



**Minutes of the Special Meeting  
of the Board of Commissioners of the  
Housing Authority of the City of Everett  
Board of Commissioners and Senior Staff Retreat,  
Inn at Port Ludlow, Port Ludlow, WA**

**December 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**Meeting Called to Order**

The Special meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Everett was called to order at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, December 3, 2014, at the Resort at Port Ludlow, One Heron Road, Port Ludlow, Washington.

**Commissioners Present at Roll Call:**

Chair Michele Rastovich  
Vice Chair Todd Taylor  
Commissioner Maddy Metzger-Utt  
Commissioner Lyle Ryan  
Commissioner George Perez, Jr.  
Commissioner John Mierke (via teleconference/Skype)

**Commissioners Absent:**

None

**Also in attendance:**

**Staff:**

Ashley Lommers-Johnson, Executive Director  
Rick Dorris, Assistant Executive Director/Director of Development and Acquisitions  
Jill Stanton, Director of Finance  
Gwen Danforth, Human Resources Manager  
Teena Ellison, Director of Resident Services  
Steve Yago, Director of Housing Management  
Wendy Westby, Director of HCV Program

Erica Koenig, Deputy Director of Housing Management  
Chris Neblett, Hearing Officer/Administrative Coordinator  
Katie Ulvestad, Executive and Development Assistant

**Guests:**

Jim Brawner, President of Brawner Real Estate Development and Consulting  
Ronald Oldham, Nonprofit Organization Management Consultant

**Agenda Items – Day 1**

***Programs, Population, Fiscal Information Session: Past, Present and Future***

Executive Director Ashley Lommers-Johnson began the retreat by clarifying to the Board and those present that the purpose of the retreat was to develop a vision and strategic goals for the Agency. Mr. Lommers-Johnson articulated that this would enable the production of a clear Five-Year Plan for the Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing programs for submission to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as broader strategic goals for the Authority as a whole. In order to provide context and a baseline for the discussion of these goals, this initial session outlined Everett Housing Authority's programs, populations served, and fiscal information.

Mr. Lommers-Johnson discussed the concept of Area Median Income (AMI) relative to the population EHA serves; for example, 83 percent of the households served by the Authority serves are below 30 percent of AMI, while 14 percent fall between 31 and 50 percent of AMI.

The Board also heard various members of the EHA senior staff provide overviews of the various programs that the Authority currently operates. Mr. Lommers-Johnson discussed the public housing program, HCV Director Wendy Westby discussed the housing choice voucher program and project-based voucher program, and Director of Housing Management Steve Yago discussed the low income housing tax credit and HUD 202 programs. This portion of the meeting concluded with a discussion of the agency's blended-subsidy properties, presented by Assistant Director of Housing Management Erica Koenig.

***"How should we spend/invest \$15 to \$20 million?"***

The afternoon session shifted focus to the Authority's current financial condition, and how this positioned it for development or acquisition opportunities that would serve as solid investments, in addition to expanding the agency's housing portfolio. In order for those present to develop a clear understanding of EHA's current financial position, Finance Director Jill Stanton gave a comprehensive presentation on the Authority's fiscal status, including its various revenue sources. Intricacies of restricted and unrestricted

funds were discussed at length. The group also discussed the opportunities that the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program offers the agency.

Following Ms. Stanton's segment, consultant Jim Brawner, President of Brawner Real Estate Development and Consulting, gave a presentation. He described the 4 percent and 9 percent Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LITCH) programs, as well as other financing options. Mr. Brawner articulated various ways the Authority could invest its unrestricted capital funds through new development and/or the acquisition of affordable real estate. He presented various investment scenarios, and their respective advantages and disadvantages. This was followed by a lengthy and thoughtful discussion on the populations that could be served through each of these various options, and how the agency could optimally position itself to meet the housing needs of the Greater Everett area in the years to come.

***Baker Heights Options: RAD, Section 18 Demolition/Disposition, Choice Neighborhoods Planning and or Implementation Grant***

Mr. Lommers-Johnson said management would need to move forward with a viable plan for the future of Baker Heights within the next year. He talked about HUD's policies regarding demolition and disposition of public housing assets and how one or both were the only viable options at this point, as the cost to renovate the existing housing units at Baker Heights would exceed 90% of the total cost of replacement. It was explained that HUD's approval of an application for demolition and/or disposition of Baker Heights would result in the issuance of tenant protection vouchers, enabling the existing tenants to relocate. Mr. Lommers-Johnson also talked about the possibility of submitting an application for the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative for an adjacent property, 12 Pines, and how this would in turn provide an avenue to redeveloping the surrounding area, including Baker Heights.

Following this discussion, Mr. Lommers-Johnson asked each member of the Board and Senior Staff to set a vision for the future of the agency by coming up with a newspaper or periodical headline that described the Authority's success 5 to 10 years into the future. In addition, he asked each person to develop a new name for the Everett Housing Authority. The meeting was then adjourned for dinner. Mr. Lommers-Johnson subsequently announced that the results of this vision setting exercise would be shared and discussed at the close of the retreat the next day, rather than returning to work on it after dinner, as originally planned.

**Agenda Items – Day 2**

***Personnel Issues and Policies: Towards an Inspired Workplace***

The second day of the retreat began with a discussion led by Mr. Lommers-Johnson on the topic of organizational health. He began by talking about a survey of the agency's

staff, designed to measure organizational health through the assessment of employee engagement and satisfaction, which has been administered three times over his two-year tenure. The most recent survey indicated that 90 percent of staff was both engaged and satisfied in their work, evidence that employees were motivated to propel the organization forward, even during the most stressful times.

The discussion then shifted to the topic of attracting and retaining talented staff to meet demands of an increasingly challenging mission. It was explained that this could be done by offering an attractive corporate culture: e.g., policies that promote a good work life balance, competitive benefits and compensation, and rewards or advancement for strong performance. This led to an in-depth discussion of the compensations systems at the Everett Housing Authority and the requirements of the labor unions that represent the agency's employees.

### ***Housing Authority Board Functions and Structure***

Mr. Lommers-Johnson introduced Ronald Oldham, a consultant who provides ethics and leadership training for PHA commissioners, independently as well as in his work with the regional chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO).

Mr. Oldham spoke about the three roles of commissioners -- envisioning the future and working toward positive change, advocacy, and oversight and monitoring of a PHA -- and how each of these elements must work together in order to ensure the success of the agency. Mr. Oldham's presentation stressed the roles of the commissioners, the importance of ethics, and the significance of maintaining a clear vision of the Authority's future and its impact on the Everett community. He also reminded the Board that PHAs are public agencies, tasked carrying out the people's business in an ethical and transparent manner.

In addition to Mr. Oldham's instruction on Board ethics and practices, he addressed the topic of Board subcommittees, and their potential for enhancing the effectiveness of a Board in carrying out its duties. There was further discussion of the formation of subcommittees and their various areas of expertise.

### ***Everett Housing Authority Resident Services: Past, Present and Future***

Following Mr. Oldham's presentation, the floor was given to Resident Services Manager Teena Ellison, who provided a comprehensive view of her department's programs, including those for individuals with disabilities and seniors. Ms. Ellison also talked about the Authority's partnering agencies and organizations -- such as Compass Health, Senior Services of Snohomish County, and the Volunteers of America -- and the services these provide within the context of this agency's programs, all of which were considered critically important to the success of our residents.

***Whom Should We Serve in the Future and How?***

Ms. Ellison's presentation was followed by Board discussion of agency partnerships and maximizing resources for those we serve.

***Vision Setting and New Name for EHA: An Exercise/Strategic Goals and Retreat Wrap-Up***

Mr. Lommers-Johnson explained to the Board and senior staff that the close of the retreat would be devoted to vision setting, exploring the potential for a new name for Everett Housing Authority, and exploring strategic goals for the agency. The Board and senior staff then shared the vision statements and potential names for the agency each person had come up with the previous evening. In order to generate further discussion, Mr. Lommers-Johnson proposed that the word "Authority" was not necessarily "client friendly." Several present were excited by the prospect of changing the agency's name; however, this was weighed against the impact that such a drastic change might have for clients and the community as a whole. It was decided that this concept would be revisited at a future meeting of the Board.

Focus then shifted to asking cogent questions related to the development of the PHA Five-year Plan for the Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing programs, as well as long-term strategic goals and objectives for the agency as a whole. Following feedback from the Board and senior staff, Mr. Lommers-Johnson explained that this information would be first crafted together in developing the draft PHA Five-year Plan that would be presented to the Board of Commissioners in February of 2015.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Lommers-Johnson thanked the Board and the senior staff for attending the retreat and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:35 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
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Secretary

  
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VICE Chair, Board of Commissioners