

MINUTES

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF ABILENE

Special Call Meeting of April 26, 2007, 10:30 a.m.

The Housing Authority of the City of Abilene, Texas, met in Special Call Session on April 26, 2007, at 10:30 a.m. in the Cypress Plaza Board Room, 534 Cypress Street. Chairman V.E. Brailsford was present and presided. Other Commissioners present were: Mary Jay Island, Tonya Smith Brice, and Dale Barthelemy.

Staff members present were: Executive Director Roberta Thompson, Ebony Bond, Megan Santee (Legal), and Mary Ann Martell, Secretary/Temp.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:40 a.m. by Chairman Brailsford.

2.0 Discussion and possible approval of funds to hire a consultant to assist in the recruitment and hiring process for the Housing Administrator position

This Agenda Item was tabled at the last meeting for further discussion. Questions needing to be addressed are who has the authority to hire the new Executive Director and how to proceed in this hiring process. Commissioner Island said in the previous meeting she was convinced and did agree with the City since she thought the idea of a consultant firm sounded reasonable. However, now she asks does the HA have the right to enter into the process and is the process of hiring a consultant firm the process regularly used for Division Managers?

Executive Director Thompson asked for permission to read the City's proposal. The City's proposal is to hire a search firm in the initial process of hiring the Housing Authority's Executive Director position. A review team of three City staff and two Board members would interview the selected candidates. She confirmed that the funding of \$17,500 to hire the firm would come out of the HA's budget. Chairman Brailsford asked if the HA had these funds. He said he could not see spending that kind of money. Commissioner Island approached the idea of posting the job with NAHRO and other national entities in order to save funds. If resumes were lacking in number, then the "headhunter" could be hired. She speculated whether the City would agree with this idea. Commissioner Brice (who was not present at the previous meeting) asked who proposed the idea of the search firm. Roberta Thompson replied that the City proposed this for the initial search. The firm would develop ads along with a brochure and send it to various venues. She said they had presented a brochure used for recruitment for the City's attorney. She continued to explain how the consultant firm would also screen the applicants and then present the selected candidates to the City. The review panel would then interview them. Commissioner Brice asked if the HA had the \$17,500. Roberta Thompson tried to answer all questions. She did not know if the City used a consultant firm for hiring Division Managers. Regarding the \$17,500, the HA does not have those

funds in the current budget, however, we would have access to it through our investment funds such as Parkridge Place.

With this in mind, we may have to look at potential budget cuts in the future as we consider the salary of the new E.D. Chairman Brailsford wanted to know if the City did hire the firm, etc., and came up with the candidate, who would make the decision to hire the E.D.? Executive Director Thompson said she has heard two things: 1) the consideration to hire a consultant; 2) an approach for placing the job posting on the web and publications. She still thinks the five-member review panel is the best idea and together the HA and the City would make the decision. The City would listen to the Board's opinion. Commissioner Brice stated according to the contract the city manager would have the final say on hiring the person.

Commissioner Barthelemy ventured to say the best firm in Texas, Evans Personnel, has an office in Abilene. We don't need to go outside of Abilene. He recommended we contact Evans Personnel. Commissioner Brice said the groundwork has already been done for the firm since they have used it before. The firm must have offered the best services for the price. Mr. Barthelemy said the fee is usually 30% of the salary for the applicant. Ms. Thompson replied that she does not know if the research has been done first. The goal is of course for the best interests of the HA. The City wants to hire the consultant and is a process they have used for other similar positions. We could look at Evans Personnel.

Another option is to develop our own job description and use NAHRO as a venue. She has examples of job descriptions from various venues and she feels assured that one or the other would get the ad nationwide. If no one has expertise, the consultant firm would have expertise. The City does have a budget to hire this firm; however, we are a small agency. She encouraged the Board to look at the budget. Why can't the City and the Board get together and post the position? Human Resources could do that and save some money. Commissioner Island recommended that we develop a job description and post the position in housing publications, etc. If we do not receive a good applicant pool, we could go with the City's proposal of using the consultant firm and pay the fee. She said since these are public funds, she wants to recommend to the City to recruit for the position in the least expensive way. The cost of placing ads, especially nationally, needs to be considered, speculated Commissioner Brice since the ads could cost a total of \$10,000. She felt the \$17,500 was a reasonable price because if we don't get qualified applicants the cost could be even greater.

Roberta Thompson said we are members of national NAHRO, Texas NAHRO, and the Texas Housing Association. We would need to do some research on the ad size, etc. The HA could set an expense and if, after researching, the cost is above that expense, we could hire the consultant firm. There is a timeframe to keep in mind since we need a person in place as quickly as possible. Do we accept the City's proposal or choose to advertise ourselves? Ms. Thompson said the Board is ultimately responsible and their job is to approve or disapprove the proposal from the City. The HA can make contacts with the publications regarding the cost and size of the ads, etc. Commissioner Brice stated there are many links online for advertising. For instance, she read the prices for placing ads from the NAHRO publication, which was \$100, and after six lines, another \$15 per line for NAHRO members and we are members of NAHRO. This would also be posted

on the website for 30 days and we need to consider that it may have to be posted for several months. Advertising in PHADA for two months would be free since we are members. Even if it would be \$500 per ad per month, the total would be significantly lower than \$17, 500.

Commissioner Brice recommended that the Board identify the organizations to post the position and pursue the search through the Board. However, she did indicate that it would consist of time and energy for the Board. Executive Director Thompson said she could provide copies of job descriptions from PHADA and NAHRO for developing an ad for the administrator/executive director. No doubt, the City will also want to give their input for the job description. She reminded the Board to consider the budget when figuring the potential salary of the new E.D.

Megan Santee Attorney said the reason the City has proposed the consultant firm is because they will manage the whole process from the job description, reviewing resumes, conducting initial interviews, preparing questionnaires, and targeting the best candidates for this position.

Commissioner Brice made a motion to pursue the hiring process in-house after researching the cost for the ads, time commitment, and consideration of the cost of the time involved in the process. Commissioner Island seconded the motion.

Ayes: Commissioners Brice, Island, Barthelemy, Brailsford

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Commissioner Barthelemy told Roberta Thompson that they would need a list of her duties as E.D. Commissioner Brice said the Board would have to know the specific criteria for the executive director for the wording of the ad. Ms. Thompson said she would provide a task analysis to the Board. Also, she said the Board could consider the City doing half of the job description and the Board could do half. The ad should clarify that this position reports to two entities. Commissioner Barthelemy asked where the applications would go – to HR? Roberta Thompson confirmed that the protocol is for the applications to go to HR. The City's HR department would conduct the background checks, reference checks, etc. They may have places they want to post the job listing also. Ms. Thompson earnestly suggested that the Board works with the City and together they could get the right person.

Commissioner Brice inquired if there was a transition plan in place after Roberta's retirement. Executive Director Thompson said Ebony Bond would be the interim director. She will have Paul Falade and Jackie Williams as back up. Ebony has served as supervisor in her absence so she is very qualified. She will be the contact person for HUD also. If the Board would have questions, they could directly go to Jon James with them. Ms. Thompson said Ebony Bond would be needing help copying ads and getting the job description completed in order to get it to Jon James no later than Monday. Commissioner Barthelemy was concerned on process of how the Board would receive the resumes since they will be going to HR for the City. Ms. Thompson said probably HR will screen the resumes and then send the selected applicant's resumes to Jon James. The review panel will be doing the interviewing. Commissioner Island, on behalf of the Board, thanked Roberta Thompson for serving the Board and the citizens of Abilene.

The Housing Authority has a positive image on local, state, and national levels. Thanks to Roberta Thompson, we have a quality Housing Authority. Commissioner Barthelemy made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Island seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 12:52 p.m.