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Mohawk Valley Economic Development District wants Johnstown to get involved with proposed land bank

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By MICHAEL ANICH , Leader Herald

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Land bank urges city to participate in effort

JOHNSTOWN - The Mohawk Valley Economic Development District wants the city to get more strongly involved in its proposed land bank, but the city isn't ready yet.

"We haven't really had an opportunity," said 3rd Ward Councilwoman Helen Martin at City Hall. "We're still going to think about it."

Article Photos



Tolga Morawski of Keep Mohawk Valley Beautiful speaks to..

Officials promoting MVEDD's six-county land bank again presented a plan to city officials Monday night, but the Common Council took no formal action.

In attendance - as they were at a May council meeting - were two supporters of the plan. They were: Gloversville 3rd Ward Councilman Vincent DeSantis, also a representative of the Gloversville Housing and Neighborhood Improvement Corp.; and Tolga Morawski of Keep Mohawk Valley Beautiful, a standing committee of the MVEDD. Morawski is chairman of KMVB's Land Bank Committee.

The Johnstown council in May voted to support the plan. But Morawski on Monday presented a "sample" resolution for further city involvement in the land bank, and other information.

Under the proposal, Fulton, Montgomery, Herkimer, Oneida, Otsego and Schoharie counties would seek state money for the land bank, which buys foreclosed properties and makes them available for sale to developers or builders. The city of Gloversville has also supported the plan, while Fulton County legislators haven't taken action.

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Morawski said certain municipalities are already proceeding with actual land bank involvement, including Montgomery, Herkimer, Otsego and Schoharie counties, and the city of Utica.

He suggested the city might be able to take further action at its next meeting in August. He said the MVEDD is working with the state Attorney General's Office on the land bank idea, which has a \$17.5 million statewide funding cap. He said \$2-\$4 million might be available for the MVEDD land bank.

"They want to put it out for the new round of land banks," Morawski said.

As much as \$400,000 might be available for land bank projects in the city, he said.

He suggested the council study "areas that are good for Johnstown."

"We're looking to get you thinking about potential projects the city of Johnstown might have," Morawski said.

Michael Anich covers Johnstown and Fulton County news. He can be reached at manich@leaderherald.com.

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