Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Date: July 16, 2026 **Time:** 12:00 PM – 1:49 PM
Location: Abessinio Stadium

Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Rick Gessner at 12:00 PM, officially beginning the July 16, 2026 meeting of the Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank Board of Directors.

Roll Call

Board Members Present

- Rick Gessner
- David Ross
- Sean Park
- Bob Weir
- Cassandra Marshall
- Elliott Larkin
- Gladys Spikes

Excused

- Maria Cabrera
- Van Hampton
- Leroy Tice
- Susan Bullock

Absent

- Trippi Congo

Staff Present Guests:

- Bud Freel, President Molly Freel
- David Reynolds Ebony Broadway
- Becky Vogel

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- The Board reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting and considered them for formal approval.

Motion: David Ross moved to approve the minutes as presented.
Second: Elliott Larkin.
Vote: Approved unanimously.

Introduction of New Board Member

- President Bud Freel welcomed Gladys Spikes as the newest member of the Board of Directors. - Mr. Freel noted Ms. Spikes' extensive experience serving as the Executive Director of Housing Opportunity of Northern Delaware.

Housing Opportunities of Northern Delaware, Inc. is a housing corporation established to promote fair and equal access to housing in rental and sales, where she oversees numerous vacant lot and property initiatives.

- The Board welcomed Ms. Spikes and recognized the value of her experience in vacant property redevelopment.

President's Report

Gibraltar Property Update

- Discussions with the State regarding potential acquisition of the Gibraltar property have concluded, with the State declining ownership at this time due to timing considerations.
- Staff will continue pursuing opportunities to transfer the property to an appropriate owner and will continue evaluating potential paths forward for the property.

2025 Annual Report

- The 2025 Annual Report has been completed and distributed to elected officials, community organizations, and other stakeholders.

Bond Bill Funding

- The Land Bank did not receive Bond Bill funding this year.
- Staff plans to seek Bond Bill funding again during the next legislative cycle.

Community Garden Initiative

- Bud Freel and Bob Weir met with representatives of the Lenape Nation on May 11 regarding potential community garden projects.
- The Land Bank provided an inventory of potential properties that could be considered for the initiative.- No additional updates regarding the community garden initiative were available at the time of the meeting.

2026 Activity Update

- Year-to-date accomplishments include 23 properties sold as part of the Land Bank's ongoing disposition and redevelopment activity.
- Year-to-date accomplishments also include six properties acquired and added to the Land Bank's inventory.

Social Media

- Mr. Freel discussed reactivating the Land Bank's Facebook page to support communication regarding Land Bank activities.
- Molly Freel will assist with managing content, and Board members were encouraged to review and help promote the page.

Signing Resolution

- The Board considered a new signing resolution authorizing Bud Freel to sign documents on behalf of the Land Bank.

Motion: Rick Gessner called for a motion to approve the signing resolution.
Second: David Ross.
Vote: Approved unanimously.

Affordable Housing Initiative

- Bob Weir provided an overview of the City's affordable housing initiatives, including $500,000 allocated to the Land Bank.
- The initiatives discussed also included the Rental Assistance Program, Façade Improvement Program, Homeless Prevention and Homeless Services initiatives, and the Get A Lot Program (GALP). • The City is working with other partners to establish a more coordinated development process by creating controlled entry points for minority home contractors.
- The coordinated process will also include infrastructure improvements such as water and sewer work to better prepare properties for future development.
- The City and Land Bank intend to package development-ready lots before offering them publicly. • The initiative also contemplates combining City-owned and Land Bank-owned properties into a more streamlined, turnkey construction program.
- A list of potential properties has been assembled.
- Once implemented, the City will assume responsibility for maintenance costs on participating City properties, reducing maintenance expenses for the Land Bank.

Motion: Bob Weir moved to acknowledge and reserve the listed properties for future announcement under the Get A Lot Program (GALP).
Second: David Ross.
Vote: Approved unanimously.

Finance Committee Report

- The Finance Committee presented the monthly financial reports, and financial statements were distributed to the Board for review.
- Restricted cash was reported at approximately $5.4 million.
- Unrestricted operating cash was reported at approximately $1.89 million.
- The organization continues to maintain a strong financial position based on the information presented.• Revenue and expenditures remain on target through May.
- The 2025 independent financial audit is well underway and nearing completion.

Governance Committee Report

- Elliott Larkin presented the Governance Committee's recommendation regarding revisions to the Side Lot Program Policy.
- The proposed changes would remove the blanket prohibition on structures located on side lots. • The revisions are intended to encourage more productive use of underutilized side lots while remaining consistent with the Land Bank's mission.
- The changes could support neighborhood beautification, property investment, and incremental housing opportunities.
- Where otherwise permitted, improvements could include accessory structures, parking areas, driveway expansions, façade additions, and future ADU readiness.
- All existing zoning regulations, building codes, deed restrictions, permitting requirements, and other applicable laws would remain in effect.
- The Committee also discussed concerns that many property owners are unaware of the current restriction.• The Committee noted that vacant side lots can contribute to ongoing maintenance and nuisance concerns.

Side Lot Policy Motion

- The Board considered the Governance Committee's recommendation to revise the Side Lot Program and address restrictions affecting existing and future Side Lot participants.

Motion: Elliott Larkin moved to remove the "no structures" restriction from the Side Lot Program and to work with existing Side Lot participants to remove those restrictions in perpetuity, allowing driveways, accessory structures, façade additions, and other improvements permitted under the City of Wilmington Code.

Second: Bob Weir.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

Technical Advisory Committee Report

- The Technical Advisory Committee did not meet.
- Discussion included the need to reinvigorate committee participation and encourage greater Board involvement.• The Board discussed identifying members willing to take leadership roles within the committee.• Discussion also focused on determining next steps to strengthen committee engagement.
- No additional issues were reported.

Inventory & Operations Report

- The Land Bank's current inventory includes 164 vacant lots.
- The current inventory also includes 34 structures.
- Staff noted that the structure count fluctuates as properties are acquired, sold, and moved through redevelopment activity.

Projects & Progress Report

Elbert Palmer

- Demolition has been completed.
- Required environmental work has been reviewed and is scheduled.
- The Request for Proposals (RFP) was publicly advertised four days prior to the meeting. • A recent informational meeting attracted four organizations, and all four organizations submitted Letters of Intent. • A Review Committee has been established and will evaluate proposals in August. • Follow-up meetings will be held with the selected awardee as the project moves forward. • The Elbert Palmer Working Group also reviewed the RFP process and the organizations that expressed interest. • The Working Group discussed Neighborhood House organizational changes affecting housing counseling. • Zoning Board approvals have been obtained.
- The RFP includes approximately $2 million in available project subsidies.

Elbert Palmer Review Committee

- Tom Ford
- Toren Williams
- Leslie Nutter
- Eugene Young
- Bud Freel

Lower Hilltop

- The project footprint expanded from Van Buren Street to Delamore Street.
- Two Agreements of Sale have been executed.
- Three properties are currently listed.
- Five properties are currently under construction.
- Additional properties have been sold and are currently under redevelopment.
- Staff discussed ongoing neighborhood concerns around 3rd and Rodney Streets.

Browntown

- Two properties are currently under construction.
- One additional Agreement of Sale is in place.
- One property has been sold.
- All current projects remain concentrated within the same block.
- Staff plans to coordinate a community meeting with local residents and the Wilmington Police Department to address neighborhood concerns.

Public Comment

- No public comments were offered during the public comment portion of the meeting.

Executive Session

- The Board entered Executive Session following approval of the motion and later returned to open session.

Motion to Enter Executive Session: Elliott Larkin.
Second: David Ross.
Vote: Approved unanimously.

Motion to Return to Open Session: Sean Parks.
Second: Elliott Larkin.
Vote: Approved unanimously.

Disposition Approvals

- The Board considered the property disposition for 15/17 E. 22nd Street.
- The Board considered the property dispositions for 6, 12, and 14 Gordon Street.
- The Board also considered the property disposition for 2250 Jessup Street.

Motion: David Ross moved to approve the property dispositions discussed during the Executive Session. **Second:** Cassandra Marshall.
Vote: Approved unanimously.

New Business

- Cassandra Marshall informed the Board of an upcoming Infill Project Conference to be held in Pittsburgh during August.
- The Board also discussed the possibility of scheduling a special meeting regarding the Elbert Palmer project prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Next Meeting

- The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2026.
- A special meeting regarding the Elbert Palmer project may be scheduled prior to the August meeting.

Adjournment

- There being no further business before the Board, a motion to adjourn was made.
- The meeting adjourned at 1:49 PM.

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