



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

August 24, 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 12:07 p.m. on Monday, August 24, 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 Benjamin Young

Commissioners Absent:

Commissioner Tammy Williamson

Also in attendance were:

Staff:

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

Guests:

Vanessa Figueroa, HCV Program Manager
Becky Ableman McCrary, City of Everett

Public Comment

City of Everett representative Becky McCrary said the City was picking back up with the housing strategy work it started last Fall but had to put on hold in the Spring, due to the COVID pandemic. She hoped local housing representatives would get involved in the public input process, which was expected to kick off with a virtual housing forum in October.

Communications

Broadway Plaza Resident Council President Gary Haddenham said residents were practicing social distancing and wearing masks. He thanked the resident services staff for coordinating delivery of a special dinner to residents, as well as a box of fresh vegetables and fruit every two weeks. He said residents were looking forward to the re-opening of the dining room as a space to socialize.

Hearing Officer/Admin Coordinator Chris Neblett confirmed a special Board of Commissioners meeting was scheduled for noon on Monday, September 28, to hold a hearing on the Housing Authority's proposed 2020-21 Annual Plan before adopting it. A review of financial statements for the quarters ending March and June 2020 was also on the meeting agenda.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Ashley Lommers-Johnson informed the Board his report would focus on current agency developments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said HUD had recently communicated its approval for PHAs to use CARES Act emergency funding for standard administrative needs in addition to expenses directly related to COVID-19 (e.g., equipment staff needs to work remotely). Per the Executive Director, management planned to spend all CARES funding allocated to date (approximately \$1.4 million in administrative fees for the Housing Choice Voucher program and \$110,000 between the Public Housing and 202 programs), which was expected to significantly improve the Housing Authority's cash flow projections for fiscal year 2020-21.

By way of an update on the Housing Authority's operations during the pandemic, the Executive Director said senior staff continued to meet four days a week to discuss how to ensure resident and staff safety while maintaining operational continuity. To date, there were 16 positive cases of COVID-19 among residents and three reported deaths, with three positive cases and an additional two unconfirmed among staff. Diversity Equity and Inclusion Director Tony Nabors was coordinating educational outreach efforts to the Marshall Islands community at Grandview, which has experienced a high prevalence of cases. A total of \$40,000 in CARES Act funding had been earmarked to assist similarly situated communities going forward.

The Executive Director said staff would not be required to return to the office any sooner than January 8, 2021. The original earliest date of return had been planned for September; however, a recent upward trend in cases, management's cautious approach to re-opening, and the ability of most staff to work remotely led to a decision to further postpone the return to normal operations. This decision was reinforced by the results of an earlier survey of staff, which indicated a significant majority favored a cautious approach to re-opening due to their ability to work effectively remotely. Chair Warren-Barbour wondered if

management would continue to offer staff the opportunity to work remotely once regular operations resume. In response, the Executive Director discussed the formation of a "Reimagine Work" group, consisting of a cross section employees. This group was tasked with reexamining the Housing Authority's traditional workflows and business processes in order to develop a set of policies and remote work plan for the Board's consideration at a future meeting.

Continuing his report with an update on real estate activities, the Executive Director reported that the Housing Authority's purchase of Pepperwoods Apartments had been finalized, and he thanked the development team and finance department for its hard work on this endeavor. He said the Baker Heights disposition remained on track, but the original HUD approval letter would need to be amended to cover new developments: i.e., a decrease in the amount of the site WSU will purchase, a corresponding increase in the acreage the Housing Authority will redevelop, a reduction in the amount of the property the first phase of that redevelopment effort will entail, and the inclusion of a portion of Wiggums Park that was omitted from the original disposition application. The Executive Director went on to report that the sale of the Public Housing Scattered Sites was going well, with higher sales proceeds than originally forecast. The first phase of the Baker Heights redevelopment had been delayed somewhat due to environmental reviews and was now projected to close at end of January 2021. Concluding his report, the Executive Director said the Housing Authority was exploring options to ensure the long-term viability of its HUD 202 program, including a conversion of the units at these properties to RAD Project-Based Vouchers. He discussed three strategic opportunities on the horizon in the form of a pending invitation from HUD to apply for Moving to Work status, plans to apply for a Choice Neighborhoods implementation next year, and a potential joint application with HASCO for the Mobility Demonstration program.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Warren Barbour called for a motion to approve minutes of the regular meeting held on June 22, 2020. Commissioner Smith made such a motion, Commissioner Young seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda

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

1. Section 8 Payments for the Month of May 2020
2. Summary of Vouchers for the Month of May 2020

Commissioner Young moved for approval of the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Smith seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Policy Discussion

New Agency Mission Statement

The Executive Director opened this segment of the meeting by referring to an earlier memo he had sent to the commissioners, which provided the rationale for adopting a new agency

mission statement and progress to date in its development. He said the need for a new mission statement grew out of several lengthy and thoughtful discussions the Board had with senior staff in Spring 2019 about the problem of systemic racism as it relates to housing throughout the United States, and how the Housing Authority could best address this issue over the next ten years. As a result of these discussions, the Board identified three main areas of focus for the new strategic plan and mission statement: developing affordable housing, thriving households and clients, and the need to address systemic racism. Since then, senior management has worked on drafts for a new mission statement at a retreat and in workshops with agency staff:

The Executive Director met recently with the Board's Policy and Programs committee, which narrowed the field of potential mission statements down to two options for the Board to consider. The first option varied slightly from a version proposed by a Commissioner: "The Everett Housing Authority seeks to foster healthy, thriving communities through housing with equitable and anti-racist practices." The second option was modified from a version agency staff favored in a poll: "The Everett Housing Authority creates affordable housing, fosters healthy communities where households thrive, and replaces systemic racism with equity for all." After some deliberation, the Board elected to go with the second option as the new agency mission statement. Several commissioners and the Executive Director recognized that this version could be more concise, and there was not a clear relationship between its component parts; however, these issues were overcome by the recognition it was rooted in the agency's long-term strategic goals.

Item for Individual Consideration

Resolution No. 1494 Adopting and Implementing a New Mission Statement for the Agency

This resolution adopted and implemented the version of the mission statement the Board decided upon during the policy discussion segment: "The Everett Housing Authority creates affordable housing, fosters healthy communities where households thrive, and replaces systemic racism with equity for all."

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

Resolution No. 1495 Establishing a Policy for Use of Electronic Signature Technology and Ratifying Prior Use of Electronic Signatures

Executive Director Lommers-Johnson said the agency does not currently have a policy on the use of electronic signatures, but it has been necessary to sign documents electronically since the move to remote work in mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This practice was held to be in line with the Board's resolution approving emergency measures that facilitate working remotely; however, it was desirable to adopt a policy that expressly authorized the past and ongoing use of electronic signatures.

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

Resolution No. 1496 Adopting Revisions to the Administrative Plan for the Housing Choice Voucher Program

By way of background, Housing Choice Voucher Program Director Wendy Westby said PHAs are required to adopt an Administrative Plan that formalizes Voucher program policies. This policy document includes policies required by HUD regulation, as well as those that are left to the discretion of the PHA. In 2015 the Housing Authority adopted an Administrative Plan based on a model developed by Nan McKay and Associates. The Admin Plan has been revised a few times since, based on model language provided by Nan McKay in response to new HUD regulations and discretionary revisions in response to changing program needs.

Director Westby invited HCV Manager Vanessa Figueroa to outline the most recent revisions to the Administrative Plan covered by this resolution. Ms. Figueroa said the vast majority of these revisions were recommended by Nan McKay as a result of changes to HUD regulation. Discretionary revisions included the addition of Mainstream Vouchers and adoption of waitlist preferences tailored to these special use Vouchers, use of Internet based platforms for client annual recertifications and background checks, use of remote technology to conduct informal reviews and hearings in response to the current public health crisis, and updates to policies specific to the Project Based Voucher program.

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

Resolution No. 1497 Authorizing Amendment #25 to the Interagency Agreement with Housing Hope Relating to the Commerce Building SRO Units

HCV Program Director Westby Wendy said this resolution related to an ongoing arrangement with Housing Hope, the agency that owns the Commerce Building. Under the terms of this agreement, the Housing Authority provides rental assistance to 29 units of SRO housing in exchange for Housing Hope's taking on the necessary management functions.

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

Resolution No. 1498 Approving Revisions to Everett Housing Authority's Family Self-Sufficiency Program Policy-Action Plan

Hearing Officer/Administrative Coordinator Neblett said this resolution pertained to revisions made to the Family Self-Sufficiency Program Policy-Action Plan subsequent to the Board's adopting it at the regular meeting of March 25. The HUD field office requested these revisions and worked with FSS Program Manager Donelle Keinholz to make the necessary updates to the Plan, including the addition of a section on participant demographics. As a final step, the field office was requesting that the Board approve this revised Plan.

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

Executive Session

Chair Warren-Barbour announced that the Board would convene in Executive Session to review the performance of the Executive Director for a period of 15 minutes, pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(g). The Board adjourned into Executive Session in a separate breakout room at 1:24 P.M.

Reconvene Regular Session

At 1:39 P.M. the Board reconvened in public session, having taken no action in Executive Session. Chair Warren-Barbour announced the Board’s Personnel Committee would need to meet two or three more times to gather additional information the Board needed to complete the Executive Director’s performance review and establish his compensation retroactive to July 1, 2020. The next such Executive Session was planned to take place at the Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners on September 28.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Warren-Barbour called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Perez made such a motion, Commissioner Young seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 1:42 P.M.


Allison Warren-Barbour (Sep 25, 2020 21:44 PDT)

Chair, Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:



Secretary

Regular Board Mtg Minutes 20200824

Final Audit Report

2020-09-30

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