

**ATHENS COUNTY LAND REUTILIZATION CORPORATION**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS – MINUTES**  
[www.AthensCountyLandBank.com](http://www.AthensCountyLandBank.com)

LOCATION: Live meeting held at Community Cares Resource Center with guests joining on Google Meet (<https://meet.google.com/bbz-ywph-ygf>)

DAY/TIME: Called to order Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025 @ 11:03 AM

PURPOSE: Regular meeting to consider the following business:

Board Administration

1. The meeting was called to order by Ric Wasserman, Chair. Roll Call by Aaron Dye, Secretary. Board members present were Ric Wasserman, Chris Chmiel, and Nathan Simons.
2. Motion to approve the agenda by Mr. Simons, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Chmiel. All Yeas.
3. Motion to approve minutes from February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025 board meeting by Mr. Simons, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Chmiel. All Yeas.
4. Financial Report from Treasurer LaVerne Humphrey

<b>Summary</b>	
Starting Balance	\$379,007.70
Actual Cash In	\$11,109.53
Actual Cash Out	\$ 8,951.25
Ending Balance	\$381,165.98

Ms. Humphrey notes that most expenses were normal bills. There was a deposit of \$9,000.00 for the sale of two properties in Glouster (55 Madison Street and 32 Front Street to Survivor Advocacy Outreach Program).

Mr. Wasserman notes that we are beginning to spend money for this round of the BD&SR program, mostly asbestos surveys. He continues that all bank statements and financial documents are available upon request. Motion to approve the financial report by Mr. Chmiel, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Simons. All Yeas.

Business:

## Old Business

1. Update on acquisition process/pipeline from Mr. Wasserman
  - i) Several foreclosures are in the end-stages with non-oral hearings having taken place in late December. We will be checking in with the Prosecutor on these cases shortly.

Mr. Wasserman notes that he has a meeting with the Assistant Prosecutor within the next week or two. There were some hearings in December and we need to find out if deeds have been produced from those. We have received some long-awaited title searches, including the Limo property in Glouster, and some other cases that may or may not be land bank projects.

2. 20 Campbell Street update

At the February board meeting, the board voted to table the 20 Campbell Street, Nelsonville demolition until further details could be obtained regarding Danny Simms' qualification status as a prospective end-user as well as information from the City of Nelsonville on the floodplain regulations that may be required with renovation.

Mr. Wasserman and Aaron had a phone call with Devon Tolliver, Nelsonville Police Chief and acting City Manager to discuss the situation. Mr. Tolliver noted he would confer with the city's legal counsel to determine what their position might be. He followed up with Aaron, noting that he spoke with ODNR and based on the home needing substantial repairs (50% or greater of the home value), it would be required to come into full compliance with the current regulations which would necessitate elevating the base elevation. He continued that there are no options for granting a variance to that requirement.

At the February board meeting, the value discussed was the Auditor's value of the entire property (\$18,100). Mr. Simms noted he could perform this renovation for approximately \$6,000-7,500, which would be below 50% of that value (\$9,050). As Mr. Tolliver indicated, the determining valuation would be that of the home, which is currently \$8,760, making the 50% valuation \$4,380. A renovation that would comply with Athens Metropolitan Housing Authority standards would not be achievable for an amount less than \$4,380, and with the confirmation that a variance for this requirement is not an option, it does not leave the land bank with many options other than demolition of the structure.

Regional County Planner Connor LaVelle has prepared a short presentation on the specifics of this situation.

Mr. Wasserman notes that the first thing we did was to review Mr. Simms qualification status. Aaron notes that he did not hear back from the Nelsonville Code Office regarding any active code violations, but all other qualification items checked out. Mr. Wasserman notes that we contacted Devon Tolliver, the acting City Manager of Nelsonville who was present at the meeting, to find out if the city has a process to potentially waive the floodplain requirement. Mr. Tolliver notes that he spoke with the city's legal counsel as well as ODNR. It was determined that since the house would be receiving significant improvements of more than 50% of the structure's value, the house would need to be brought in compliance with all floodplain regulations which includes raising the house above Base Flood Elevation. There is no option to grant a variance.

Regional County Planner Connor LaVelle presented a short presentation on local floodplain regulations in relation to the situation at 20 Campbell Street. He reviewed FEMA maps of the area and noted that the house would need to be raised one foot above the BFE. Mr. Simms asks how high the house would need to be elevated to meet the requirements. Mr. LaVelle responds that registered surveyor would have to shoot the elevation. Mr. Simms asks if this is the case even though every house in that neighborhood sits lower than the house at 20 Campbell. Mr. LaVelle responds that they would have to go through the same process if there were improvements made that were above 50% of the value of the structures. Mr. Simms responds that it is his opinion that Nelsonville is being "bled dry" because of "non-tax paying entities." He continues that he could renovate the structure into a nice house but believes "every monkey wrench has been thrown at him." Mr. Wasserman responds that the floodplain requirement has been the only issue, and the land bank does not have the wherewithal to exempt a property from floodplain regulations. Mr. Simms responds that most areas in Nelsonville shouldn't be in the floodplain to begin with. Mr. LaVelle responds that the city would need to work with FEMA on that. Mr. Tolliver notes that nobody in this room has control over how far FEMA extends their maps.

Mr. Simms continues that he does not see a reason why the house cannot be renovated in line with this previously stated desire. Mr. LaVelle responds that it can be, but it would have to meet all current regulations. Mr. Simms continues expressing his dislike of the land bank and opines that it was a mistake to do away with sheriff sales. Mr. Wasserman responds that almost every house we acquire goes through sheriff sale and sheriff sales still take place. Mr. Simms says there must be something wrong if a non-profit organization has almost \$400,000 in the bank. Mr. LaVelle steers the conversation back to the floodplain. Mr. Simms responds that if Mr. LaVelle is going to make regulations like this, that he would request that Mr. LaVelle tell him how high the house needs to be raised. Mr. LaVelle reiterates that he would need to have an elevation certificate filled out by a surveyor. He estimates that the end-user would probably be looking at elevating the house 3-4 feet depending on the findings from the surveyor. He addresses Mr. Simms' comments regarding Taco Bell, noting that commercial buildings can be flood-proofed, but residential structures must be elevated

above the BFE. He continues that the sub-grade storage area would need to be filled-in at the Campbell Street house and there are some drainage issues concerning for the foundation. He notes that the Auditor's office assesses the structure's value is \$8,760 and if he wanted to utilize the property without engaging the necessary floodplain requirements, improvements would need to be below \$4,380. If the renovations exceed that cost, then the house would need to be elevated, the sub-grade storage area would need filled-in, and one would need to ensure that it meets all of Nelsonville's criteria to be a home within the floodplain. Mr. Wasserman asks for clarification that the improvements do not just include cash expended, but the value of the materials and labor. Mr. LaVelle confirms. He further explains that it includes the cost of materials—if donated or acquired at discount, the cost would need to be the estimated retail value—as well as the estimated value of labor even if the labor is volunteered or executed by the owner, foundation repair, removal of debris or demolition work, management and supervision of construction, overhead profit materials sales tax, foundations, concrete slabs, and all other renovations. Mr. Simms responds that the house cannot be renovated for \$4,380, but it can be renovated for "about \$7-or-8,000." He then asks how much of the taxpayers' money would be used to tear down the house and clean it up. Mr. Wasserman responds that the funding is through a state grant so it would be \$0 from Athens County taxpayers. Mr. Simms remarks that that's why the land bank has almost \$400,000 in the bank. Mr. Wasserman responds that the land bank manages its money well. Aaron asks Mr. Simms how any non-profit is expected to operate without funding.

Mr. Wasserman reiterates that allowing somebody to renovate this house jeopardizes Nelsonville's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. Hundreds of property owners have financing on their houses contingent on having flood insurance and there is no affordable flood insurance other than NFIP. If the government pulls Nelsonville's eligibility for that program, those property owners are out in the cold because they no longer have compliant financing, and their loans will be called.

Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Southeast Ohio Ken Oehlers outlines the Habitat program and how Habitat's partnership with the land bank benefits Nelsonville including new builds occurring on land bank lots over the next two years.

Mr. Wasserman moves that 20 Campbell Street, Nelsonville is returned to the demolition roster and proceed to find a buyer after the demolition is complete, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Chmiel, All Yeas.

### 3. State Demo project

The 2024-25 BD&SR application was submitted on Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>. Other Land Banks across the state have begun receiving cure lists for the applications from ODOD,

so we expect to receive one soon. Since we did not surpass the \$500,000 per county set-aside, we do not foresee any issues regarding funds. Asbestos surveys and remediation have been executed for the first three demolition groups.

We received a cure list from ODOD that had very stringent requirements compared to the FY22 BD&SR program. Aaron is working on assembling all requested items which are due by March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025. Mr. Wasserman and Aaron had a meeting with our ODOD contact on Monday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, which provided greater clarity about what can be submitted for the cure requests.

The Group N1 demolitions were awarded to Running G Farms and should begin shortly. The Group N2 demolitions were awarded to Hutton Excavating, but because one of the structures in that group is a project that ODOD requested more information on, we are holding off until we are notified that all projects are approved. 20 Campbell Street, Nelsonville was removed from the Group N2 demolitions as requested by the board at the February 2025 meeting. Should the board choose to continue with demolition of the structure, it could be added to the Group N3 demolitions.

Demolitions have been grouped as follows:

Group N1: 21 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street, The Plains; 26 N. Clinton Street, The Plains; 5 Oak Street, The Plains

Group N2: 319 Oak Street, Nelsonville; ~~20 Campbell Street, Nelsonville~~; 902 Chestnut Street, Nelsonville; 23 Morgan Street, Glouster.

Group N3: 4382 N. Gun Club Road, Athens; 8356 Marsh Street, New Marshfield; 4910 Vore Ridge Road, Athens; 11535 Carbondale Road, Nelsonville

Group O1: 20 Smith Street, Chauncey; 71 Main Street, Chauncey; 100 Main Street, Chauncey; 14 Mound Street, Chauncey

Group O2: 73 High Street, Glouster (back addition only)

Group O3: 24518 Rowley Lane, Coolville; 805 River Front Road, Hockingport; 21196 Chapman Road, Guysville; 20757 US 50, Guysville

Group P1: 55 Mill Street, Chauncey; 8 Ellis Avenue, Chauncey; 16 High Street, Chauncey; 16 Lexington Avenue, Chauncey

Group P2: 14560 McDaniel Road, Amesville; 17759 SR-377, Bern Township

Group P3: 25 Town Street, Glouster; 29 Hill Street, Glouster; 34 Spring Street, Glouster; 50 Front Street, Glouster

Group P4: 10190/10194 Chase Road, Albany; 2388 Trout Road, Albany

#### 4. State Brownfield Grant Application

In collaboration with the Athens County Port Authority, we made application for two brownfield remediation projects in conjunction with the Athens County Port Authority. The demolition of the service station at 4070 Washington Road, Albany is complete! Tetra Tech has notified us that they are working on submitting the “No Further Action” documents to mark this project as complete.

#### 5. Update on previously approved projects

A. Rehabs: Land Bank Rehabs or new construction underway or nearly completed in the county: 24 Cherry Street, 141 Monroe Street, 75 High Street, Glouster; 217 Harper Street, 354 Chestnut Street, Nelsonville; 19476 Maple Street, Trimble.

#### 6. Rural Acquisition (Pay-in-advance) Program Projects

- 1) 4070 Washington Road (3 parcels, LB-2021-16): The request for proposals process has begun with a deadline of Friday, April 4th, by 4:00 PM. Several approved applicants have scheduled additional walk-throughs of the property and Aaron has had extensive conversation with folks regarding best practices for assembling project proposals. We expect to bring it up for disposition at the April board meeting.
- 2) Haga Ridge Road, Rome Township (2 parcels, LB-2024-01): This property was acquired in early December 2024.
- 3) 17636 Jacksonville Road, Millfield (1 parcel, LB 2024-05): The applicant Jerrame Forrest has signed the pay-in-advance agreement. Mr. Wasserman is beginning the 30-day notification process.

#### 7. Update on pending dispositions

No pending dispositions.

#### 8. Update on 47 Main Street, Chauncey litigation

The second round of mediation occurred on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025. All parties have reached a settlement agreement. Athens Preservation has a limited window of time to obtain a demolition estimate for the structure at 47 Main Street and they will have until June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025 to demolish the structure. The property will then be conveyed to the Village of Chauncey.

Mr. Chmiel comments that the land bank learned a lot from the 47 Main Street situation when it comes to the importance of floodplain regulations.

9. Community Development Block Grant opportunity in collaboration with HAPCAP for downtown revitalization at 87 High Street, Glouster  
Aaron met with Jeff Jenkins of HAPCAP and Eric Smith of BDT Architects for a 50% review of the proposed plans. A review was given of structural issues discovered, including a crack on the roof that stretches from one side to the other. Their proposed plan is for the replacement of the roof, replacing all windows, new gutters/downspouts, and repairing the front parapet. The estimate comes in at \$306,747.65. For reference, our spendable grant amount is \$235,200. The estimate is for construction costs only and does not include labor, BDT design fees, asbestos remediation, and other labor costs.

Mr. Wasserman suggests not implementing new windows yet, which would cut around \$65,000 from the cost. Aaron notes that he believes the priority for the building is a new roof and permanent repairs to the facade. Mr. Wasserman asks if there would be the possibility of getting an additional grant to contribute to this project. Mr. Chmiel responds he will begin looking at potential grants. Mr. Wasserman notes that we should ask for a new estimate that does not include windows at this time.

10. WHO application with Habitat for Humanity of Southeast Ohio

At the August board meeting, the board voted to accept the motion to pivot with a new WHO application with Habitat for Humanity of Southeast Ohio and to inform ODOD that we would not be moving forward with the previous application submitted in partnership with SAOP.

In further meeting with Habitat, it was decided that new Habitat builds would occur on 823 Walnut Street, Nelsonville; 923 E. High Street, Nelsonville, 931 E. High Street, Nelsonville; and 9 Johnson Road, The Plains (contingent on current examinations of the property). There is the potential for an additional build on a Habitat lot.

At the October board meeting, the board voted to approve a borrowing resolution that noted the Land Bank could borrow up to \$100,000 from the Athens County Foundation should we find ourselves in need of funds while waiting for reimbursements from the WHO program and BD&SR program. We are waiting for the Athens County Foundations to provide us with specifics on the agreement.

Kenneth Oehlers has informed us that an amended scope of work for the WHO program is being drafted and should be available shortly. This will serve as the modification for the grant agreement at the state level. Further updates include that Habitat is almost certain that Tri-County Career Center will be building one of the homes. WoodsWork, a unique youth group mission trip program, will likely be building the homes on the High Street lots and one other lot.

At the December meeting, it was discussed that Mr. Oehlers is working with ODOD to acquire another \$30,000 from the Rehab & Construction portion of the program.

Mr. Oehlers has prepared a short presentation for the board on the status of the project.

Mr. Oehlers reviews that Habitat will be building 5 houses with 3 being in Nelsonville and hopefully one in The Plains. The homes are built energy efficient and are built simple and affordable. The homes are sold for 0% interest, and those funds go back into building more houses. The Nelsonville home layouts are permitted for 3-bedroom builds. The Nelsonville projects will kick off in June with a volunteer crew called WoodsWork coming in and helping with the builds while staying at Nelsonville-York. Combined with another program through SAOP, Habitat will be building 9 new homes in Athens County over the next two years. Mr. Wasserman notes that the lots in Nelsonville are 823 Walnut, 923 E High, and 931 E High. The latter two were donated to the land bank.

11. 10190/10194 Chase Road, Albany project

Surface cleanup by Running G Farms is currently on hold as Tetra Tech executes their Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments. They have noted that work is moving quickly.

12. Strategic Planning Consultation with Mission Met

Aaron and Jody have reviewed the draft strategic plan and are meeting to discuss timelines for proposed work. The board retreat to review the plan and obtain feedback is scheduled for April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 at 10:00 AM. More details will be provided shortly.

13. 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Ohio Land Bank Conference

The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Ohio Land Bank Conference, presented by the OLBA, will take place April 23-25, 2025 in Columbus. This 2.5-day event brings together professionals, partners, and stakeholders dedicated to land banking and community revitalization. Early bird registration has opened and will be available until February 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Wasserman, Mr. Chmiel, Aaron, and Jody have been registered and their lodging secured.

## New Business

1. Future Dispositions – Several potential dispositions are in progress, and we hope to bring them to the board soon. They include:
  - a. 4070 Washington Road, Albany: See update under Brownfield projects.
  - b. Haga Ridge Road, Rome Township

2. Presentation by Jeff Harris of Bricker Graydon

Mr. Wasserman introduces Mr. Harris, who was previously involved with the Knox County Land Bank. He is now an attorney with Bricker Graydon and will give a presentation on land bank powers under the law and how they can be used in different ways.

Mr. Harris notes that land banks exist as Community Improvement Corporations (CICs). He briefly reviews the history of CICs and Economic Development Corporations (EDCs). Mr. Wasserman asks if land banks can be 501(c)3s. Mr. Harris responds that they can. Mr. Harris continues reviewing the processes that land banks as CICs can engage, including revolving loan funds. He also reviews things land banks cannot do, including directly receiving CDBG funds and more.

Mr. Harris reviews the monumental changes that occurred in 2009 with Gus Frangos of Cuyahoga County in writing the land bank law. He continues by outlining how holding properties tax exempt as well as acquiring properties from the forfeited property list may incentive development within their county.

Mr. Harris outlines that land banks also cannot be sued unless they allow themselves to be sued, like how a county cannot be sued unless they so choose, as they are a function of government. He continues to review economic development tools that can lead to job growth and other items that land banks can engage.

Mr. Wasserman asks if the land bank finds a large parcel of land, that they could affect the construction of homes, sell them to individuals to live in, and the entire property could remain tax-free? Mr. Harris responds there is a strong argument that it would remain tax-free, but there are a few nuances as community land trusts are another concept in state law. Land banks may form a land trust as a subsidiary, as land trusts exist to hold property long-term for the community. Mr. Harris continues to discuss land trusts with audience members, including how equity regarding property sales has worked with other land trusts and how banks might address financing for these houses.

3. Renewal of services contract with the Athens County Treasurer's office

The contract has expired and the contract will be prepared and on the agenda for the April meeting.

4. Donation of 233/235 Kontner Street, Nelsonville from Habitat for Humanity of Southeast Ohio

233-235 Kontner Street, Nelsonville has already been voted to be a land bank project (2024-11). We are seeking board approval to accept the donation of the property from Habitat for Humanity. Motion by Mr. Chmiel to accept the

