

# MINUTES

## HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF ABILENE

### Special Call Meeting of May 7, 2007, 10:30 a.m.

The Housing Authority of the City of Abilene, Texas, met in Special Call Session on May 7, 2007, at 9:30 a.m. at 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: Program Coordinator/Interim Director, Ebony Bond, Megan Santee (Legal), and Mary Ann Martell, Secretary/Temp.

### CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:45 a.m. by Chairman Brailsford.

#### **1.0 Discussion and possible approval of final draft of the Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Plan**

Attorney Mark Zachary addressed the Board regarding this Agenda Item. He said part of the process is making the draft available for public review. Before the Board adopts the plan which is the "guidebook" for the Section 8 program, any person has the opportunity to make comments or to ask questions. Summarizing, Mark Zachary told the Board that Nan McKay provided the template for the Admin Plan. The plan was reviewed page by page and several changes were made. Although HUD has many regulations, the local PHA is given the discretion and many choices to run the programs also. National housing consultant Nan McKay sets forth the HUD regulations and then sets apart the local PHA policy. The public can readily distinguish between the two. When reviewing, Mark Zachary said he used Roberta Thompson's vast knowledge and experience in housing and incorporated the changes recommended by the Board. The production of this draft has been a year-long process and all plans can be subject for changes when issues arise i.e., when Congress passed the Violence Against Women's Act, that had to be added into the plan. The purpose of today's meeting, he stated, is for the Board to pass this final preliminary draft and then once approved by the Board, to make it available to the Public for review and comments. Additional things to consider are: 1) what format will the Public be required to send their comments/questions; 2) where will copies of the draft be available for public review i.e., copies in the office, on the website, various housing sites; 3) what if a person requests a copy of the plan. Mr. Zachary relayed to the Board that he had already asked Nan McKay about making copies available. They were very responsive and even signed a release. A notice will be posted on the website saying the draft will be available for review after the Board approves the draft. In addition, a public notice will be placed in the public notice section of the *Abilene Reporter News*. Commissioner Island suggested that the ad be placed in the free publications in town such as the Thrifty Nickel, West Texas Tribune, the Spanish and Black publications. Mark Zachary said there needs to be a time period for public to make their comments so the Board can respond. As for the format, he recommends the comments be written.

Commissioner Brice asked if comments could also be made on the website. A “dummy” e-mail account could be set up to accommodate this process. Mark Zachary expressed his concerns about being out of compliance since the HA has not updated its current admin plan. He said the Board needed to get it done as soon as possible. Commissioner Brice suggested giving the public until the end of May to get their comments into the Board. Then we could prepare the responses for the June meeting. Mark Zachary offered an alternative to push up the public comments deadline to May 25<sup>th</sup>, and then the Board would approve the plan as of May 31<sup>st</sup>. The Board agreed that it would be best to get the plan approved by the end of the month. Commissioner Island suggested a May 30<sup>th</sup> Special Call meeting of the Board.

Mark Zachary recapped the discussion: 1) The public comments must be in writing; 2) A public notice will appear in the *Abilene Reporter News* and other publications; 3) A copy of the draft will be posted on the website; 4) If requested, a person can get a copy of the draft for a fee; 5) The draft will be available at other housing sites. Mark Zachary distributed a copy of the public notice for the Board’s review. Regarding the final draft, Mr. Zachary said the only revision was to delete Chapter 17 from the table of contents since the HA does not use Project-based Vouchers.

Chairman Brailsford asked if there was anymore discussion. Mark Zachary replied that he would like to address the issue of a sexual harassment policy that concerned Commissioner Island. He said it is a very important issue. If an incidence occurred with the employees, it would be addressed by the City’s policies. In the plan, HUD does not require a policy regarding sexual harassment between landlords and tenants. But it could be developed if it becomes an issue. These situations are looked at on a case-by-case basis. He gave an example of a policy regarding discrimination. HUD does not require that discrimination be addressed as a policy; however, we have it addressed in the admin plan. Commissioner Island said she is more comfortable now hearing that any sexual harassment will be looked at on a case-by-case basis. Ebony Bond said there is room in the admin plan to address this issue if need be. Chairman Brailsford called for a motion to accept the preliminary final draft of the administrative plan.

Commissioner Brice made a motion to accept the final draft of the administrative plan with one correction, the deletion of Chapter 17 in the table of contents. Commissioner Island seconded the motion.

Ayes: Commissioners Island, Brice, Barthelemy, Brailsford

Nays:

***The motion passed.***

Commissioner Brice made a motion to make the final draft of the administrative plan available for public comments until noon on May 25<sup>th</sup>, with comments to be submitted in writing. Commissioner Island seconded the motion.

Ayes: Commissioners Island, Brice, Barthelemy, Brailsford

Nays:

***The motion passed.***

Commissioner Brice made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Barthlemey seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

