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Commission voices support for creation of land bank

(KNZA)--The Hiawatha City Commission Monday evening heard about the creation of a land bank to manage and dispose of derelict properties in the community.

Hiawatha Foundation for Economic Development Director Mikaela Moore met with the Commission to discuss the formation of a local land bank.

Moore said land banks has been something HFED has been discussing, on and off, for the last couple of years but with the tax sale last December it became really apparent there are a lot of properties that would be well suited if there was a local land bank.

Moore said the major benefit of having a local land bank is that any property held in the land bank or owned by the land bank is not taxed. The goal is to have those lots be repurposed for something better—parks, green space, community gardens or even to sell for redevelopment. The land bank can acquire properties through donation or purchase.

Moore said the Kansas Legislature approved legislation in 2006 authorizing cities to create land banks and in 2009 passed legislation allowing counties to create land banks.

Currently, there are 19 Kansas cities that operate land banks and one county.

Commissioners voiced support for the creation of a land bank.

An ordinance creating a land bank will be drafted for the commission's approval at a their next meeting.

The land bank would be overseen by a five-person board appointed by the Commission.

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