



Hazle Township Land Bank  
Hazle Township Commons  
101 W 27th Street  
Hazle Township, PA 18202

**Meeting Minutes**

**Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Hazle Township Land Bank Meeting was called to order at 12:00pm on December 4th, 2025 by Vice Chair Michael DeCosmo Sr.

<b><u>Members Present:</u></b>	<b><u>Members Absent:</u></b>
James Montone	
Anthony Griguoli	
John Chirico	
Michael DeCosmo, Sr.	
Robert Fiume	

**Others Present:**

Hailstone Economic – Ted Ritsick  
Slusser Law Firm - Attorney James Brando  
Hazle Township Code Enforcement - Chuck Krone

**Public Comment**

N/A

**Minutes:**

**A. Approval of 10.24.2025 Meeting Minutes**

**Motion:** Mr. Montone **2nd:** Mr. Grigouli  
Motion passes unanimously.

**Financial Report**

**A. Hailstone Economic Invoice #1707 for \$10,000**

**Motion to Approve:** Mr. Grigouli **2nd:** Mr. Montone  
Motion passes unanimously.

**Staff Reports**

**A. Solicitor Report**

a. N/A

**B. Administrator Report**

a. Mr. Ritsick provided an update on startup tasks. Items later in the agenda will allow for a finalization of the startup tasks. An insurance policy for the board will protect members from decisions made in conducting official business.

## **Unfinished Business**

### **A. Discussion and motions on future property purchases and transfers.**

- a. Mr. Ritsick outlined the steps for the Hazle Township Land bank to purchase a property at upset sale auction, trump bid at judicial sale, and request to purchase from the county at repository sale.

### **B. Discussion and motions on 2026 budget**

- a. Mr. Ritsick outlined the process for designing a budget through backfill of a fixed amount, or determination of acquisition. Board members discussed funding through general fund and grant dollars.

Due to the timing of the Land Bank establishment, PHARE, Statewide LSA, Luzerne LSA, and Luzerne County's Property Transfer fee will not be able to apply until 2026, and funds will not be received until 2027. The Land Bank can use contracted services or use municipal capacity to apply for grants at its discretion.

Mr. Ritsick and Attorney Brando outlined the interplay between municipal code enforcement, condemnation and utilization of the Land Bank. Mr. Ritsick explained that the Land Bank could be used as a tool to approach blighted property owners and accept donations of the property. By the HTLB applying as a 501(c)3, people have an incentive to donate and receive a tax deduction. The deduction would be determined by the individual donating the property, and it does not fall on the HTLB.

Mr. Ritsick the process of accepting a donation through a title search, legal review, then action at a HTLB meeting. The HTLB can also purchase property via the open market.

Cash flow to purchase properties in the 2026 judicial sale is not needed until mid-2026. Mr. Ritsick discussed a sample budget provided in the budget, and advised that demolition would be the most costly line item.

Mr. DeCosmo asked about return on investment from the Land Bank. Mr. Ritsick explained that the return from the land bank would be the result of a ripple effect from removal of blighted structures which in turn would increase property value over decades through turnover of higher value properties and reduction of crime.

Attorney Brando advised that the budget reflect remediation of the greatest and most imminent health and safety issues. Mr. DeCosmo discussed code enforcement partnering with the HTLB to provide a list of the worse properties.

Mr. Ritsick explained that the Land Bank could eventually be used to ensure properties purchased at tax sale could go to priority groups like first time homebuyers and primary residents. A good first step would be to find high problem blighted structures, demolish, and sell the lots to neighbors.

Mr. Krone reported that the Township was aware of blighted properties, but few were accessible at the tax sale. Many available on the list were vacant properties in Eagle Rock. The HTLB is a vehicle for acquisition with policy implications to be determined by the board. Hazle Township also has the option to transfer township owned properties to the Land Bank for disposition and sale.

Mr. DeCosmo inquired about the order of using funds. Do municipal funds need to be used before grant dollars? Mr. Ritsick explained that the answer was no, and dollars like the Luzerne County Funds and LSA would have a lower administrative burden versus PHARE and federal funds. The best approach is to leverage HTLB general fund dollars and leverage it with LSA and other funds.

**C. Discussion and motions on future property purchases and transfers.**

Discussion above was rolled into this agenda item. No action was taken.

**D. Discussion and motions on bylaws and policies**

Mr. Ritsick provided a copy of policies utilized by the Lower South Valley Land bank for review by members. Policies largely center around a sale of property.

**E. Discussion and motions on insurance policies**

A budget would be needed for an insurance policy.

**New Business**

N/A

**Adjournment**

**Motion:** Mr. Montone – 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mr. Fiume

Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned 1:08pm.