

KENT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Thursday, July 12, 2012

Administration Building - Room 310

Meeting called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Chair Sandi Frost Parrish.

Present: Commissioners Boelema, Bulkowski, Chivis, Hennessy, Hirsch, Koorndyk, Mast, Morgan, Ponstein, Rolls, Saalfeld, Shroll, Talen, Vonk, Voorhees, Wawee, Chair Parrish - 17.

Absent: Antor, Vander Molen – 2 (excused).

Invocation: Commissioner Talen introduced Pastor Reggie Smith, Roosevelt Park Community Church, who gave the invocation.
The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Joe Tomaselli (Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board Chair) – Introduced and welcomed the Airport’s new Executive Director, Brian Ryks. Also announced that with the appointment today of David Slikkers to the Airport Board, the Board will increase to seven members.

Mr. Ryks said that it is an honor and a privilege to serve as the Executive Director of the Gerald R. Ford International Airport. He thanked Phil Johnson for his strong leadership during the interim.

2. Susan Kazma, Conklin (Real Estate One Success) - Asked the Board to vote “no” on the Land Bank Authority resolution as she believes it is not a transparent use of taxpayer funds. She supports the Land Bank in its missions and goals, but cannot support their attempt to buy property prior to the tax sale.

3. Juanita Buskard, Hudsonville (Re/Max Lifestyles & listing agent for New Development Corporation) - The properties in question that the Land Bank would acquire are not ready to be on the market. They have chosen properties in struggling blocks that need revitalization and homes in this condition could sit on the market for a long time. Anyone who lost their homes over the tax amount that is owed cannot afford to buy it back or they would have. She doesn’t feel people are being displaced by allowing the Land Bank to acquire the properties. Tax funds are not used in the purchase of these homes. *Supports the resolution.*

4. Lee Kitson, Big Rapids (Grand Rapids rental property owner & current Chair of the Grand Rapids Home Builder Association Housing Advocacy Committee) - The non-profit housing corporations and the Land Bank invest in strategically located properties. The acquisition and rehab of the properties in the manner proposed is a very positive step. *Supports the resolution.*

5. Glen Hoeksema – Is a neighbor to one of the properties on the acquisition list (1717 Richmond), which has been vacant for three years. Area neighbors would like to see the New Development Corporation get this property and remodel it; this will be an improvement to the neighborhood. *Supports the resolution.*

6. Lola Audu, Walker (Audu Real Estate) – A small business owner in Comstock Park, she currently serves as a District 3 director of the Michigan Association of Realtors. Even though the market is turning around, she doesn't believe we are out of the woods yet, as one out of three home sales today is still a distressed sale. Houses which become vacant can be vandalized and homes which left to deteriorate by homeowners who have limited resources present a lingering issue. *Supports the resolution.*

7. Debra Eid, 809 Diamond Avenue, Grand Rapids (Executive Director - Creston Neighborhood Association) - The Land Bank Authority will help stabilize neighborhoods. Its viability depends on the Board of Commissioners and our neighborhoods' future, in part, depends on the creative problem solving demonstrated by the Land Bank. *Supports the resolution.*

8. Greg Conway, East Grand Rapids (Executive Vice President Founders Bank & Co-Chair of the Kent County Land Bank Advisory Council) – He believes the Land Bank accelerates and benefits the free market. The Land Bank Advisory Council is balanced and genuinely seeks the best possible outcomes for the broadest base of County constituents. The Land Bank has the possibility, with the Board of Commissioners' continued support, to be a positive and powerful force that augments and adds value to the private and non-profit sectors, it doesn't compete with them. *Supports the resolution.*

9. Tom Koetsier, 60 College, Grand Rapids (real estate broker & past president of the Rental Property Owners Association of Kent County) - The Rental Property Owners Association would like to voice its opposition. Although not directly opposed to the Land Bank, they are opposed to the 66 properties that won't make the tax sale and will be removed from free enterprise system. He would like the Board to put a five-year sunset on the Land Bank Authority. *Opposes the resolution.*

10. Scott Jonkhoff, 7436 Willow Pointe, Caledonia (Executive Director – Next Step West Michigan) - Next Step is a non-profit agency which hires the unemployable. Currently, they are working on five projects. This is a transparent process. Unlike federal programs, the standards are "good," not excessively over the top. The Land Bank is a common sense approach to combat blight. *Supports the resolution.*

11. Dave DeBruyn, Kentwood (Midwest Properties of Michigan) – Supports the Land Bank per se, but opposes pulling 62 properties from the tax auction. The Land Bank should buy properties at the auction. It's all about public perception. *Opposes the resolution.*

12. Sandy Stuckhartt, 310 Knapp, Grand Rapids (President of Creston Neighborhood Association) – Fanny Mae published a Land Bank guide which has been very informative and helpful. The Land Bank is an extra tool to save neighborhoods. *Supports the resolution.*

13. Tom Paarlberg (Greenridge Realty & President of Grand Rapids Association of Realtors) – The Association has taken no position on the Land Bank. He is on the Land Bank Advisory Board and has heard nothing negative about land banks. *Supports the resolution.*

14. Rusty Richter, 5665 Ivanrest Ave SW, Grandville – As a realtor, he attends the tax auctions and works with buyers to list homes. He is not against the Land Bank but is against the resolution allowing the land bank acquisition of the properties prior to the tax sale. *Opposes the resolution.*

15. A.J. Sutter, 321 Page NE, Grand Rapids – Board member New Development Corporation – In favor of the land bank taking over the properties. The non-profits will have the neighborhood at heart, not merely profit. *Supports the resolution.*

16. Reggie Smith, 625 Naylor, Grand Rapids – His neighborhood had a fire which was due to squatters. Homeownership helps and the Land Bank is a tool needed to help neighborhoods. *Supports the resolution.*

17. Peter Carlberg, 71 Richards Avenue NE, Grand Rapids (President – John Ball Park Neighborhood Association) – He is opposed to turning single-family neighborhoods into rental neighborhoods. The tax auction is not “free enterprise,” as it is not really open to the property owner. *Supports the resolution.*

18. Lloyd Reed, 851 North State Road, Belding (Home Run Real Estate) – He teaches a first time homeowners class, is a rental property owner and is supportive of the Land Bank. *Supports the resolution.*

19. Helen Lehman, 9353 Kreuter Road, Cannon Township (Executive Director - New Development Corporation) – The New Development Corporation, with the passage of the resolution today, will receive six houses, four of which are terribly blighted. Public/private partnerships are a hallmark of Kent County. *Supports the resolution.*

20. Denise Love (RW Daniels Realty) – Supports the idea of the Land Bank Authority helping communities but does not support that they can acquire properties prior to the auction. The Land Bank should bid for properties at the tax sale the same as everyone else. *Opposes the resolution.*

CONSENT AGENDA

- a) Approval of the Minutes of June 28, 2012, Meeting
- b) June 19 & 28, 2012, Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
(Reports of Claims and Allowances)

Motion by Commissioner Talen, seconded by Commissioner Mast, that the Consent Agenda items be approved.

Motion carried:

Yeas: Boelema, Bulkowski, Chivis, Hennessy, Hirsch, Koorndyk, Mast, Morgan, Ponstein, Rolls, Saalfeld, Shroll, Talen, Vonk Voorhees, Wawee, Chair Parrish – 17.

Nays: 0.

RESOLUTIONS

7-12-12-71 – FUNDING FOR JOHN BALL ZOO FIBER CONNECTIVITY AND IT PRE-TRANSITION PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT / JOHN BALL ZOO

WHEREAS, John Ball Zoological Garden is a County-owned facility. Under the current governance and management structure, operation and management of the zoo facility, animal care and education are the responsibility of the County; fundraising and development (including membership), and guest services (gift shop, concessions, special events) are managed by the separate, non-profit organization, the John Ball Zoo Society; and

WHEREAS, in April 2011, the County and Zoo Society approved a Strategic and Governance Plan that would move all operations under the responsibility of a single, private, non-profit management corporation; and

WHEREAS, as a part of the reorganization, it will be necessary to coordinate and update certain Information Technology (IT) services and programs. Currently, the Zoo is supported by the Kent County Information Technology Department which is responsible for connectivity to County software and application services. In addition to the County's IT support, the Zoo Society also manages and maintains its own IT services to support specific operations at the Zoo. Each entity owns its own hardware and software, and each has individual and corporate licensing agreements; and

WHEREAS, in early 2012, a study was completed to assess the current IT infrastructure, software and applications, and staffing, and to make appropriate recommendations regarding IT services for the new John Ball Zoo. In addition to the technical recommendations, the study also recommended contracting with an individual/firm to manage the continued planning for and transition of IT services for the new John Ball Zoo; and

WHEREAS, in addition, connectivity among the various Zoo facilities and buildings, which is currently handled via a wireless network, is not sufficiently robust. Efficient operation of the Zoo requires an upgrade to a fiber-based network within the grounds. In order to accomplish installation of the fiber during the summer/fall season construction season and coordinate with other IT-related Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) and exhibit upgrades already planned or in process, it is being requested that funding for the fiber project be made available at this time; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners hereby approves the creation of the Capital Improvement Projects for John Ball Zoo Fiber Connectivity and the John Ball Zoo Pre-transition, and to appropriate \$155,000 to the 2012 CIP Fund budget from uncommitted CIP Fund reserves for these projects (\$85,000 for Pre-transition and \$70,000 to Zoo Fiber).

Motion by Commissioner Rolls, seconded by Commissioner Wawee, that the resolution be adopted.

Motion carried:

Yeas: Boelema, Bulkowksi, Chivis, Hennessy, Hirsch, Koorndyk, Mast, Morgan, Ponstein, Rolls, Saalfeld, Shroll, Talen, Vonk Voorhees, Wawee, Chair Parrish – 17.

Nays: 0.

7-12-12-72 – ACQUISITION AND TRANSFER OF PROPERTY TO THE KENT COUNTY
LAND BANK AUTHORITY / TREASURER

WHEREAS, 64 properties (a copy of which are on file in the County Clerk's Office) are part of 325 parcels that have all been foreclosed by the Kent County Treasurer for non-payment of real property taxes in 2012; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to MCL 211.78m, Kent County has the right to acquire tax-foreclosed properties prior to them being offered for sale at auction by paying the minimum bid price. Kent County has the right to sell these properties to the Kent County Land Bank Authority (KCLBA); and

WHEREAS, KCLBA has reviewed the entire list of 325 parcels and has now identified 43 properties that either meet the criteria for following its strategic plan or have been requested to be acquired on behalf of the local unit where it is located; and

WHEREAS, four local non-profit developers are interested in acquiring and redeveloping 21 additional properties. Treasurer Parrish requests that the County acquire and transfer ownership of these parcels to KCLBA; and

WHEREAS, no recording fees are required for a transfer to the KCLBA. Corporate Counsel will review and approve the transfer documents before execution.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners hereby exercise its right to purchase 64 parcels for the minimum bid price and sell them to the KCLBA at the same minimum bid price for future redevelopment and sale and that the Treasurer be authorized to sign the necessary documents.

Motion by Commissioner Boelema, seconded by Commissioner Hennessy, that the resolution be adopted.

Motion by Commissioner Morgan, seconded by Commissioner Vonk, to amend the resolution by removing 19 parcels on Wabasis Shore and Wabasis Pointe (Oakfield Township), as recommended by the KCLBA, and one parcel on Montauk Drive (Alpine Township).

(Commissioner Hirsch asked for a roll call vote.)

Motion failed:

Yeas: Koorndyk, Morgan, Saalfeld, Shroll, Vonk, Voorhees, Wawee – 7.

Nays: Boelema, Bulkowski, Chivis, Hennessy, Hirsch, Mast, Ponstein, Rolls, Talen, Chair Parrish – 10.

Motion by Commissioner Ponstein, seconded by Commissioner Bulkowski, to amend the resolution by removing the 19 parcels on Wabasis Shore and Wabasis Pointe (Oakfield Township), as recommended by the KCLBA.

Motion carried:

Yeas: Boelema, Bulkowksi, Chivis, Hennessy, Hirsch, Koorndyk, Mast, Morgan, Ponstein, Rolls, Saalfeld, Shroll, Talen, Vonk Voorhees, Wawee, Chair Parrish – 17.

Nays: 0.

7-12-12-72a – ACQUISITION AND TRANSFER OF PROPERTY TO THE KENT COUNTY
LAND BANK AUTHORITY / TREASURER

WHEREAS, 64 properties (a copy of which are on file in the County Clerk's Office) are part of 325 parcels that have all been foreclosed by the Kent County Treasurer for non-payment of real property taxes in 2012; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to MCL 211.78m, Kent County has the right to acquire tax-foreclosed properties prior to them being offered for sale at auction by paying the minimum bid price. Kent County has the right to sell these properties to the Kent County Land Bank Authority (KCLBA); and

WHEREAS, the KCLBA has reviewed the entire list of 325 parcels and has now identified 24 of these properties that either meet the criteria for following its strategic plan or have been requested to be acquired on behalf of the local unit where it is located; and

WHEREAS, four local non-profit developers are interested in acquiring and redeveloping 21 additional properties. Treasurer Parrish requests that the County acquire and transfer ownership of these parcels to KCLBA; and

WHEREAS, no recording fees are required for a transfer to the KCLBA. Corporate Counsel will review and approve the transfer documents before execution.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners hereby exercise its right to purchase 45 parcels for the minimum bid price and sell them to the KCLBA at the same minimum bid price for future redevelopment and sale and that the Treasurer be authorized to sign the necessary documents.

Motion by Commissioner Boelema, seconded by Commissioner Hennessy, that the resolution, as amended, be adopted.

Motion carried:

Yeas: Boelema, Bulkowski, Chivis, Hennessy, Hirsch, Mast, Morgan, Ponstein, Rolls, Saalfeld, Talen, Vonk, Chair Parrish – 13.

Nays: Koorndyk, Shroll, Voorhees, Wawee - 4.

APPOINTMENT

Aeronautics Board

Motion by Commissioner Koorndyk, seconded by Commissioner Shroll, that David A. Slikkers be appointed to the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board.

Motion carried by voice vote.

REPORTS

Land Bank Authority

Commissioner Ponstein: Appreciated all of the comments today on the Land Bank Authority. He invited all Commissioners to meet with Dave Allen, Executive Director of the Land Bank, if there are any other questions or concerns. A copy of the Kent County Land Bank Authority's policies and procedures will be given to each Commissioner for their information.

MISCELLANEOUS

Retiring Election Workers

Commissioner Hennessy: Next week, the City of Grand Rapids will honor its retiring election workers. We know how important these people are to an efficient election process.

City of Grandville

Commissioner Ponstein: The Annual Grandville Police Report to the City Commission cited the many times cooperation was received from the County and neighboring jurisdictions. Harold Ziegler announced that they are bringing the second Fiat dealership in the state to Grandville and, they will follow it up with another Alfa Romeo dealership. Genesis Development Corporation has announced that they are putting in a 33-unit low income disability housing in the City of Grandville.

Public Comment

Commissioner Rolls: Thanked those who spoke at Public Comment today on the Land Bank Authority resolution. He noted that of the nineteen individuals who spoke, only four were against it.

Cost of Freedom Tribute

Commissioner Mast: The City of Kentwood is sponsoring the *Cost of Freedom Tribute*. The moving memorial honoring American veterans includes an 80% replica of the Vietnam War Wall Memorial and will be in Kentwood July 26–29.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:49 a.m., Commissioner Talen moved to adjourn, subject to the call of the Chair, and to Thursday, July 26, 2012, Room 310, County Administration Building, at 8:30 a.m., for an Official Meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Morgan. Motion carried.

Sandi Frost Parrish, Chair

Mary Hollinrake, County Clerk