

TIMES TELEGRAM

Ilion to consider land bank resolutions

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ILION, N.Y. – The Ilion village board plans to consider resolutions to partner with the Mohawk Valley Land Bank in an effort to deal with some of the village's abandoned properties.

Tolga Morawski, of the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank, attended Wednesday's board meeting to discuss the program and provide the board with a pair of draft resolutions to move ahead with the program.

One resolution states that the village wants to work with the land bank. The other is for what he called a 5/50 split. It states that half of the taxes from any property that the land bank puts back on the tax rolls would go to the land bank for the first five years. He said the split could be done on a parcel-by-parcel basis, but noted that

in order for the land bank to be sustainable, it will require funds in addition to what it can obtain through grants.

Agreeing to the 5/50 split “sends a message to the land bank board that you’re willing to work with us as a partner,” he said. The Little Falls Common Council was the first municipality in Herkimer County to pass the 5/50 resolution.

Morawski said the land bank operates under an “opt-in” model. He pointed out that there are 169 municipalities in the six-county area served by the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank. “We go where we’re wanted. We’re willing to partner with communities that want us.”

Land banks are independent not-for-profit corporations created to redevelop vacant, abandoned, or tax delinquent properties that have a negative effect on their communities. The county or other foreclosing unit must give a property to the land bank. The land bank would then renovate it, stabilize it, deconstruct it to take materials that could be used for other projects and demolish the rest or simply demolish the building.

Morawski noted that the properties the land bank would take over are ones that have been abandoned and the county would not put up for auction because they are in such poor condition. Once the county drops the parcels from the tax rolls, neither the county nor the village or other taxing entities receive any tax

income from the properties. The goal of the land bank is to fight blight and get properties back on the tax rolls.

He said he had looked at properties on Lester Avenue, Maple Place and View Terrace that could be candidates for the program. In the case of the Lester Avenue properties, the houses would likely have to be demolished and the land left as green space or perhaps offered to neighbors, he said.

A slide several years ago in the earthen embankment along the rear of the houses there left them uninhabitable. Village officials looked into having them torn down but found the cost prohibitive.

When the land bank takes over a property that can be rehabilitated, Morawski said, it could go in and fix it up to sell or put together specifications and sell it to a buyer who would have to meet those requirements or return it to the land bank.

The board plans to consider the land bank resolutions at its next board meeting.

Keep Mohawk Valley Beautiful and its parent not-for-profit, the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, led a three-year effort to establish a regional land bank that includes Herkimer, Oneida, Fulton, Montgomery, Otsego, and Schoharie counties.