

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICES

DATE: NOVEMBER 26, 2007

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:	OTHERS PRESENT:
SUPERVISORS MONROE	MICHAEL SWAN, DIRECTOR, REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICES
BENTLEY	
F. THOMAS	PATRICIA NENNINGER, SECOND ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY
GERAGHTY	JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:	JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISORS BELDEN	SUPERVISOR CAIMANO
CHAMPAGNE	SUPERVISOR SOKOL
HASKELL	DAVID STRAINER, SUPERVISOR-ELECT, TOWN OF QUEENSBURY
	DEANNE REHM, ADIRONDACK COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST
	CHARLENE DiRESTA, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

In the absence of the Committee Chairman, Mr. Monroe, Vice-Chairman called the meeting of the Real Property Tax Services Committee to order at 9:37 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Geraghty, seconded by Mr. F. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the October 29, 2007 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Michael Swan, Director of Real Property Tax Services, who distributed copies of his Agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the Agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Swan apprised that Item No. 1 on the Agenda pertained to the Mullen's property on Bay Road in the Town of Queensbury. He added that a 90-day extension had been granted for payment of the back taxes. He said that David Mullen, the property owner, had said that he was unable to pay the back taxes at this time.

Mr. Swan stated that the environmental study of the property had not been completed; however, he added, the individual that had expressed an interest in leasing the property was still considering such. He suggested that the property be included in the 2008 foreclosures and that the County wait for the results of the

environmental study. Mr. Geraghty asked if there was a business currently operating on the property and Mr. Swan replied negatively. Patricia Nenninger, Second Assistant County Attorney, noted that the potential lessee's attorney had spoken with Paul Dusek, County Attorney, and stated that they were initiating an environmental study. She added that the County Attorney's Office hoped to have more information for the Committee at the next meeting. Mr. Swan expounded that Mr. Mullen had already spent in excess of \$40,000 in an attempt to clean up the property. Mr. Monroe asked how the property had been used in the past and Mr. Swan responded that it had been used as an industrial foundry. Mr. Monroe suggested that the Committee obtain a timetable for the environmental study. Mr. Swan stated that attempts had been made to contact the lessee's attorney, who had initiated the study. Mr. Monroe further suggested the Committee set a date in the spring to receive an update on the study.

Mr. Monroe apprised that Item No. 2 on the Agenda was a request from the Adirondack Community Housing Trust (ACHT) to address the Committee and he introduced Deanne Rehm, from the ACHT. Ms. Rehm apprised that she had addressed the Planning & Community Development Committee last month and many of the members of this Committee had been in attendance; therefore, she said she would just give a brief overview of the program. She stated that the Adirondack Community Housing Trust was a non-profit organization, funded by a \$1 million grant from Senator Little's Office, \$500,000 of which had been received last week. She added that the goal of the Trust was to provide long-term affordable housing.

Ms. Rehm stated that she wanted to discuss with the Committee the ways that the ACHT could partner with Warren County, as well as to consult with the County Attorney's Office concerning any legal aspects. She noted that in the Adirondacks, land was a limited commodity. She added that for that reason the cost of owning a home was increasing beyond the reach of middle income (\$40,000 to \$50,000 per year) families. She said that families at that income level, could afford to purchase a home for \$100,000 to \$150,000; however, she added, they would have to pay an additional \$30,000 to \$50,000 to purchase the parcel of land. Therefore, she stated, this income level was being locked out of the housing market.

Ms. Rehm expounded that if the ACHT was able to obtain smaller land lots from the County, after foreclosure and prior to the County land auction, the Trusts' \$500,000 would go a long way. She said it was her understanding that the Towns were given the option to purchase the foreclosed parcels prior to the County Land Auction, for the amount of back taxes owed and she hoped the ACHT could become a preferred partner by also being given that option. She said that the ACHT was hoping to work within each of the municipalities in Warren County.

Mr. Monroe asked if a separate trust corporation had been established. Ms. Rehm replied that the Trust had established a Board of Directors, filed articles of incorporation and established a set of bylaws; however, she added that they still needed to apply to the Internal Revenue Service for 501 C3 status. Mr. Monroe apprised that the County Land Auction involved both vacant land and occupied homes. He added that he felt that when dealing with situations where the home was occupied, it was better to try to work with the occupants in an attempt to keep them in their homes. He said that the homeowner could be given the option of deeding the land to the Trust so that they would be able to retain ownership of the home. Ms. Rehm responded that utilizing that option would mostly depend on the willingness of the homeowner, who would no longer own the land.

Ms. Rehm expounded that for each of the transactions, the Trust would own the land in perpetuity. She added that the homeowner would only own structures built on the land. She said that way the Trust would ensure that the homes on the land would always stay within an affordable price range. Mr. Swan stated that the new timetable for the County Land Auction would work well with the needs of the ACHT. Mr. Monroe stated that the Committee should request that the County Attorney's Office investigate the legal aspects of this proposed partnership. Mrs. Nenner stated that she would investigate all legal aspects of the proposed partnership and return to the Committee with her findings. She added that she was unsure if the County was authorized to enter into this type of contract. Ms. Rehm asked if the ACHT would be able to enter into contracts with the individual Towns and Mrs. Nenner replied that any contracts with the Towns would be separate from the County.

Mr. Sokol asked if the ACHT was working with other Counties, as well. Ms. Rehm responded that the Trust had approached Essex, Hamilton, Franklin, Fulton and Clinton Counties; however, she added, none of the Counties had worked out the mechanics of how the partnership would work. She apprised that it was not the intent of the ACHT to have large groups of houses, which would then form 'low housing' areas. She said that the homeowners would not be labeled as 'low income' as it would not be common knowledge that they did not own the land that their house was on.

Discussion ensued.

It was the consensus of the Committee to refer the proposed partnership to the County Attorney's Office to investigate any possible legal issues in forming a partnership between the Adirondack Community Housing Trust and Warren County.

Ms. Rehm exited the meeting at 9:55 a.m.

Mr. Swan apprised that Item No. 3 on the Agenda was to inform the Committee that the 2007 STAR Administrative Aid payment had been received in the amount of \$4,381.30.

Mr. Swan informed the Committee that there had been one parcel sold at the County Land Auction, after which the high bidder had changed his mind about the purchase. He said that the purchaser had since changed his mind again and now wanted to purchase the parcel; however, he added, since the bidder was past the thirty-day deadline in which to pay, he would offer the parcel to the second highest bidder. He said if the second highest bidder was no longer interested in the parcel he would offer the highest bidder a second chance to purchase the parcel.

Mr. Swan apprised that the other issue was with the parcel of land on which the highest bidder had stopped payment on the check. Mrs. Nenninger said that the second highest bidder was interested in purchasing the property but was requesting additional time to pay. She added that since he was the second highest bidder, he was entitled to an extension of time for payment. She asked Mr. Swan if he had confirmed with the second highest bidder that he would be required to pay the 5% auctioneer's fee and Mr. Swan replied affirmatively.

As there was no further business to come before the Real Property Tax Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. F. Thomas and seconded by Mr. Bentley, Mr. Monroe adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene DiResta, Legislative Office Specialist