



**Rome/Floyd Land Bank Authority  
Minutes**

Friday, April 1, 2022

8:30 AM

Carnegie Building Training Room

**Committee Members Present:**

Harry Brock  
Rob Ware  
Lowery May  
David Mathis  
Roger Smith

**Others:**

Cindy Reed - City - Accountant, Grants/Internal Auditor  
Meredith Ulmer - City - Assistant City Manager  
Joe Smith - City - City Clerk  
Kevin Payne - County - Tax Commissioner  
Bruce Ivey - County - Special Projects Manager  
David Clonts

**Staff:**

Bekki Fox - City - Community Development Director  
Amanda Carter - City - Community Development - Rome/Floyd Land Bank Authority Manager  
Logan Drake - City - Community Development Administrative Program Assistant

**Welcome and Call to order:**

David Mathis called the meeting to order at 8:34 AM. A quorum was established.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Mathis asked for any corrections to the minutes from the meeting of March 4, 2022. Rob Ware motioned to approve the March 2022 minutes, which was seconded by Harry Brock. Motion carried.

**Authority Updates- David Clonts:**

Mathis welcomed David Clonts as he will soon become the newest board member for the Rome/Floyd County Land Bank Authority (LBA). Once Clonts receives final approval from the City Commission, he will officially replace Roger Smith. The LBA thanked Clonts for agreeing to serve as his expertise will greatly help going forward. Clonts stated that he was glad to be there.

**Authority Updates- Roger Smith:**

Bekki Fox reminded everyone that Roger Smith had graciously agreed to stay through June 2022 if a replacement was not found before then. Since Clonts has accepted the invitation to join, this was Smith's final meeting of his term. Fox stated that Smith will be greatly missed as he has shown consistent dedication to making the LBA a success. Smith was given a gift as a show of appreciation for his service. While Smith will no longer be operating in the capacity of committee member, the LBA still wants Smith to attend April's planning session as he could still provide valuable insight. Moving forward, Smith may also attend regular meetings in a guest role. Smith stated he was both thankful for everyone's kind words and grateful for the opportunity to serve. All acknowledged that Smith's leadership helped get the LBA to this point. Smith had confidence that those present will ensure that the LBA is preserved as a force for good in the community.

### **Authority Updates- Planning Session with the Center for Community Progress (CCP):**

Fox updated everyone on progress concerning the upcoming planning session. She briefly explained how the LBA felt it would be wise to seek advice from a subject matter expert. Staff invited representatives from CCP to attend as they are the nation's leading nonprofit on land banking. CCP accepted the invitation and is preparing a proposal regarding facilitation and technical assistance. CCP opened a Georgia office as they believe the Georgia Association of Land Bank Authorities (GALBA) to be the fastest growing network of land banks in the country. Two individuals, who have visited the LBA before, will be there: Sara Toering, Senior Fellow and Odetta MacLeish-White, Director of Georgia Initiatives. CCP has provided a scope of work and cost estimate worth \$9,740.00. Fox reminded everyone the session would qualify as an ARPA eligible expense. Staff and CCP have already engaged in pre-planning phone calls with more to come. Amanda Carter has drafted a planning session outline addressing desired outcomes, goals, and discussion topics. To be ready by the tentative date, MacLeish-White wants to review the LBA's Intergovernmental Agreement, policies and procedures.

At the Session itself, CCP would do the following: give a presentation, lead discussion, explain what the LBA is authorized to do, tell success stories from other LBAs, and run through potential scenarios. In order to understand each board member's thoughts and goals for the LBA, she also desires to have a 30-minute phone call per person. After the Session is over, CCP will provide both follow-up phone calls and on-going technical assistance. In total, accepting CCP's current offer would help the LBA achieve its future goals. The planning session is tentatively scheduled to be held in the Sam King Room of Rome City Hall/Auditorium on April 21, 2022, from 09:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Lunch will be provided. Fox explained that Clonts has indicated he would attend. J.R. Davis and LaDonna Collins may not be formally adopted as board members by that time but are still planning to attend. The request for said adoption has been submitted to the County but no confirmation has taken place.

Discussion was had concerning the scope of work. Ware asked if the session would be generic or tailored to local needs. Fox confirmed that CPP has researched relevant local characteristics, such as demographics and housing needs assessments.

Funding the cost was discussed. Regarding local ARPA funding, the LBA asked the City and County for \$1 million apiece. The City has approved the ask but the County has not committed to allocation yet. The approved funds are already in the City's account and the LBA will be reimbursed for any money spent. Regarding the status of the ask made by GALBA, the State has unfortunately not announced their decision yet. City funds must be spent inside City limits. There was some concern as to how the LBA would make sure that funding sources stay separate if the County or GALBA decide to allocate. Cindy Reed reassured everyone that any confusion would likely be mitigated by having separate accounts.

Carter reminded everyone that the planning session will provide the LBA with multi-year value. The lessons learned from CCP will be instrumental in drafting a multi-year strategic plan. After final discussion, the board acted as follows:

- Harry Brock motioned to approve the cost of LBA planning session services provided by CPP, which was seconded by Roger Smith. Motion carried.

### **Authority Updates- Property Transactions:**

Carter provided updates on closings regarding recent property transactions. Purchasers have closed on the following properties: 303 Ross Street (J13J021), 0 Nixon Avenue (I14Z029), and 106 Brookwood Avenue (I13X291). Sherrell Smith has still not come by the office to sign her sales contract for 0 King Bee Circle (J13I029). As previously requested by the board, Smith's contract will be cancelled if she does not show up by the April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. Staff would then repost the property and market again. Updates will be given later.

Carter then updated everyone on progress involving quiet title action. Attorney Newton is working on completing the following: 410 Hardy Avenue in mid-March, 1 Orchid Place in late March, and 712 E. Boundary Street in early April. Branham Avenue and 7 Forsyth Street will be completed beyond April, possibly early May.

Carter stated that 330 Ross Street (J13J048), which does have a house on it, is currently in the process of being redeemed through the services of Attorney Trey Newton. Redemption will cost \$5,878.33 but that money would come back to the LBA. Considering the property does not have a clear title, Brock suggested an alternative. He explained that an opportunity exists for the LBA help them clear the title if they can provide an estimated timeframe of what they plan to do with the property. Many in attendance thought it was an idea worth exploring. Fox mentioned Code Enforcement has received complaints about the house. If the owner does keep the property, they will immediately have to deal with these issues or most likely end up in the same position as before. While the previous owner has not been responsive to conversation requests in the past, Attorney Newton might have more luck. The LBA stated that it must be determined whether the time period for foreclosing on the right to redeem has passed yet. If the time period has passed, the LBA is officially the owner and can even sell it back to them. Fox stated she will speak with Attorney Newton about this situation. Updates will be given. A decision will be made later.

### **Authority Updates- GICH Retreat:**

Fox provided an update on the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) Retreat. Fox and Carter recently attended the retreat held in Cartersville, GA as representatives of the Rome-Floyd Housing Team. By participating as GICH alumni, Rome-Floyd County can obtain extra points towards grant applications and low-income housing tax credits. Fox stated they attended a training class ran by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). DCA too has a significant amount of ARPA funding that must be spent. DCA will have a low-interest loan program up and running by the end of this Summer. Each developer would be loaned 40% of funds needed totaling between \$500,000 and \$2 million. In order to get the other 60%, one would also be given a letter to take to a bank. This would be a great opportunity for the LBA to leverage some funds considering DCA wants to give these loans to developers instead of municipalities. The LBA already has money in their account so it would be unnecessary to borrow money from a bank. Additional funds could be used to help the LBA build. DCA's portion could be paid back once built homes were sold. Developers or partners who normally would be financially unable to go up to 100% could now work with the LBA. Updates will be given as more is learned.

### **Financial Report:**

The financial report was distributed for review and given by Cindy Reed in Toni Rhinehart's absence.

### **Discussion Items:**

### **Board Member Discussion:**

Fox continued discussion on J.R. Davis and LaDonna Collins becoming LBA board members. Both individuals have already submitted required documents to the City and County. On April 11<sup>th</sup>, the City Committee on Committees will vote to approve Clonts and Davis. The County meets April 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Intergovernmental Agreement Discussion:**

Fox read the language drafted for the amendments to the Intergovernmental Agreement. The LBA shall be composed of a board of directors comprised of seven members. Three members will be appointed by the City Commission, three members appointed by the County Commission, and one nominated member will be jointly approved by both Commissions. Terms will be staggered as such in that no more than one third or three members will end in the same year. There will be no consecutive term limits. Terms are structured by alphabetical order in the following three groups: two members will have a two-year term, two members will have a three-year term, and three members will have a four-year term. The board members shall be residents of the County and made employees of the respective parties. Any vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term in the same manner as the original appointment. Joe Smith confirmed that the City prefers their appointees to reside in the City, but the rule is flexible. Discussion was had on the amendments.

### **301/303 Walnut Avenue Lindale Discussion:**

Fox and Mathis mentioned the County and Code Enforcement are making a concentrated effort to clean up Lindale. 301/303 Walnut Avenue is a duplex/old mill house in which Code Enforcement has visited. The owners were two sisters, but one sister is deceased. The sister's estate was never probated. The sister's husband was alive at the time of her death so technically everything would have gone to him. He, however, did not probate or have a written will. This couple's side of the duplex thus went to their three children. Unfortunately, the title will be complicated.

Code Enforcement is giving out Fox's contact information to owners when they say they are unable to afford demolition or court citation. Considering Code Enforcement is attempting a soft approach, working with the LBA can be an excellent alternative. Fox stated that she received a phone call from the owner. The owner was unsure of her options. Fox asked if she wanted to sell or donate the house. After visiting the property site, Fox determined that the home unfortunately cannot be saved but the lot itself is in decent condition. Chief Building Official James Martin confirmed Fox's findings upon reviewing site photos.

A demolition contractor visited the site and gave an estimate. If Asbestos removal is unnecessary, the cost would be \$13,000.00. If Asbestos is found, it will likely cost an additional \$1,000.00 in order to transport waste to a specialized landfill. Testing for Asbestos could be too dangerous. Bruce Ivey stated that the home likely has plaster instead of Asbestos. An option considered was to contract out the County's standard demolition team. They could complete the demolition but not the remediation. Mathis emphasized the importance of figuring out a solution as leaving the home in its current state would continually cause issues. He mentioned it is located within very close proximity to a school with a lot of foot traffic. The family will likely need to hire an attorney to help them figure out a solution as they probably cannot afford to probate. Fox asked if the LBA wanted to purchase the home for \$2,000.00 in the hopes that a test would find no Asbestos. The County could then tear it down and the LBA pays the landfill cost. Everyone, including the owner, would benefit from this option. The LBA could draft a sales contract for a certain amount of dollars with the requirements she has to meet up front. This way, she would not be forced to probate. The owner could use Attorney Richardson. The

owner has reached out to the three children, and they said they would sign the documents. If the house were torn down, it would be a great start towards rebuilding the area. The LBA decided to table the discussion until May where action can take place. Fox asked if there was consensus for her to move forward with the following: ask Code Enforcement for an extension on the property, have another discussion with Betsy O'Neal about Attorney Richardson's suggestions for the owners, check taxes, and speak with the County about possible demolition. The board confirmed this to be so.

### **South Rome Alliance/House Plans Discussion:**

Fox led a discussion on the plan to bid out three CHIP build single family home projects through the City and South Rome Alliance (SRA). The LBA previously voted to donate two of the properties, 1 Orchid Place and 604 Pennington Ave, to SRA for CHIP home sites. The properties have not been transferred to SRA yet. The LBA previously gave them 232 Pennington Avenue. The three lots went out to bid for new housing. Two bidders came in, "Eleven Twelve" and "Cargle Brothers." When CDD and SRA previously used Cargle Brothers to build homes on Peachtree, a ranch style plan was \$98k. These same plans, however, now come in at \$160k each. Fox added that two different cottage style options were bid out. The square footage is the same for both at around 1000 sq ft. The results were 2 bed/1 bath at \$141k and 2 bed/2 bath at \$161k. Considering these prices are significantly high and the intended funding source has an income cap, lenders told staff that the odds of anyone qualifying is extremely low. Unfortunately, SRA has no other option to build these houses. Fox told Executive Director Jake Hager to tell SRA's board that they might not receive the lots depending on the high prices. SRA said they would allow the LBA to retain the two lots and then sell 232 Pennington Avenue back for the amount they invested in the title: \$5,000. Ware posed an alternative option. The LBA could counter the \$5,000 offer and ask for 232 Pennington to be given back to the LBA. Many members were in agreement. 604 Pennington has clear title, and 1 Orchid Place is in the process of doing so. These two lots are easily developable whereas handling 232 Pennington's topography would likely prove to be challenging. Fox stated that action does not need to be taken as a decision can be made at the planning session.

### **Other Discussion:**

While Fox hoped to discuss house plan options and the LBA's mission statement, time was unfortunately running out. The discussion will take place on a later date.

### **Property Purchase Requests:**

Fox presented the applications for property acquisition through the Land Bank Authority. The applications were discussed, and the outcome is listed as follows:

- **13 North McLin Street (J14L037)**

Fox reminded everyone the LBA completed a Judicial-In-Rem Foreclosure on 13 North McLin Street (J14L037) and was deeded the title. The Board previously took action to acquire this lot and then donate it to the Boys and Girls Club of Northwest Georgia (BGCNWGA). The property is adjacent to the BGCNWGA Main Office. BGCNWGA has requested the lot be donated. A home previously resided on the property, but it has been since torn down. Since this vacant lot is likely undevelopable, the goal will be to provide more greenspace. They have an attorney on their board who would handle the closing costs for free. Considering the Board had already approved the donation process, the LBA just needs to finalize the transaction to move this property to them. Discussion was made. The Board acted as follows:

- Roger Smith motioned to approve finalizing the transaction to donate parcel J14L037 to the Boys and Girls Club of Northwest Georgia, which was seconded by Lowery May. Motion carried.

- **300 Cave Spring Street (J14M041)**

The Board reviewed two applications submitted for the purchase of parcel J14M041 located at 300 Cave Spring Street. The LBA previously reviewed and denied a different offer for this property. At that time, the Board asked staff to contact Darlington School and gauge their interest in acquiring the parcel as Darlington owns many properties on that street. Staff contacted Darlington but never received a response back. Recently, David Limon made an offer of \$500.00 for the parcel. Staff reached back out to Darlington who made an offer of \$5,000.00. Discussion was made. The Board acted as follows:

- Lowery May motioned to approve the \$5,000.00 offer presented from Darlington School for parcel J14M041, subject to conveyance from Floyd County, with Harry Brock abstaining, which was seconded by Roger Smith. Motion carried.

- **607 Excelsior Street (I13K024)**

The Board reviewed an application submitted for the purchase of parcel I13K024 located at 607 Excelsior Street. David Limon made an offer of \$500.00. This lot is zoned M-R and is adjacent to a commercial property. Limon previously made an offer on this parcel in August 2019. The LBA approved his offer and the County transferred it. Limon, however, did not follow through with closing. The adjacent property owner owns the surrounding properties. Discussion was made. The Board decided that more research needs to be done and thus acted as follows:

- Brock motioned to deny the \$500.00 offer presented from David Limon for parcel I13K024, which was seconded by Rob Ware. Motion carried.

**Other Business:**

The next scheduled meeting will be the Planning Session. It will be held on **Thursday, April 21, 2022, from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM** in the Sam King Room at City Hall/Auditorium. Lunch will be provided. Staff will reach out to City Manager Sammy Rich, County Manager Jamie McCord and Jake Hager to see if they are interested in attending. Fox asked if the Board wanted her to schedule their personal phone calls with CCP. They said yes.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for **Friday, May 6, 2022, at 8:30 AM.**

**Adjourn:**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:12 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Logan Drake  
Recording Secretary