



Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Date: January 21st

Time: 12:13 PM – 1:38 PM

Location: [Abessinio Stadium](#)

Attendees: Rick Gessner, Maria Cabrera, David Ross, Van Hampton, Hal Schneikert, Bob Weir, Leroy Tice, Michelle Harlee, Elliot Larkin, Sean Parks.

Absent: Cassandra Marshall, Ernest Congo, Susan Frank.

Staff: Bud Freel, Becky Vogel, David Reynolds, Ray Saccomandi.

Guests: John Metcalf.

Call to Order

Chair Rick called the meeting to order at 12:13 PM.

Approval of Previous Minutes

- October Meeting Minutes
 - Motion to approve: Maria
 - Seconded by: David Ross
 - Vote: Unanimous approval

Election of Executive Officers

- Motion to approve slate: Leroy Tice
 - Seconded by: Van Hampton
 - Vote: Unanimous approval
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Guest Introduction

- John Metcalf introduced himself and shared his affiliation with the Highlands community.
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President's Report

Gibraltar Property Update

- Community meeting held December 3rd at Joseph Johnson Elementary School
- Opening remarks by Mike Prezicki
- Attendance: 80+ community members
- Mixed feedback regarding third-party involvement
- Decision made to step back and explore alternative uses, including:
 - Residential redevelopment
 - Conference/meeting center
 - Potential state ownership

- Property improvements made to dining room, foyer, and other areas
 - \$2 million from bond bill designated for upkeep (no Land Bank funds will be used)
 - Maria suggested garden expansion and expressed support for conference center use
 - Ownership clarification:
 - Mansion: Land Bank
 - Gardens/fountains: Preservation Delaware
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Organizational Updates

Website

- Streamlining and redesign underway
- Project temporarily paused due to property sales
- Ready to move forward with updates

Grants

- Applying for Capital One open-call grant
- Working with professional grant writer
- Ten grants at \$200,000 each
- Potential total award: \$4.5 million
- Focus: Dedicated homeowner assistance
 - Partners: Stand By Me, Stepping Stone

- Pilot: Elbert Palmer (Southbridge)
- Required 90-second video completed
 - Maria served as spokesperson

Evaluation Consultant

- Partnership with University of Pennsylvania
 - Reviewing 7 years of Land Bank impact
 - Studying:
 - Sheriff sales
 - Inventory
 - Tax impact
 - Will present findings to:
 - Board
 - Community
 - Mayor's office
 - Purpose: Education & fundraising leverage
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2025 Year-End Summary

- 42 properties transferred
 - 3 returned to City

- 13 to nonprofits
 - 6 side lots to homeowners
 - 20 sold to affordable homebuyers
 - 8 properties purchased
 - 1 in East Side
 - 6 in Hilltop
 - 400+ total properties repurposed since inception
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Finance Report – Hal

- Cash on hand: \$8.1 million
 - Restricted: \$6.7 million
 - Unrestricted: \$1.3 million
 - Sufficient funds for FY2026
 - City funding reduced: \$1M → \$500K
 - Need to pursue private funding
 - 2027 outlook: Grant funding declining
 - Bank of America funds remaining: \$25,000
 - Overall decrease: 8%
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Committee Reports

Governance Committee

- Did not meet

Technical Advisory Board

- Kevin Smith resigned as Chair (end of 2025)
 - No replacement yet
 - Kevin willing to remain involved
 - Many stakeholders from Cinnaire & Jumpstart
 - Maria volunteered for Greening Committee
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Inventory & Operations

- Significant monthly costs for:
 - Grass cutting
 - Trash removal
- Average monthly cleanup expenses: Five figures
- Current inventory:
 - 165 lots
 - 41 structures

Project Updates

Elbert Palmer (EP) Project

- Demolition underway (50% complete)
- Minimal neighborhood complaints
- Subdivision plans in development
- Expected completion: End of June
- RFP release planned
- New home cost target: \$230,000–\$240,000
- Received \$500,000 County grant
 - Previously unused
 - Now allocated to EP project
- Goal:
 - Subsidize construction
 - Lower homeowner costs
- Home specs:
 - 1,600 sq ft
 - 3 bed / 2 bath

Hilltop Update

- Expanded footprint (N. Van Buren → Delamore St)
 - Completed:
 - 23 rehabs
 - 1 side lot
 - Under construction:
 - 19 properties
 - 1 side lot
 - Using ARPA & grant funds
 - North Harrison cleanup successful
 - Market challenges:
 - Vacancies down
 - Sellers increasing prices
 - Own most of West 2nd Street
 - Two residents still present
 - Exploring purchase options
 - Maria reported major crime reduction in Lower Hilltop
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Executive Session

- Motion to enter: Hal

- Seconded: David Ross
 - Entered at 1:03 PM
 - Motion to exit: Leroy Tice
 - Seconded: Van Hampton
 - Vote: Unanimous
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Property Dispositions

- Motion to approve disposed properties
 - Moved: Maria
 - Seconded: David Ross
 - Vote: Unanimous

2301 N. Market Street

- Proposed transfer to Derrick Reed
- Motion: Maria
- Seconded: Leroy Tice
- Van Hampton recused
- Vote: Unanimous

New Business

- Maria discussed:
 - Interfaith fundraiser luncheon
 - Community presentation
- 10-year anniversary planning
 - Proposed public fundraiser
 - Annual milestone community event
- Bud suggested:
 - Annual report luncheon
 - Invite elected officials
 - Develop budget & event plan

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn approved
- Meeting adjourned at 1:38 PM