



**Minutes of the Annual Meeting
of the Board of Commissioners of the
Housing Authority of the City of Everett**

November 9, 2020

Meeting Called to Order

The Annual Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Everett was called to order by Chair Allison Warren-Barbour at 12:17 p.m. on Monday, November 9, 2020. This meeting was held via Zoom videoconference as an emergency measure to prevent the spread of the COVID coronavirus.

Commissioners Present at Roll Call:

Chair Allison Warren-Barbour
Commissioner Chip Burgess
Commissioner Koren Smith

Commissioner Benjamin Young
Commissioner Tammy Williamson

Commissioners Absent:

Commissioner George Perez, Jr.

Also in attendance were:

Staff:

Ashley Lommers-Johnson, Executive Director
John Forsyth, Director of Housing Operations
Jason Morrow, Director of Development
Wendy Blain, Director of Finance
Linda Manning, Director of Human Resources and Administration
Wendy Westby, HCV Program Director
Tony Nabors, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Kristen Cane, Temporary Real Estate Advisor to the Executive Director
Janinna Attick, Senior Policy Analyst
Chris Neblett, Hearing Officer/Administrative Coordinator
Jaysen Garcia, Executive Assistant

Guests:

Becky Ableman McCrary, City of Everett

Administration of Oath of Office to Commissioner Koren Smith

Chair Warren-Barbour administered the oath of office to Koren Smith, re-appointing her as a commissioner to a five-year term ending October 6, 2025.

Election of Officers

Chair Warren-Barbour called for nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair for respective one-year terms, pursuant to Article II, Section II of the Housing Authority's Bylaws. Commissioner Young nominated Ms. Warren-Barbour to serve another term as Chair, Commissioner Smith seconded, and there were no further nominations. Commissioner Burgess nominated Commissioner Young for Vice-Chair, Commissioner Smith seconded, and there were no further nominations. Commissioner Burgess moved to elect this slate of candidates to their respective offices, Commissioner Smith seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Communications

Chair Warren-Barbour polled the commissioners on their availability for a mid-December special meeting, which will include a hearing on the Housing Authority's Moving to Work application and Plan. All were available for a noon meeting on Monday, December 14.

Public Comment

City of Everett representative Becky McCrary provided an update on the City's resumed efforts to develop a Housing Action Plan and the steps this will entail, including community outreach and the appointment of a committee composed of various members of the City's Boards and Commissions for which the Housing Authority's real estate advisor Kristen Cane will act as a subject matter expert. Ms. McCrary said the first in a series of community meetings and chat sessions was planned for December 8 and was expected to provide firsthand information with respect to the community's the broad spectrum of housing needs and barriers to meeting those needs, as well as other pressing issues such as homelessness.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Lommers-Johnson noted his report would include presentations from other members of the senior management team, given the numerous developments that had taken place over the past few weeks. As a first topic, the Executive Director reflected on the impact the recent election results may have on Federal housing program funding. Although he was hopeful for a funding increase under a Biden administration, he also recognized that much depended on which party had a majority in the Senate, which was still undecided, and the results of the House mid-term elections in a couple of years. Recalling how a split government stifled initiatives proposed by the Obama administration and played spoiler to some of the cuts proposed by the Trump administration, he was hopeful that Congress would align with a Biden administration, as this could mean an increase to corporate tax rates that would favor the LIHTC program, as well as new Voucher funding resulting from pandemic-related stimulus funding.

The Executive Director next informed the Board that plans to sell a majority portion of Baker Heights – a minimum of 10 acres at a sale price of \$13.5 million per the memorandum of understanding – to Washington State University would not be going forward. Terms of the MOU called for WSU to make up the difference between the purchase cost and a \$10 million state grant by leasing units on the property; however, the condition of those units made that untenable, and an alternative proposal was not forthcoming. This left the Housing Authority with three options for disposing of the parcel: selling it at fair market value by competitive bid (although the Executive Director noted we may not be in a seller's market at this time), developing an additional 300 to 400 mixed income units on the site, or pursuing a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Grant to transform Baker Heights and the surrounding neighborhood.

Continuing on the topic of the Baker Heights disposition, the Executive Director said that if the site is sold to a private developer, it will be necessary to engage community stakeholders and residents of the Delta Neighborhood, including those who live in Housing Authority properties, to come up with a master plan that sets the parameters for development. At the request of the Executive Director, Director of Development Jason Morrow explained how a feasibility analysis – an assessment of what the regulatory landscape will allow based on the property's physical features – would serve as a helpful starting point in evaluating disposition options for the parcel. Commissioner Young expressed a strong opinion that, in keeping with the Housing Authority's mission, disposition plans for the site should focus on creating equity rather than seeking maximum profit. The Executive Director said that Director Morrow would provide a more detailed update on phase one of the Baker Heights redevelopment at the next Board meeting.

Director of Housing Operations John Forsyth gave an update on the Housing Authority's pandemic response. He began by noting that the number of COVID cases within the County recently reached a level not seen since March, then provided some statistics on how COVID has impacted Housing Authority residents: e.g., 23 residents have tested positive for COVID to date, with four positive tests this month; and three residents have died, the most recent death occurring at a senior property over the past weekend. Although positive cases among Housing Authority staff have remained low, two staff members who work remotely tested positive this month. Strict tracking protocols for staff who must visit Housing Authority offices and residential buildings remained in effect, and management continued to keep staff abreast of developments and to work with the County Health District to keep its mitigation efforts in line with current recommendations. Director Forsyth said plans to re-open Housing Authority offices at the start of the year would be delayed due to the upward trend in positive cases. In conclusion, he noted that the closing of community rooms and other restrictions have been hard on residents, particularly those with mental health challenges, and staff have been working to find ways to assist during this difficult time, such as through food deliveries.

Senior Policy Analyst Janinna Attick, the lead for developing the Housing Authority's application for the Moving to Work Demonstration Program (MTW), updated the Board on progress to date with that undertaking. She provided some background information about MTW's statutory objectives and the key flexibilities it will offer in the administration of the Housing Authority's programs before explaining how, if admitted, the Housing Authority will be part of a cohort tasked with studying the effects of rent reform policies on non-elderly, non-disabled households, through the implementation of tiered rents. Ms. Attick then provided a timeline going forward: the draft MTW Plan will be released for public comment

on November 17, then will be subject to a public hearing at a special Board meeting on December 14, and finally will be presented for adoption by the Board at a January special meeting before it is submitted to HUD by a deadline of January 8, 2021.

Kristen Cane, who is serving as a temporary real estate advisor to the Executive Director, briefed the Board on the Housing Authority's plans to potentially convert its nine senior (age 62+) Section 202 Project Rental Assistance Contract (PRAC) housing developments to the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program. Ms. Cane said such a move would likely provide the financial resources needed to shore up operations at these properties and provide for their long-term capital needs, as HUD has historically underfunded the 202 PRAC program. She outlined the major steps involved with submitting a RAD for PRAC application, beginning with today's submittal of a Confirmation of Interest letter to HUD for the conversion of nine properties in the 202 PRAC portfolio to RAD Project-Based Voucher contracts. Further steps will include resident outreach, environmental reviews, and Capital Needs Assessments. If HUD grants approval, each property will convert to RAD on a rolling basis over the course of 2022, upon expiration of their respective PRAC contracts. Ms. Cane concluded by elaborating on some of the benefits of a RAD conversion, which included a greatly reduced administrative burden for their management. Next steps in the application process will include procuring Capital Needs Assessment reports for each property and then submitting the first round of rent increase requests – which are relative to the capital needs of each property – starting in December. Ms. Cane said the Housing Authority would have a better idea of the feasibility of converting the 202 PRAC properties to RAD based on HUD's response to the requests to raise rents. She planned to provide a more detailed presentation to the Board on those outcomes in February 2021.

Director of Diversity Equity and Inclusion Tony Nabors updated the Board on his work over the past couple of months and going into 2021. He noted it has been necessary for now to place a greater focus on policy, processes, and procedures; however, he has continued to build upon his efforts to normalize DEI within the agency through education, organizational culture, and external networking. He recapped his educational outreach to Housing Authority staff, including an internal Institutional Racism workshop, one on one meetings with the senior management team, and a microaggressions training provided by a consultant he learned about through Leadership Snohomish County's Step-Up Conference, with an internal follow up training. Director Nabors recently completed Leadership Snohomish County's six-month racial equity cohort, and he said the Housing Authority received LSC's Community Partner Award, mainly in response to its collaboration in organizing the Step-Up conference. Director Nabors concluded by discussing the policy work he has been engaged in as of late, including facilitating staff workgroups to assist with the development of policies and messaging for tenants around holiday decorations, and development of an anti-racist tenant policy.

Finance Director Wendy Blain informed the Board that the Executive Director recently approved a two percent (of annual salary) one-time payment to all staff, to be paid in early December. This was a result of the Housing Authority's better than expected performance over the previous fiscal year and the fact that the current year's budget only allowed for a one percent increase for staff. Director Blain said the total payment of around \$152,000 will come out of the previous fiscal year's reserve funds. She said this payment will not impact future budgets and will not require Board approval, giving that this year's budget allowed for some flexibility in that regard.

HCV Director Wendy Westby shared an update on the results of the first round of waitlist selections for Mainstream Vouchers. She noted that these Vouchers are designated for families with a head, co-head, or adult family member who is under 62 and disabled. Of the 50 families pulled from the waitlist, 26 were issued Vouchers and 25 leased-up, a 96% success rate. Director Westby recognized this great achievement as testament to the resourcefulness of her staff, considering that the pandemic has required briefings and follow-ups to be done remotely. The average search time (Voucher issuance to lease-up) for this group was 62 days, down from a historical average of 80 days, which Director Westby attributed to additional services that have been made available to her team to aid families in their search. The Executive director commented that a lease-up success rate of 96% was unheard of, especially in a time of pandemic, and he congratulated Director Westby and her team for their excellent work.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Warren-Barbour called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting held on September 28, 2020. Commissioner Burgess moved for approval, Commissioner Young seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Consent Agenda

Chair Warren-Barbour called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which consisted of a single item: Acceptance of Executive Director's Report on Write-offs of Tenant Accounts Receivable. Commissioner Young moved to approve the consent agenda, Commissioner Burgess seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Items for Individual Consideration

Resolution No. 1500 Approving Section 125 Cafeteria Plan for 2021

Director of Finance Wendy Blain said this resolution authorized the employee paid portion of the medical insurance benefit to be deducted from pre-tax dollars over the next calendar year. The plan administrator requires this resolution to be adopted at this time each year.

Commissioner Young moved to adopt the resolution, Commissioner Smith seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Policy Discussion

None

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Warren-Barbour called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Smith motioned as requested, Commissioner Young seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, ending the meeting at 1:48 p.m.


Allison Warren-Barbour (Dec 15, 2020 07:05 PST)

Chair, Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:



Secretary

Annual Board Mtg Minutes 20201109

Final Audit Report

2020-12-15

Created:	2020-12-14
By:	Chris Neblett (chrisn@evha.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAg-jya7pNRkeFAZgNkxCn89WhwqUHGiyM

"Annual Board Mtg Minutes 20201109" History

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2020-12-14 - 10:02:36 PM GMT- IP address: 73.221.165.67
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2020-12-14 - 10:03:09 PM GMT
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2020-12-14 - 10:13:02 PM GMT- IP address: 73.11.169.193
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2020-12-14 - 10:13:17 PM GMT
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2020-12-15 - 3:05:13 PM GMT- IP address: 24.22.163.59
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Signature Date: 2020-12-15 - 3:05:37 PM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 24.22.163.59
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