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FAYETTE WILL BE FIRST TO ADOPT LAND BANK LEGISLATION

Uniontown, PA – Fayette County will continue paving the way for local redevelopment authorities to fight community blight when it becomes the first in the state to grant land bank powers to their redevelopment authority, in accordance with Pennsylvania Act 33 of 2018.

Introduced by Fayette County resident and state Sen. Pat Stefano, R-Bullskin Township, last year and signed into law by Gov. Tom Wolf in June, Act 33 will grant redevelopment authorities the same powers currently allotted to land banks through the Pennsylvania Land Bank Act.

The new legislation, which will enable redevelopment authorities to take an even more active role in acquiring and rehabilitating blighted properties and neighborhoods, was passed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives in rare, consecutive unanimous votes.

Of its success, Stefano hailed the legislation as an important tool to combat a growing problem affecting many communities.

“Unfortunately, blight is like a cancer that spreads rapidly through our neighborhoods and risks the safety and economic vitality of the communities we serve,” Stefano said while addressing colleagues in Harrisburg. “In my district, several areas looked into forming a land bank but found the start-up costs and the recurring costs to maintain it too expensive.”

In many of the 16 land banks that formed following the Land Bank Act’s passage five years ago, Stefano said, local redevelopment authorities have led the way for the operations. Allowing them to now act as their own land banks eliminates redundancy and is a huge cost-savings, he added.

“Since our inception, the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority has essentially been implementing the same types of projects and initiatives undertaken by land banks,” Fayette County Redevelopment Authority Executive Director Andrew French said. “Act 33 and the ordinance being considered by the Commissioners will provide us official land bank powers and give us one more tool to help fight blight in Fayette County.”



In support of his assertion that redevelopment authorities across the Commonwealth have traditionally performed land bank functions, French indicated that since the Land Bank Act's passage, the redevelopment authority has acquired and rehabilitated nine properties for resale to low-income homebuyers; rehabilitated 33 owner-occupied residential properties; demolished over 40 residential blighted properties and seven commercial blighted properties; and aided in the construction of over 40 new homes for sale to first-time, low-income homebuyers.

In total, French said, the authority has invested over \$7.1 million in those efforts using a variety of local, state and federal resources.

"In Fayette County, these projects have had a tremendous impact on stabilizing our most fragile communities and have had a significant secondary impact of creating additional revenue for the impacted municipalities," French said.

Fayette County Commissioners Vince Vicites, Dave Lohr and Angela Zimmerlink voted unanimously Tuesday to place the new legislation on the agenda for their Sept. 20 meeting, when the matter is expected to be approved.

"While this ordinance isn't official yet, I am optimistic and appreciative of the leadership and support the County Commissioners have taken over the past several years in providing the tools and resources for us to fight blight throughout the county" French said. "Because Sen. Stefano and our entire legislative delegation have been so instrumental in starting this process, and seeing it through to its final passage, Fayette County wanted to remain on the forefront and be the first to designate their redevelopment authority as the official Fayette County Land Bank."

For more information, contact French at 724-437-1547, ext. 210, or afrench@racfpa.org.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.info.

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