardy Avenue (I14W330), 1 Orchid Place (J14O113), and 7 Forsyth Street (J13J165). Everyone, including surrounding property owners, has been served with no responses back. There is, however, a time delay due to some miscommunication regarding who was supposed to run publication announcing that anyone with a claim for or against these properties needs to speak up. Ads must be run for 45 days before these properties can be finalized. Attorney Newton will file ASAP. Discussion was had.

There was a brief discussion regarding the current process for quiet title action. Fox was authorized to negotiate with the attorney's office and ask that they move forward with a two-part process. This would be to bill the LBA for the barment process only, and then move forward with the quiet title action process if the property is not redeemed. This process should be less expensive but could add a time delay.

Fox explained how HUD Income Limits affect the LBA. According to the LBA's Administrative Policies, providing affordable housing is one of the purposes of the LBA. Section 2.2 defines affordable housing as "*the first use of real property of the LBA for non-governmental purposes is the production or rehabilitation of housing for persons with low or moderate incomes. On an annual basis, the Board of Directors will establish the applicable definitions of low-income and moderate-income.*" In years past, the LBA Board has adopted the HUD Income Limits for Rome and Floyd County, which refers to 80% of the Area Median Income. The most current limits are updated/published annually and were displayed to the Board. An income limit needs to be established moving forward. The LBA generally works with non-HUD funds. The State of Georgia runs the Georgia Dream Homeownership Program which helps first time homebuyers and those who have not bought a home in at least three years. This program has a different set of income limits which are based on where your county is located. There is also a restriction on the purchase price on the home. Fox recommended that the LBA adopt the income limits stated in the Georgia Dream Home Ownership Program for LBA programs that are unrelated to CHIP, HOME, or CDBG. The LBA being able to work with higher income limits will discourage restriction and continue the progress already made. The LBA does have other purposes besides providing housing for low-to-moderate income people. The household income limits included in the program are 1 or 2 persons- \$72,000 (max) and 3 or more persons- \$83,000 (max). Discussion was had. The Board acted as follows:

- Brock made a motion to accept the guidelines of the Georgia Dream Homeownership Program of household income with no cap on purchase price, which was seconded by Davis. Motion carried.

### **Financial Report:**

The financial report was distributed for review and presented by Toni Rhinehart. The attached report details the cash balance and YTD property taxes collected. Rhinehart stated that she recently met with Fox and Carter to make sure that the LBA is prepared to handle the upcoming ARPA funds.

### **Discussion Items:**

Carter recapped the LBA Planning Session held on Thursday, April 22, 2022, in the Sam King Room at City Hall. The session was facilitated by special guests from CPP; Sara Toering and Odetta MacLeish-White, Director of Georgia Initiatives. The following points were mentioned: staff directives, takeaways, Board member top priorities, member goals, more efficient options for clearing title, and next steps. Moving forward, the goal is to draft a LBA Strategic Plan by utilizing feedback from CPP, staff and Board. As this plan is a living, working document, future meetings will influence editing decisions. A work plan will help the LBA to know what needs to be accomplished in both the present and future. Fox added this document will provide greater structure and efficiency. Fox asked the Board if they wanted to provide any feedback concerning the Planning

Session. Comments were made. The City and County were supportive of the Session and LBA moving forward. Fox brought up the GALBA Summit being held in Macon, GA in June 2022. Fox was asked to serve on the discussion panel where she and MacLeish-White will talk about the Land Bank movement in Georgia. Land bank authorities across the State and Country are continuing to innovate by taking advantage of the special powers they possess. As the RFLBA moves forward, Collins emphasized the importance of community involvement so that everyone's voices may be heard. Fox brought up how the Comprehensive Plan thankfully had a lot of citizen input. Fox stated she and Mathis had been working with the Northwest Georgia Housing Authority on the Choice Neighborhood East Rome Plan. Valuable survey information and ideas have been collected, such as whether the LBA could form partnerships that help low-income people.

Carter and Fox emphasized the importance of the LBA crafting a mission statement. A major focus would be eliminating all evidence of redlining in the community. She provided mission statement examples from both other Georgian communities and local options created by staff. Carter was asked to email everyone the examples for input and feedback.

Carter continued the discussions and updates on 301/303 Walnut Avenue in Lindale, GA. The owner, Betsy O'Neal, is speaking with Attorney Richardson about probating the will. Building Inspection gave her an at least 30-day extension as staff continues to work with her. The title remains complicated. O'Neal is becoming frustrated with handling the situation and still cannot likely afford to probate. The LBA discussed making an offer to buy the property for an approved amount once the title has been cleared. The amount to probate the will along with legal fees would be deducted from this set amount offered. Once the LBA has acquired the property, the following options were considered: Demolition, rehabilitation, selling to a developer, making it a rental property, or selling it as a single-family residence. Discussion was had. The Board took the following action:

- Ware made a motion to empower Fox and Carter to pursue title for 301/303 Walnut Avenue and to allow a maximum of \$7,500.00 to acquire the property minus fees, which was seconded by Clonts. Motion carried.

Fox explained the need for the LBA to adopt a committee-type structure. While it is promising that the LBA is growing and progressing, there has not been enough time in board meetings to adequately cover necessary topics. Moving forward, the different duties could be divided up. The following committees have been proposed: Executive, Finance, Housing Development, and Partnership/Program Development. Discussion was had. Mathis asked staff to assign committees and email the Board. Board members should send their feedback to Carter with a set deadline.

### **Other Business:**

A draft 2022 LBA Budget was shown on PowerPoint and will be reviewed in detail at an upcoming meeting. Discussion was had on what should be done with various revenues, such as the City of Rome HOME Trust Fund.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for **Friday, June 3, 2022, at 8:30 AM.**

### **Adjourn:**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:41 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Logan Drake  
Recording Secretary