

LCI Board Meeting Minutes
February 23, 2022 (Via Zoom)

PRESENT: Patricia Brett, Hon. Richard Furlow, Neil Currie, Nadine Horton, Seth Poole, Evan Trachten (LCI staff), Michael Pinto (Office of Corporation Counsel)

Absent: Hon. Ernie Santiago, Arlevia Samuel (Executive Director)

Guests: None

Meeting called to order at 6:06 P.M.

Roll call of Members: Pat Brett, Neil Currie, Nadine Horton, Seth Poole

Review of LCI Board meeting minutes from December 22, 2021 meeting. A motion to approve was made by Pat Brett, seconded by Nadine Horton, roll call of members was taken, approved unanimously.

New Business

Election of Officers

Seth informed Pat that she was nominated at the last meeting to be vice-chair. Pat accepted the nomination. Seth was nominated to be chair at the last meeting. Seth asked if there were any further nominations from the floor for Chair or Vice-Chair. There were none.

A motion to accept the slate of Seth Poole as Chair and Pat Brett as vice Chair was made by Neil Currie, second by Nadine Horton, Roll call was taken, all were in favor, Approved unanimously.

Pat told the Board that she joined the LCI Board because she wanted to help families. Pat has a background in education having been an educator for 40 years. Where families live have an impact on their lives. Decent housing helps families. Pat thanked the Board.

Seth told the Board he grew up in the City and has watched neighborhoods change, and affordability has changed. Our work is noble and needed. Inflation and unemployment are problems in our community. LCI Board creates housing opportunities for residents and families. The market is volatile, and our work quells some of the volatility.

Alder Furlow joined the meeting. He apologized for being a few minutes late.

Old Business / Discussion

Attorney Pinto told the Board staff conducted research about LCI being designated as an Urban Homesteading Agency and Community Development Agency. Attorney Pinto provided a historical review of LCI. In the past Eminent domain was used to conduct redevelopment and the statutes listed in the information packet deal with the rules of utilizing those powers. Historically, there were many blighted properties, and this was the process and tool-kit during the days of Redevelopment (1960's-late 1990's).

Evan noted that we use the PAD Guidelines now more so than the State statutes in the packet. If LCI was utilizing Eminent Domain, we would be bound to all the regulations in the statutes. LCI was created to hear these proposals because the Community Development Committee of the Board of Alders did not have the capacity not hear all the sales proposals during the redevelopment days due to the high volume. LCI's real estate activities occur through tax foreclosure and not eminent domain thus we do not adhere to the redevelopment regulations listed in CT General Statutes 8-169 in this context.

Pat Brett asked how the Board will operate differently after this clarification. Evan told the Board there isn't any change currently. When the PAD guidelines are revised, and housing objectives are updated the Board may look at proposals differently based on any new objectives. The powers of the Board remain the same. LCI has not used eminent domain powers for many years. We utilize other tools. Attorney Pinto told the Board how the City acquires a property dictates how we dispose of it, and how the property gets utilized. LCI is doing community development but not via Urban Homesteading and Redevelopment like in the 1960's.

Nadine asked if the purview of the Board is solely to approve property sales? Evan referenced Sec. 21-27 for guidance. Neil noted that the LCI Board has not participated in policy formulation and annual budget review over the 2 ½ years he has been on LCI Board. Attorney Pinto told the Board they can discuss policy matters and provide advisory reports. Neil would like the LCI Board to review LCI's activities such as housing development, not review other department's pending proposals before the BoA. LCI Board should have oversight over everything that comes out of LCI. Nadine would like the Board to focus on matters beyond property sales and expected to do so as part of being on LCI Board.

Nadine told the Board that LCI's website lists its mission and she doesn't feel that LCI is doing what the website has listed as its mission. Nadine listed a few goals from the website, and she feels this Board should review all the activities listed on the website. The current purview of the Board is primarily property sales, what about all the other items listed? Nadine also mentioned the issue of mega-landlords as an issue and LCI Board should be able to address this topic. She noted a recent purchase of 2 properties by Mandy Management on her street and received calls from concerned residents. Nadine is also the Chair of WEB CMT and receives questions about LCI's purview and the Board's role.

Attorney Pinto told the Board LCI staff can present information about projects and developments to this Board. Nadine mentioned Mandy management just purchased 2 homes on her street. Nadine asked, where is the enforcement of housing code and regulations concerning large landlords? Evan noted that LCI's Residential rental

program was amended to require a “natural person” registered with LCI. The City is also developing a land bank to purchase properties in response to market conditions.

Pat noted there is LCI and LCI Board, they are separate entities. LCI Board does not get involved in enforcement matters. Nadine noted that a lot at Whalley and Winthrop has sat stagnant for almost 20 years. Where is the enforcement, or eminent domain? Regarding the large landlords, what is LCI doing, do the property owners have Residential Rental Licenses? Attorney Pinto discussed the “natural person” regulation.

Neil told the Board that LCI Board has become isolated from the department. LCI Board should be fully informed of LCI’s activities. The Board should be more involved and have more input about policy and planning. Seth noted that we need to see the budget. Pat asked if LCI staff can present to the LCI Board on a regular basis (monthly or every other month)? Attorney Pinto told the Board we will relay this to Arlevia.

Neil asked for a LCI flow chart and staff list. Pat noted there is a staff list on the website which contains names and titles. Seth thanked the Board for putting all of these ideas on the table. Seth would also like to be more included and likes the idea of LCI staff presenting to the Board.

Attorney Pinto discussed eminent domain and clarified how the process operates and the technical aspects of utilizing it. Alder Furlow said there were many excellent questions. He noted the LCI Board seems to be a review board not an administrative board, attorney Pinto agreed (in the context of property sales). Alder Furlow is working on some new ideas to help the City to develop a quicker process to acquire properties and deal with the current housing market. Alder Furlow noted the Mayor can call an emergency Board of Alders meeting to purchase a property if needed. Our current process to acquire property takes several weeks at a minimum.

Pat Brett said Nadine is a breath of fresh air to this board. Please hold this board accountable. We need some clarity and will keep pushing. Nadine wants the best for all of New Haven. Attorney Pinto noted he is a New Haven resident, and he is grateful for the work and concern expressed by the LCI Board, he thanks the Board for its work.

Seth thanked the Board for their work, it has not been in vain. Seth noted the Board would like to see other LCI staff and Divisions at our future meetings (and receive updates and budget information). LCI staff should provide an overview of what’s going on in the department for March 2022 and plan to continue the discussion.

Seth recognized Valerie Thomas who was on our call. She is a parent of a Yale student and she is looking for information from LCI. Contact info was provided via chat. Alder Furlow noted Miss. Thomas should call her alder to assist, that’s their role.

A motion to adjourn was made by Nadine Horton, seconded Neil Currie. Roll Call was taken, all were in favor, approved unanimously.

Adjourned at 7:27 P.M.