

City of Auburn

City Council, Auburn, Maine

Date: July 6, 2009

**TITLE: RESOLVE – AMENDMENT TO THE POLICY REGARDING THE
ACQUISITION AND DISPOSITION OF TAX ACQUIRED
PROPERTY**

Be It Resolved by the Auburn City Council, that the attached policy regarding the acquisition and disposition of tax acquired property is hereby approved as amended.

Motion for acceptance: Ronald Potvin

Seconded by: Robert Hayes

Vote: 6 Yeas with Councilor Herrick voting Nay

Action by the City Council: Passed

Date: July 6, 2009

Attest: 
City Clerk

City Council

Agenda Information Sheet

Council Meeting Date: 7/6/2009

Agenda Item No. 4

SUBJECT:

**RESOLVE – AMENDMENT TO THE POLICY REGARDING THE
ACQUISITION AND DISPOSITION OF TAX ACQUIRED
PROPERTY**

INFORMATION:

The City Council has collaborated with staff to amend the tax acquired policy to ensure that abutters receive notification of all tax-acquired property sales and that the Council be given the latitude to review a variety of concerns and issues when disposing of said property. The policy will also require a minimum bid of 50% of assessed value. This item was discussed at the June 15th City Council Workshop.

STAFF COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATION:

The City Manager recommends passage of this resolve.

REQUESTED ACTION:

Motion for passage of the resolve.

VOTE:



City of Auburn

Policy Regarding the Acquisition and Disposition of Tax Acquired Property

Article 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a procedure for the management, administration and disposition of real property acquired due to non-payment of taxes in accordance with Title 36 MRSA Sections 942 and 943 as amended. It is in the City's and the residents' best interest to have a clear policy with respect to the disposal of tax acquired property and to have that property disposed of efficiently as possible in order to:

- Return properties to the tax rolls;
- Reduce the opportunity for neighborhood blight by not having buildings or lots sit vacant and untended, thus potentially becoming an eyesore and a target for vandalism;
- Preserve neighborhoods by having properties sold in a timely manner, thus reducing the likelihood of deterioration or becoming dilapidated.

Article 2. Administration – "Tax Acquired Property Management Committee"

Section 2.1 Committee Established. The City Manager will appoint a staff committee which will be called the "Tax Acquired Property Management Committee".

Section 2.2 Committee Composition. The committee will have representation from those departments as determined by the City Manager which have a direct relationship to property administration in the City of Auburn. Permanent members of the committee will be the Finance Director, Tax Collector, Purchasing Agent and a representative of the City Manager's Office. The City Manager will name the committee chairperson.

Section 2.3 Meetings. The Committee will meet as often as necessary to carry out the duties and responsibilities set forth in this policy.

Article 3. Duties and Responsibilities of the City Tax Collector and the Committee

Section 3.1 Review of Properties. At least forty five (45) days prior to the foreclosure date, the City Tax Collector shall identify each property on the list and notify all members of the committee of the impending foreclosure. The identification shall include, but is not limited to, the following: property tax map and lot number, property owner name, property location by street address, current property use if improved with buildings, and any other information available that the Tax Collector feels will be helpful to the committee.

Section 3.2 Notice to Departments. The Tax Collector shall notify the following departments of the impending foreclosure, and provide the list of properties and the same information as provided to the committee: the City Manager, Community Development, Assessing Department, Economic Development, Planning and Code Enforcement, Parks and Recreation, Public Works Department, Engineering Division, Fire Department, Police Department, and City Clerk. In addition to the above named City departments, the Tax Collector will notify the Auburn Water District, the Auburn Sewer District and any other persons requesting such notification.

Section 3.3 Request for Department Review. At the time of the notice, the Tax Collector will request the departments to review the property list for the purpose of advising the committee of any properties which the City should not acquire through the lien foreclosure process. When appropriate, the department should perform a field visit to the property. In reviewing the list, each department will consider the criteria and guidelines established in this policy and by the Committee.

In order for the Committee to perform its work, each department must conduct its review and return its written findings and recommendations to the Tax Collector within five (5) business days.

~~**Section 3.4 Guidelines Regarding the Sale or Disposition of Tax Acquired Property.** All tax acquired properties will automatically be eligible for disposition immediately following foreclosure by the City with the following exceptions:~~

- ~~• In cases where the City has negotiated a payment plan with the owner for back taxes prior to foreclosure, and payments are being made accordingly; and~~
- ~~• In cases where the City wishes to retain ownership for municipal purposes, such as open space, public improvements, sewers, storm drains, parks and recreation, public safety, transportation, education, right of ways, storage areas, etc., or the City wishes to convey the property for a use which serves the City's interests.~~

Section 3.4 Guidelines for reviewing

When reviewing properties that may be subject to foreclosure, the Committee and the affected departments will, at a minimum, consider the following guidelines and criteria in determining whether the City should: (1) retain the property for public use, (2) sell the property, or (3) waive foreclosure:

- the property is either unfit or unnecessary for City use;
- the City wishes to retain ownership for municipal purposes;
- the property is adjacent to publicly owned land;
- there are buildings on the property that should be demolished;
- there are environmental liabilities or hazards present on the site;
- the property has investment or marketable value;
- there are uses that the property is suited for which meet the requirements of the City's zoning and land use ordinance;
- the property has value only to an abutter (provides additional set back, off

street parking, etc.).

The Committee may consider additional criteria in formulating its recommendation to the Manager and City Council regarding disposition of the property.

Section 3.5 Committee Action/Recommendations. The committee will meet to review the comments received from each department. The Committee will then forward a recommendation to the City Manager for appropriate action. The Committee will meet in sufficient time before the foreclosure deadline in order for the City Manager and City Council to have sufficient time to take any action that may be necessary, including waiver of foreclosure.

Article 4. Sale and Marketing of Tax Acquired Properties

The City of Auburn will dispose of tax acquired properties by the following method.

Section 4.1 Guidelines Regarding the Sale or Disposition of Tax Acquired Property. All tax acquired properties will automatically be eligible for disposition immediately following foreclosure by the City with the following exceptions:

- In cases where the City has negotiated a payment plan with the owner for back taxes - prior to foreclosure, and payments are being made accordingly; and
- In cases where the City wishes to retain ownership for municipal purposes, such as open space, public improvements, sewers, storm drains, parks and recreation, public safety, transportation, education, right of ways, storage areas, etc., or the City wishes to convey the property for a use which serves the City's interests.

Section 4.12 Sale to the Prior Owner. The City will first offer tax acquired property to the prior owner, it shall be offered upon the following conditions: Upon acquiring a property, the Tax Collector shall notify the prior owner that they have thirty (30) days within which to inform the City if they intend to redeem the foreclosed property. To redeem the property, the prior owner must pay all taxes assessed and unpaid, all interest on those unpaid taxes, all costs associated with the lien and foreclosure process and the estimated next fiscal year's property taxes if the redemption occurs after April 1st. If the prior owner has not entered into a payment plan or has not redeemed the property within sixty (60) days of the date of notification by the City, the City will proceed with the disposition in accordance with this policy. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to create any entitlement of reconveyance.

Section 4.23 Sale to Abutters. In the event the prior owner has declined or is unable to buy the property within the timeframe specified in Section 4.1, the property will be offered-advertised for sale to all immediate abutters and the general public. Immediate abutters will receive notice by certified mail and notice to the public will be by generally accepted means. requesting a bid for -All notices will require a minimum bid of 50% of the assessed value of the property. When selling any property the Council will take into consideration:

- Whether the lot is nonconforming and/or unbuildable.
- The needs of abutting properties for additional land to meet current zoning

requirements.

- The plans for neighborhood development or master planning and the potential effect on the neighborhood.
- The minimum bid price.

The Council will determine the outcome of all tax-acquired bids and reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal it receives.

~~If there is more than one acceptable proposal, and unless the City chooses to withdraw the property from the market, the highest offer will be accepted. The City will provide tax title only through a quit claim deed.~~

Section 4.3-4 Public Sales. Depending on the type of property and its value, the City may use a variety of marketing methods, as indicated below. Regardless of the method, the City reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal it receives. The Finance Department will maintain an updated list of all tax acquired properties which are available for sale and which will be provided to the public upon request.

i. Sealed Bids. The City may offer properties for sale by sealed bid in conformance with the City charter and applicable statutes. This sale will be conducted by the City's Purchasing Agent ~~within 90 days of the date of foreclosure.~~ The City retains the sole discretion to accept or reject any bid depending on whether the City determines a bid proposal meets the City's objectives.

ii. Request for Proposals. The City may solicit proposals using an RFP process.

iii. Real Estate Broker Contract. Vacant land, commercial, industrial, residential and multi-family residential properties which are determined to have investment or high sale value will be identified with a disclosure statement describing all property attributes. This disclosure statement will be obtained from the Assessing Department based on the available record and a field inspection when entry to the property can be obtained. The City may place these properties with a professional real estate broker to be marketed. If the properties are placed with a professional broker, they will be given a deadline within which to sell the property. If the property is not sold within that timeframe, thereafter if any broker produces a purchaser, which results in a sale, the broker will receive a commission.

Section 4.34. Rejection of Bid or Purchase Offer. All properties will be sold at a price acceptable to meet the City's priorities for reuse, taking into consideration the assessed value, the property's current condition, and potential use. Nothing in this policy shall limit or modify the discretion of the City Manager or the City Council to reject any bid offer to purchase, should they deem it in the best interests of the City to do so. All properties must be sold for uses in keeping with the City's zoning ordinance. The City may place criteria on the disposition of any property that meet or further the City's objectives including: the density of development, design standards, the intended use

(even when the particular use is allowed in that zone), and evidence of the buyer's financial ability to develop the property.

Article 5. Occupied Residential Properties. Prior to the conveyance by the City of a foreclosed residential property, the City will manage the property in accordance with the provisions of Title 14 MRSA Section 8104-A. The purpose for this provision is to avoid any liability, or management responsibility with regard to ownership of the property.

The City may notify the occupants that the property has been foreclosed and is in the possession of the City of Auburn. The City may choose to evict the occupants in accordance with the law. If the City allows the occupants to continue to reside in the building, the City will notify the occupants that it will perform no maintenance on the property or buildings, that the City will accept no financial obligations or responsibilities to operate the buildings and that the continued occupancy of the property is at the sole discretion and risk of the tenant or leasee.

Adopted by the Auburn City Council February 17, 1998
Amended by the Auburn City Council: January 29, 2009
Amended by the Auburn City Council: July 6, 2009