

**MINUTES OF  
JOINT WORK SESSION**

**Spalding County Board of Commissioners  
City of Griffin Board of Commissioners  
Land Bank Authority**

Monday, October 24, 2011  
Meeting Room 108  
Spalding County Courthouse Annex  
2:00 P. M.

County Commissioners present: Chairman Eddie Freeman, Gwen Flowers-Taylor, Chipper Gardner, Bob Gilreath, and Raymond Ray. County Manager William P. Wilson, Jr., Deputy County Manager Virginia Beams and Attorney Jim Fortune were also present. Executive Secretary, Ricky L. Clark, Jr. was present to record the minutes.

City Commissioners present: Chairperson Joanne Todd, Shaheer Beyah, Will Evans, Douglas Hollberg, Dick Morrow, Ryan McClemore and Cynthia Reid-Ward. City Manager Kenny Smith and City Attorney Drew Whalen were also present. Judy Flournoy was present to record the minutes.

Land Bank Authority members present: Executive Director John Joiner, Newton Galloway & Patty Beckham

Chairman Freeman called the joint work session to order and introduced the following agenda.

1. Discuss mission and scope of Land Bank Authority as approved by the City and County in 2008
2. Discuss impact of proposed amendment to current Georgia Land Bank Statute

Attorney Newton Galloway began the meeting by advising all parties of the origin of the Land Bank Authority. Mr. Galloway explained that the Land Bank Authority was an entity authorized by State Statute and created by both the City & County Commissioners by an Intergovernmental Agreement in 2008. The original members appointed in 2009 were Newton Galloway, John Joiner, Aaron Rockmore and Jim Smith. The Land Bank Authority is the only entity in State Law that is authorized to acquire property without delinquent taxes added on.

Commissioner Dick Morrow questioned could the Land Bank bid on properties that had separate claims other than taxes. Mr. Joiner, Executive Director explained that the bid put forth by the Land Bank Authority could only equate to that which would satisfy the liens, taxes etc. He noted that if another bidder put forth the same bid as the Land Bank Authority, then that bidder cancels out the bid of the Land Bank. Mr. Galloway explained that the only way the Land Bank could acquire property is if the property is subject to tax foreclosure, property is noticed for bid and at the bid nobody appears. At this time by statute the Land Bank Authority is able to bid only the amount of the liens or taxes owed. Mr. Galloway further stated that this practice is governed by State Statute and by the Intergovernmental Agreement between both City & County governments.

Mr. Galloway noted that initially when the Land Bank Authority would bid, they would always lose the bid. He stated that within the last five months vacant subdivision lots have come up in the tax foreclosures. Mr. Galloway added that home foreclosures are not making it to the tax sales. Tax Commissioner Sylvia Hollums noted that most of the homeowners after seeing notices of tax sales are paying off delinquent taxes. Mr. Galloway stated that the Land Bank Authority has been bidding on these vacant subdivision lots.

Mr. Galloway noted that both Boards empowered the Land Bank Authority to be the entity to carryout and acquire property under Neighborhood Stabilization Program funding. Mr. Galloway further explained that the Land Bank Authority came under the understanding that they would not just be acquiring property as stated in the statute but considered a sub recipient of Neighborhood Stabilization Program Funding. Mr. Galloway stated that funding remitted by NSP had to be spent by September 1, 2010 and it was just not enough foreclosures to buy.

Mr. Joiner presented attendees with a spreadsheet detailing the purchases made by the Land Bank Authority. Mr. Galloway then explained the right of redemption. He advised that when the Land Bank Authority acquires property, the owner of that property has a year and a month to redeem property. To redeem property the owner must pay any liens, taxes and interest acquired. After the redemption period has expired then the Land Bank Authority can convey property without tax liens.

Commissioner Gilreath requested the definition and purpose of the Land Bank Authority. Mr. Galloway advised the purpose of the Land Bank Authority was to acquire tax foreclosed property. Mr. Galloway further explained that when the Land Bank Authority acquires property, it takes these properties off of the digest and seizes delinquent taxes. At this point the Land Bank can sell property to a third party and get the taxes back in good standing. Mr. Galloway advised that after the properties have been purchased they are renovated. After renovation they are listed with two contracted real estate agents for sale.

Commissioner Flowers-Taylor questioned the amount of property acquired by the Land Bank Authority that has not been sold. Mr. Galloway advised his frustration with the speed in which property was acquired and being renovated.

Mayor Joanne Todd questioned the balance of funds at the Land Bank Authority. Mr. Galloway advised that for general operations the Authority is dependent upon both Boards for funding. For NSP funds Mr. Joiner works with Frederick Gardiner to prepare applications for reimbursement. Mr. Joiner advised that his salary is totally dependent upon funding from both Boards. Commissioner Flowers-Taylor commented that like the Development Authority, initial funding must come from both Boards. Commissioner Flowers-Taylor stated that \$10,000.00 from both the City & County was initially contributed to the Land Bank Authority. Commissioner Gilreath requested the Land Bank Authority to provide to the board monthly financial statements.

Commissioner Ray stated he thought the Land Bank would purchase only properties in blighted neighborhoods, renovate properties and improve neighborhoods. The purchase of the vacant lots by the Land Bank Authority in the Crescent neighborhoods caused a lot of concerns. Mr. Ray would like the City & County to provide priorities and expectations for the Land Bank Authority.

Mr. Galloway stated that he would like citizens to see purchases made by the Land Bank Authority as improvements in their neighborhoods.

The meeting was adjourned.

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Eddie Freeman, Chairman

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William P. Wilson, Jr.- County Manager

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