

MINUTES

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF ABILENE

Meeting of May 22, 2007, 9:30 a.m.

The Housing Authority of the City of Abilene, Texas, met in a rescheduled session on May 22, 2007, at 9:30 a.m. in the Cypress Plaza Board Room, 534 Cypress Street. Chairman V.E. Brailsford was present and presided. Other Commissioners present were: Dr. Tonya Smith-Brice, Mary Jay Island and Dale Barthelemy.

Staff members present were: Ebony Bond, Program Coordinator/Interim Director; Genette Edmond, Tanya Johnson; Edward McRoy, Assistant Director Planning and Development; Megan Santee (Legal), and Mary Ann Martell, Secretary/Temp. Guests present were: Stephanie Baker.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Brailsford called the meeting to order at 9:49 a.m.

1.0

Routine Announcements, Recognitions and Presentations

There were no routine announcements, recognitions, or presentations.

DISPOSITION OF MINUTES

2.0

There being no corrections, additions, or deletions to the April 19, 2007, Board Meeting and the Special Called Meetings held on April 26, 2007, and May 7, 2007, Commissioner Smith-Brice made a motion to approve the minutes as printed. Commissioner Island seconded the motion.

AYES: Commissioners Barthelemy, Island, Smith-Brice and Chairman Brailsford

NAYS: None

The motion carried.

OPEN DISCUSSION FOR CITIZEN GENERAL COMMENT AND RESIDENT/LANDLORD INPUT

3.0

There was not any discussion, since no other citizens, landlords or residents were present at the meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

4.0

Chairman Brailsford asked the Board if they had any questions or wished to pull out any item under the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Smith-Brice stated she would like to pull the Monthly Status Reports, Agenda Items #4.1a, #4.1b, #4.1c, and #4.1d.

Ebony Bond, Programs Coordinator/Interim Director, made a comment concerning the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program Status/Financial. In the past, she said the number of participants and finances are based on the end of the month; however, HUD bases their reports on the first of the month. These reports should coincide; therefore, Ebony said the financial reports will reflect the first of the month. Dr. Smith-Brice questioned whether the Housing Authority is below their numbers on the waiting list. Ebony replied that Section 8 is below in vouchers, however, since the waiting list was exhausted at the end of March when all the applicants were pulled and we are waiting on verifications, etc. We then can expect the number of people with vouchers will increase. The Housing Authority does have strategies in place. Commissioner Island asked if the lease-up information has been provided in the board packet. Ebony said she is in the process of creating a spreadsheet and it will be available for the next board meeting. A question arose regarding very-low income. HUD requirements specify applicants coming into the program must be very-low income, however, once they are in the program they can earn more income. Commissioner Smith Brice asked if these income guidelines could keep some people off housing assistance. Ebony affirmed this, however, those are the guidelines and there is not a waiver process that she knows of but she will check with HUD. She also explained that we have a sufficient pool of very low-income applicants. HUD does look at the area to determine what that area needs regarding guidelines, number of vouchers, etc. We have been issued 1,029 vouchers. Last year we froze the waiting list since we were at the maximum requirement for HUD; however, we are working at getting our numbers back up. Normally, when we pull applicants from the waiting list, we have a 40% response. We estimate that 40% of those will eventually receive vouchers because during the process some will no longer be eligible and some will decide not to be on the program. The counselors are working at getting vouchers to them. This has been slow since we have to wait on verifications and one of our counselors is out on FMLA. Our other counselors are taking up the slack. HUD requires our utilization to be at 95%. Commissioner Island expressed her concern about utilization. Ebony Bond clarified that HUD requires that 95% of the vouchers are being utilized or that we are spending the monies allocated to the HA. We have to respond to HUD if we are not using all of the funding. Commissioner Smith Brice stated that she wants to hear more regarding the strategies that are in place for increasing our numbers. She also wants to know if HUD has a waiver criteria for eligibility for low-income instead of very-low income. Ebony responded that she could get the strategy/corrective action plan sent to HUD. She will inquire about the waiver.

Chairman Brailsford asked for a motion to approve 4.1 a. Commissioner Island made a motion to approve 4.1 a. Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Status/Financial Report for April 2007. Commissioner Smith Brice seconded the motion.

Ayes: Commissioners Brailsford, Smith Brice, Island, and Barthelemy

Nayes: None

The motion carried.

4.1 b. Low Rent Public Housing Status/Financial Report for April 2007

Commissioner Smith Brice asked if we were meeting expectations for low-rent public housing. Genette Edmond, Public Housing Manager, said the criteria from HUD is 80% of median low-income. Commissioner Smith Brice asked if applicants are being referred

to low-rent public housing. Is there a flyer for the Section 8 program? Ebony said although there is no flyer we do suggest they apply at low-rent public housing. Discussion occurred regarding having the determination done right away to see if they qualify for public housing if they don't qualify for Section 8. This could be a hindrance since the Housing Specialists at Section 8 are not familiar with the public housing guidelines. Genette Edmond said their income guidelines are extremely low income (30%), very low income (50%), low income (80%) and that they can make up to a certain amount. She said she lets applicants know about Section 8 and that they can be on both waiting lists. Commissioner Island suggested the guidelines could be on one sheet and then the applicants could be directed to any of the programs. Commissioner Smith Brice said she was an advocate of low-income population and suggested we empower people by providing them with basic information and by giving them options. She said there could be additional staff training to help streamline programs. Ebony said the customer could be provided the income guidelines and then pointed to the right program. Genette said they do provide information on both programs, the voucher program and public housing. Stephanie Baker, President of Accolade Property Management, interjected that the programs became segregated because they are very specialized programs. The referral program is good but since the programs are so very different they split. Discussion continued on the streamlining of the program. Ebony Bond said the income guidelines sheet would be configured to include both programs. Chairman Brailsford entertained a motion to approve Monthly Status Report 4.1 b. Low Rent Public Housing Status/Financial Report for April 2007.

Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to approve Consent Agenda Item 4.1b.

Commissioner Island seconded the motion.

AYES: Commissioners Barthelemy, Island, Smith Brice and Brailsford.

NAYS: None

The motion carried.

4.1 c Report on Capital Fund Modernization Programs (CFP) for April 2007.

Ebony Bond stated that we have \$325,762.25 funding for 2007, and she is currently addressing needs. Commissioner Smith Brice said she has looked at the CF program and would like to know how plans are initiated especially in the Five-Year Annual Plan. Ebony said plans are initiated by physical needs and tenant responses to their needs. The budget incorporates all needs but the critical items such as foundation repairs have to be addressed and items such as clotheslines, new appliances, and playgrounds can be moved to 2008. There is currently no community center at public housing, which is greatly needed. There has been discussion how to utilize land for that project. Chairman Brailsford called for a motion for Agenda Item 4.1 c Report on Capital Fund Project #TX21P327501-07 for April 2007. Commissioner Island made a motion to accept Agenda Item 4.1 c. Commissioner Smith Brice seconded the motion.

Ayes: Commissioners Island, Brailsford, Smith Brice, and Barthelemy

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Agenda Item 4.1 d Parkridge Place Apartments Status/Financial Report for April 2007

Commissioner Smith Brice questioned the funds that come from Parkridge Place Apartments. Ebony explained that the income goes into reserves. Stephanie Baker said these funds remain segregated and the money goes into an investment account. \$3,000 a month goes into this investment account. TML manages the investment fund and provides equity distribution, which this year was \$9,084. An equity return on the liability insurance was \$525. Chairman Brailsford asked for a motion to accept Agenda Item 4.1d Parkridge Place Apartments Status/Financial

Report for April 2007. Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to accept Agenda Item 4.1 d. Commissioner Island seconded the motion.

Ayes: Commissioners Island, Smith Brice, Barthelemy, and Brailsford

Nays: None

The motion carried.

5.0 REGULAR AGENDA

5.1

Discussion and consideration of a lease of a postal meter

Ebony Bond, Programs Coordinator, distributed a handout regarding a postal meter from Pitney Bowes. Postal rates have changed recently with rates being based on weight and thickness. A 41-cent letter cannot be over ¼” thick or it goes to the parcel cost. The handout included three proposals with all machines basically doing the same thing. The meter would be password protected for internal security purposes. Based on our number of mail items going out, a cartridge costing approximately \$125 would last 1 ½ years to 2 years. Ebony asked the Board to please review the handout and consider approving the lease of a postal meter at the next board meeting.

5.2

Presentation and discussion by staff of the PHA Five Year/Annual Plan

Ebony told the Board that the Nelrod Agency is drafting the Five Year/Annual Plan. The changes in the CF budget need to be sent to them and they will draft the Final Draft before the public hearing on June 7, 2007.

5.3

Discussion and possible action regarding an RFQ for the hiring of a consultant to advise the Housing Authority in becoming an independent Housing Authority

The Board packet included some information regarding health insurance rates for the HA employees. The City’s HR department provided a sheet showing the City’s cost. Bill Hester provided quotes from Blue Cross/Blue Shield, AETNA, Principle United Healthcare, and Humana, etc. Megan Santee from Legal asked if these quotes were based on rates for a corporation or federal program. The HA could fall under a federal entity. Ed McRoy said he realizes there was, in the past, a discussion evaluating the split between the HA and the City and acquiring assistance to help in this process. He handed out a rough draft of an RFQ for hiring a consultant to assist in this matter. He said currently the City’s HR department has an existing contract with a company called Maximus. They look at different services accessed for different programs and the indirect fees charged for these services. Chairman Brailsford said he would want to review the RFQ. Mr. McRoy replied that he would draw up the RFQ and have it go to the legal department, etc. He would have it ready by the next board meeting. Chairman Brailsford again reiterated that he would need to review it plus he wants to look at all available options. Commissioner Smith Brice commented that she likes the RFQ proposal and feels the HA should look at the examples from the consultants. Discussion followed on moving forward with the RFQ or waiting until the next board meeting. Commissioner Island said it needs to be looked at now and that we need to move forward on the RFQ. It was decided to have Ed McRoy move forward with the RFQ and to send drafts before the next board meeting. Mr. McRoy said he would have the version of the RFQ ready for the next board meeting and then the HA could move forward.

5.4

Discussion and possible approval to hire legal counsel for the Housing Authority

Megan Santee, Legal representative, said the City does provide legal representation to the Board and HA, however, it is not like an attorney who works daily on housing issues, etc. Discussion followed on whether it would be beneficial for the HA to hire legal counsel. The Board can solicit firms, etc. to hire one. Does the Board want to pursue outsourcing legal representation? Commissioner Island said she felt the Board should move ahead on this. A firm is definitely needed to assist on dealing with tenant and landlord issues, agencies, etc. Commissioner Smith Brice said she would like to hear about other Housing Authorities that contract their legal representation. Chairman Brailsford added that the Board has wanted this legal representation for some time. He called for a motion. Commissioner Island made a motion to approve hiring legal counsel for the Housing Authority. Commissioner Smith Brice seconded the motion.

Ayes: Commissioners, Brailsford, Smith Brice, Barthelemy, Island

Nayes: None

The motion carried.

5.5

Discussion and update on the hiring process for the Housing Administrator Position

The Board packet includes a copy of a draft for the job description for the executive director position. Ebony Bond asked for feedback and suggestions on the job description and advertising. Commissioner Island inquired on how the HA was working with the City on this process. Mr. McRoy replied that they are reviewing the job description to ensure that the text is effective in order to attract the qualified people for this position. The timeframe, venues, and the cost of the ads are being considered also. Commissioner Island inquired about the process of receiving the applications, etc. for this position. Mr. McRoy informed the board of the course of action: First, the City's HR department would receive the applications; second, they would filter out any unqualified candidates; and thirdly, the HR Department would forward the selected applications to a review committee. It has not been decided who would be on this committee. The committee would consist of perhaps the HR manager, Jon James or Ed McRoy, a member of the management staff, and two members from the HA board. This five-member committee would review the applications, résumés, etc. and narrow the résumés down to perhaps a half dozen. These selected candidates would receive an interview by the committee. Subsequently, the committee would have a system of ranking the candidates and finally an offer would be made regarding salary, etc. The Board would most likely go into executive session to discuss the selected candidates. Chairman Brailsford said he did not approve of this process. Discussion followed regarding the contract between the HA and the City. Commissioner Island said it is time for a contract revision but the contract does give the City the right to perform the HR duties. A question arose regarding the review committee and why there would only be two board members on it and three officials from the City. Commissioner Smith Brice stated since we have this contract with the City and until we are independent, we need to be concerned with hiring the best director for this position. Mr. McRoy again explained the process for hiring the executive director. In addition, he stated after the interviews the remainder of the Board would receive a report and most

likely meet and then give their feedback. Comments surfaced again on the HA becoming independent, etc. Commissioner Island stated that is not the issue now and we have to focus on hiring an E.D. We can look at the contract with the City when we hire our legal representative. Concerns arose about the E.D. reporting to two entities. The selected candidate would have to be able to adapt. Commissioner Barthelemy wanted to know about the compensation package. Mr. McRoy said HR has the pay grade and ranges. He would have it for the next board meeting. Chairman Brailsford questioned the cost of this process. How much is it costing? This should be discussed especially if \$17,000 is being spent and coming from the Housing Authority's budget. This has not been allocated. Megan Santee, Legal, replied that most likely any costs could come from funds designated for Roberta's salary which isn't being currently spent. Commissioner Smith Brice said the proposal did include hiring an outside firm, however, it was decided to handle as much as possible internally. The City is taking care of this and as a Board we will have representation on the review committee. We have to remember the City and the HA have the same goal – to hire the best candidate for the job. Discussion continued. Commissioner Island did point out that the E.D. would be an employee of the City and if we did become independent we could choose not to bring that employee aboard with the Housing Authority. Commissioner Smith Brice stated she would like to see the final draft for the E.D. position to be able to offer more input, etc. Chairman Brailsford will be leaving town for two weeks. The Board was reminded of the Special Called Meeting on May 30th to approve the Administrative Plan

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Barthelemy made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Island seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 12:18 p.m.