



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

June 22, 2020

Meeting Called to Order

The Regular 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 12:04 p.m. on Monday, June 22, 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
Vice- Chair George Perez
Commissioner Chip Burgess

Commissioner Koren Smith
Commissioner Tammy Williamson
Commissioner Benjamin Young

Commissioners Absent:

None

Also in attendance were:

Staff:

Ashley Lommers-Johnson, Executive Director
John Forsyth, Director of Housing Operations
Wendy Abbey, Director of Finance
Jason Morrow, Director of Development
Linda Manning, Director of Human Resources and Administration
Steve Yago, Deputy Director of Development
Wendy Westby, HCV Program Director
Tony Nabors, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
Brenda McLeod, Asst. Director of Procurement and Contracts
Janinna Richardson, Senior Policy Analyst
Chris Neblett, Hearing Officer/Administrative Coordinator
Jaysen Garcia, Executive Assistant

Guests:

Becky Ableman McCrary, City of Everett
Liz Vogeli, City of Everett

Public Comment

None

Communications

None

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Lommers-Johnson began his report by noting there was nothing new to report on the status of the agency's Strategic Plan, but a slide showing progress to date in this area was included in the presentation deck for today's meeting. He then introduced the newest member of the senior staff, Senior Policy Analyst Janinna Attick. Ms. Attick previously worked for over ten years at the Housing Authority of Snohomish County, and the Executive Director said her high level of skill and knowledge in the fields of housing policy and quantitative analysis were a welcome addition to our agency.

As a first topic, the Executive Director discussed his recent statement to Housing Authority staff on systemic racism and police violence against minority communities. This emphasized the Housing Authority's long-term commitment to undoing institutional racism, its alignment with organizations that share this commitment, and its support of staff who choose to exercise their individual right to political expression. The Executive Director said he was contemplating sending a letter to the Mayor about police department policies that affect the communities served by the Housing Authority, and if he chose to do this, the Board would be asked to review it.

Moving to the next topic in his report, the Executive Director said staff town hall meetings and other means of communicating with employees during this time of working remotely have demonstrated the Housing Authority's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as a key operating principle. These town halls have been held via Zoom videoconference, and subjects covered to date have included the sick leave plan during the pandemic, current development projects, revised work guidelines during the pandemic, and the issue of systemic racism. The Executive Director said between 65 and 85 employees have attended each town hall, and follow-up surveys have shown unanimous support among staff for their content and delivery.

Additional surveys have shown that almost all employees have been able to work at home productively; this was attributed to the agency's significant investment in software and technology, as well as regular meetings between department directors and their staff. The Executive Director concluded this segment by addressing the topic of future work planning, a topic he originally intended to address at the end of his report. Preliminary efforts have taken the form of a staff work group led by Senior Policy Analyst Janinna Attick, which has been tasked with developing a plan on how the Housing Authority will do business in the future. This will include recommendations on how to improve business processes based on what has been learned during the emergency shift to remote work caused by the pandemic.

The Executive Director concluded his report by highlighting some of the Housing Authority's accomplishments over the course of the fiscal year ending June 30. These included but

were not limited to the following: success in maintaining most operations remotely during the pandemic while providing for resident and staff safety; 30 consecutive years without an audit finding from the State Auditor; the successful relocation of all Baker Heights and most Scattered Sites residents, a total of 270 households, without incident; successful initial implementation of efforts to become a more diverse and effective anti-racist organization; and excellent fiscal health, including growing financial reserves. Concerning the last point, the Executive Director said the Housing Authority has quadrupled its total assets (including net assets) and its cash reserves over the past eight years.

Consent Agenda

Chair Warren-Barbour called for approval of the Consent Agenda, containing the following items:

1. Section 8 Payments for the Month of April 2020
2. Summary of Vouchers for the Month of April 2020
3. Approval of Minutes of the Regular Meeting Held on May 26, 2020

Commissioner Perez moved for approval of the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Young seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Item for Individual Consideration

Resolution No. 1493 Adopting Budgets for FY 2020-21 for EHA Programs

Introducing this resolution, Finance Director Wendy Abbey noted each commissioner received a digital copy of the complete budgets for the Housing Authority's programs effective July 1 ahead of today's meeting. She further noted that she and her team had met with the Board's Finance Committee and the Executive Director the previous week to review these detailed budgets, which were developed with the Housing Authority's strategic goals and objectives in mind. Director Abbey presented the budgets in summary form at this meeting, a format that divided properties and programs into three main categories (Supporting Programs, Federally Funded Programs, Non-Federal Programs), with subcategories under each (e.g., Federally Funded Programs subdivided into Public Housing, Section 8/Mod Rehab, FSS Grant). In total, budgets reflected a positive net cash flow of \$337, 234. This did not account for proceeds from the sale of Baker Heights and the Scattered Sites, anticipated to be around \$21-22 million. Director Abbey said sale proceeds will be earmarked as non-operating funds for the purchase of replacement housing for these former Public Housing properties.

The commissioners thanked Director Abbey and her team for their good stewardship of the Housing Authority's funds during challenging times. Before a vote was called, Director Abbey called attention to an important provision within the resolution: pursuant to section two, these budgets are subject to an increase in spending of up to 5% in aggregate without the need for further approval by the Board. The budgets up for adoption kept most spending at the same level as the previous year as a cautionary measure, given uncertainty about the amount of Federal funding that will be available as a result of the pandemic; however, in the event things stabilize over the coming months, management was requesting authority for additional spending that will allow it to commence with some Strategic Plan activities. Clarifying the last point further, Executive Director Lommers-

Johnson said the Federal government's budgetary stalemates over the past couple of decades have resulted in an expected level of uncertainty surrounding the budget writing process, but the COVID pandemic has significantly increased this level of uncertainty. He was hopeful that developments over the next six months will provide room for some adjustment to the budgets up for adoption, as these kept operations spending at current levels and only provided for an increase of one percent to employee salaries.

As a final point, Director Abbey said the proposed budgets included CARES Act grants from the Federal government for COVID-related costs -- in the amounts of \$81,186 for the Public Housing program and \$581,992 for HCV and Project-Based Voucher properties. This grant funding will be used primarily to reimburse the Housing Authority for time its employees allocated to COVID related activities, and to cover expenses related to purchases of equipment that enable staff to work remotely. This money was available from March 27 through the end of the year, although HUD may extend it further. In conclusion, Executive Director Lommers-Johnson said he was expecting another disbursement of CARES Act funding within the next couple of months, which will require developing a detailed plan to show how this money will be spent once it is received.

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

Policy Discussion

EHA's Mission Statement

Executive Director Lommers-Johnson said he had originally hoped to have a new agency mission statement for the Board's consideration at today's meeting, but it has taken longer than expected to get this into final draft form, given its importance in framing the Housing Authority's mission over the long-term. He recounted the steps that have been followed in developing a new mission statement through dedicated work groups and meetings with senior staff, an effort that began at the direction of the Board of Commissioners during a retreat with senior management in Spring 2019. At that time the Board called for the creation of a new agency mission statement consisting of three core components: 1) the development of affordable housing with an emphasis on new housing; 2) a focus on fostering success among the Housing Authority's tenants and program participants; 3) ending systemic racism by pursuing equitable housing policies.. The Executive Director said that several attempts have been made to turn these elements into a cohesive statement, but this has been challenging because these components are complex in and of themselves and do not directly relate to one another.

The Executive Director shared some of the draft mission statements developed to date for the Board's review and comment. He suggested any feedback received at today's meeting could merit further discussion at an upcoming meeting of the Board's Policy and Programs Committee, which could then aid in the development of one or two refined drafts for the Board to consider for adoption at the August regular meeting. Following a discussion along those lines, it was agreed that an effective way of structuring the new mission statement may be to present the desired outcome (i.e., overcoming systemic racism) first, then to present pursuing equity as the means for achieving this outcome, and finally to state the development of affordable housing and healthy and vibrant communities as byproducts of this effort.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Warren-Barbour called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Burgess made such a motion, Commissioner Smith seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 1:27 p.m.


Allison Warren-Barbour (Aug 27, 2020 22:31 PDT)

Chair, Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:



Secretary









Regular Board Mtg Minutes 20200622

Final Audit Report

2020-08-28

Created:	2020-08-25
By:	Chris Neblett (chrisn@evha.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAjmkgygDHAB3FzjXuTUGRGgpWj8YVrp1fM

"Regular Board Mtg Minutes 20200622" History

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2020-08-25 - 3:48:26 PM GMT- IP address: 50.34.67.226
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2020-08-28 - 5:30:17 AM GMT- IP address: 24.22.163.59
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Signature Date: 2020-08-28 - 5:31:10 AM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 24.22.163.59
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2020-08-28 - 5:31:12 AM GMT
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2020-08-28 - 9:31:26 AM GMT- IP address: 174.204.82.250
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Signature Date: 2020-08-28 - 9:31:40 AM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 174.204.82.250
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2020-08-28 - 9:31:40 AM GMT