LEWIS COUNTY LAND BANK CORPORATION
DRAFT Inaugural Meeting Minutes

Date: July 23, 2026
Time: 4:00 p.m. – approximately 5:33 p.m.
Location: Lewis County, New York, with virtual participation available
Meeting Type: Inaugural Meeting of the Board of Directors

1. Call to Order

Casandra Buell called the inaugural meeting of the Lewis County Land Bank Corporation to order at 4:00 p.m. in the Lewis County Legislative Chambers. She reviewed the meeting recording notice and virtual meeting procedures and proceeded with introductions and roll call.

2. Roll Call and Introductions

Board members introduced themselves and identified their respective legislative districts or affiliations.

Board Members Present included:

- Timothy Hunt, County Manager
- Patrick Looby, District 1
- Kim Vogt, District 3 (attended virtually)
- Jared Martin, District 4
- Eric Virkler, District 5
- Mary Misek, District 6
- Ryan Salmon, District 8
- Ashley Waite, District 9
- Jerry King, District 10

Absent:

- Jonathan Beller, District 2
- Dan Szalach, District 7

With 9 of 11 members present, both in person and virtually, a quorum was established.

Lewis County Board of Legislators Chairman Larry Dolhof was also in attendance in a non-board capacity.

County staff and resource partners introduced to the Board included:

- Ian Gilbert, Lewis County Attorney
- Harper Barrett, Grant Coordinator, Planning and Community Development
- Roxanne Turck, Director of Development, Naturally Lewis
- Candy Akin, Director of Real Property
- Megan Krokowski, Community Development Specialist, Planning and Community Development

Casandra advised that county departments and partner organizations would provide technical and administrative assistance as the Land Bank becomes established.

3. Purpose and Mission of the Lewis County Land Bank

Casandra reviewed the purpose of the Lewis County Land Bank Corporation and discussed its role in addressing vacant, abandoned, unsafe, and underutilized properties.

Primary objectives discussed included:

- Reclaiming and improving problem properties;
- Reducing blight and stabilizing neighborhoods;
- Supporting housing, business, and other community redevelopment needs;
- Returning properties to productive use and the local tax rolls;
- Supporting redevelopment consistent with local community priorities; and
- Creating opportunities for strategic rehabilitation, demolition, reuse, or transfer of properties.

The Board discussed the flexibility afforded to land banks in acquiring and disposing of property in that a land bank may consider community benefit and proposed use when determining the appropriate disposition of property.

The Board also discussed a land bank's ability to acquire properties through foreclosure transfers, municipal transfers, gifts, or purchases, as well as its ability to address certain liens and title issues.

4. Formation of the Lewis County Land Bank Corporation

Casandra reviewed the process leading to formation of the Corporation.

In March 2026, the Lewis County Board of Legislators authorized creation of the Land Bank and established an eleven-member Board of Directors consisting of one representative from each legislative district and the Lewis County Manager.

The Board was advised that:

- The Corporation is separate from the County;
- Board members are appointed by the Lewis County Board of Legislators;
- Initial terms are staggered to establish future three-year appointment cycles;
- The Empire State Development Corporation approved formation of the Lewis County Land Bank in May 2026; and
- The Articles of Incorporation were subsequently finalized and filed.

Casandra also reviewed prior work completed by the County, including preparation of draft bylaws, policies, organizational documents, state applications, and advocacy for continued New York State Land Bank Initiative funding.

5. Resolution 2026-01 – Initial Terms of Office

The Board reviewed proposed Resolution 2026-01, acknowledging the initial terms of office for members of the inaugural Board of Directors.

The staggered terms were established through prior action of the Lewis County Board of Legislators, with the first one-year terms scheduled to expire March 3, 2027.

A motion was made by Ashley Waite to approve Resolution 2026-01 as written and Jerry King seconded the motion. With no discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

6. Organizational Goals and Measures of Success

Casandra led a discussion on how the Board may define and measure the Land Bank's success.

Potential measures included:

- Vacant properties returned to productive use;
- New or rehabilitated housing units;
- Blighted structures eliminated or rehabilitated;
- Private investment generated;
- Partnerships established with municipalities, developers, and nonprofit organizations;
- Properties returned to the tax rolls; and
- Improvements to neighborhood and community quality of life.

Potential strategic priorities discussed included housing rehabilitation, new housing development, adaptive reuse, downtown redevelopment, public safety projects, brownfield redevelopment, and coordinated investment with municipalities and community partners.

The Board was advised that the first year will likely focus substantially on policy development, organizational structure, securing funding, property identification, and establishment of operating procedures.

7. Land Bank Case Studies

Casandra presented examples of other New York State land banks to illustrate potential operating models and project strategies.

Examples included programs focused on:

- Sale of distressed properties for rehabilitation;
- Categorizing properties for rehabilitation versus demolition;
- Housing needs assessments and data-driven property selection;
- Rehabilitation of abandoned properties for affordable or workforce housing;
- Deed restrictions to preserve long-term affordability;
- Identification of priority properties before acquisition; and
- Strategic redevelopment rather than simply holding tax-foreclosed properties.

The Board discussed the importance of identifying projects based on community impact rather than acquiring properties solely because they become available.

8. Vacant and Blighted Property Inventory

Casandra updated the Board regarding the County's Community Development Block Grant planning award for development of a countywide vacant and blighted property inventory.

The County received approximately $48,500 in grant funding, with a $1,500 local match.

LaBella Associates submitted the lowest responsive proposal at approximately $50,000 and was recommended for award, subject to approval by the Lewis County Board of Legislators, which was expected to be approved at the upcoming August 4th Board of Legislators meeting.

The project is expected to begin following County approval and continue through approximately May 2027.

Anticipated deliverables include:

- A countywide ArcGIS-integrated vacant and blighted property inventory;
- Property photographs and supporting information;
- An objective property evaluation and prioritization framework;
- An interactive GIS StoryMap;
- A companion guide for future inventory updates and redevelopment planning; and
- GIS files for future County and municipal use.

The resulting framework is intended to allow future properties to be evaluated and added to the inventory as conditions change.

9. Open Meetings Law, Ethics, and Board Responsibilities

Casandra advised that the Lewis County Land Bank Corporation is a public benefit corporation and is subject to New York State Open Meetings Law requirements.

Meetings will generally be open to the public, and appropriate public notice and virtual access information will be provided when applicable.

Board members were reminded of their fiduciary and ethical obligations. Any member with a financial or personal interest in a matter before the Board must disclose the conflict, have the disclosure reflected in the minutes, and refrain from participating as appropriate.

Directors, officers, and employees of the Corporation will also be expected to comply with the Lewis County Code of Ethics.

The Board discussed creating separate Land Bank email addresses for members to facilitate official communications, public records compliance, and protection of members' personal email accounts. County staff will coordinate with the Information Technology Department regarding available options.

10. Board Officers

Casandra reviewed the anticipated officer positions identified in the draft bylaws:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer

The Board did not appoint officers at this meeting.

Members were asked to review the noted responsibilities associated with each position in the provided draft bylaws and consider their interest prior to the next meeting.

11. Property Acquisition, Code Enforcement, and Redevelopment

The Board discussed the relationship between the Land Bank, County foreclosure activities, property maintenance enforcement, and redevelopment.

It was clarified that the Land Bank cannot take private property through enforcement. Property may be acquired through purchase, gift, municipal transfer, or other lawful mechanisms.

The Board discussed the potential for stronger coordination between County Code Enforcement and the Land Bank when owners are unable or unwilling to maintain distressed properties.

County representatives advised that Code Enforcement is working to increase property maintenance activity and currently has a substantial list of properties requiring attention.

The Board also discussed:

- Potential acquisition of County-owned foreclosure properties;
- Environmental liability associated with certain properties;
- Opportunities to rehabilitate or demolish structures depending upon condition;
- Use of deed restrictions or other legal mechanisms following disposition; and
- The importance of selecting responsible purchasers or redevelopment partners.

The Board emphasized that property acquisition should be strategic and based upon the Land Bank's established priorities and available resources.

12. Draft Bylaws

Members received draft bylaws for review.

Board members were asked to review the document before the next meeting and identify questions, proposed revisions, or additional provisions for discussion.

County Attorney Ian Gilbert will also continue his legal review of the draft bylaws.

No action was taken on the bylaws at this meeting.

13. Resolution 2026-02 – Interim Administrative Support

The Board considered Resolution 2026-02, authorizing the Lewis County Planning and Community Development Department to provide interim administrative support to the Corporation.

Services will include, as necessary:

- Preparation of meeting agendas and supporting materials;
- Preparation and maintenance of draft meeting minutes;
- Maintenance of corporate records and files;
- Assistance with required organizational filings;

- Coordination of meeting and public notices; and
- General administrative and logistical support.

A motion was made by Ashley Waite to adopt Resolution 2026-02 as written, which was seconded by Patrick Looby. With no discussion, the motion was carried unanimously.

14. Public Notices and Corporation Web Presence

The Board considered the proposed Resolution No. 2026-03, authorizing Land Bank notices, policies, minutes, and other public information to be hosted on the official Lewis County website until such time as the Corporation determines that a separate website is necessary.

The Planning and Community Development Department will coordinate maintenance of the Land Bank's web presence.

A motion was made by Jerry King to adopt Resolution No. 2026-03, as written, which was seconded by Patrick Looby. With no discussion, the motion was carried unanimously.

15. Long-Term Administrative Structure

Casandra presented potential models for long-term management of the Land Bank.

Options discussed included:

1. Hiring an independent Executive Director and staff directly employed by the Corporation;
2. Entering into an agreement with Lewis County for the services of an existing County employee serving in a designated Land Bank leadership role; or
3. Continuing with administrative support from County staff during the organization's startup period.

The Board discussed the relative costs, administrative requirements, independence, and operational capacity associated with each model.

No final decision was made. Members were asked to consider alternatives prior to a future meeting.

16. Resolution 2026-05 – New York State Land Bank Initiative Funding

Casandra reviewed anticipated funding through the New York State Homes and Community Renewal Land Bank Initiative.

The program may provide funding for organizational operations, property maintenance, technical assistance, predevelopment activities, and potentially capital projects.

Because application periods may be brief, the Board considered the proposed Resolution 2026-05, authorizing preparation and submission of an application when the next funding opportunity becomes available.

A motion was made by Eric Virkler to adopt Resolution 2026-05, as written, which was seconded by Ashley Waite. With no discussion, the motion was carried unanimously.

17. Resolution 2026-06 – Corporate Banking Relationships

The Board considered the proposed Resolution 2026-06, authorizing staff to begin investigating and establishing appropriate corporate banking relationships on behalf of the Land Bank.

The Board discussed the need to subsequently designate an approved financial institution and authorized signatories before accounts are formally established. Casandra Buell clarified that she would not establish a banking relationship on behalf of the Corporation without first presenting the available options to the Board and obtaining Board authorization to proceed.

A motion was made by Patrick Looby to adopt Resolution No. 2026-06, as written, which was seconded by Kim Vogt. With no discussion, the motion was carried unanimously.

18. Resolution 2026-07 – Organizational Registrations and Federal Tax Status

The Board considered proposed Resolution 2026-07, authorizing necessary organizational registrations, including obtaining a Federal Employer Identification Number.

The resolution was amended to expressly authorize staff to pursue federal 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status for the Corporation.

A motion was made by Patrick Looby to adopt the Resolution with the additional authorization to pursue federal 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, which was seconded by Mary Misek. With no discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

19. Resolution 2026-04 – Meeting Schedule

The Board discussed establishing a regular meeting schedule.

Members discussed monthly, bi-monthly, and quarterly meetings, along with the ability to call special meetings when necessary.

The Board agreed that another meeting should be scheduled approximately two months from the inaugural meeting and that a permanent meeting schedule could be revisited at that time. Resolution 2026-04 was tabled.

Casandra will distribute a scheduling poll for the next meeting. The Board generally indicated that a 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. meeting time was workable. Additionally, members expressed a preference to avoid Wednesdays and Fridays, where possible.

20. Items for the Next Meeting

Members were asked to prepare for further discussion and potential action regarding:

- Adoption or revision of the bylaws;
- Development of an acquisition and disposition policy;
- Election of Board officers;
- Long-term administrative and staffing structure;
- Selection of a banking institution;
- Designation of authorized banking signatories;

- Financial policies;
- Procurement policies;
- Records retention policies;
- Insurance coverage; and
- Future meeting schedule.

County staff will also continue efforts to establish Land Bank email addresses for Board members.

21. Other Business

No additional formal business was presented.

22. Adjournment

A motion was made by Eric Virkler to adjourn the meeting, and Patrick Looby seconded the motion. No discussion was had, and the motion to adjourn the meeting was carried unanimously.

The inaugural meeting of the Lewis County Land Bank Corporation was adjourned at approximately 5:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Casandra Buell
Lewis County Planning and Community Development
Interim Administrative Support

Draft minutes subject to review and approval by the Lewis County Land Bank Corporation Board of Directors.