

MINUTES

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF ABILENE

Meeting of June 21, 9:30 a.m.

The Housing Authority of the City of Abilene, Texas, met in a scheduled session on June 21, 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. Tanya Smith-Brice, Mary Jay Island and Dale Barthelemy.

Staff members present were: Paul Falade, Genette Edmond, Tanya Johnson(left early), Jon James, Director Planning and Development; Edward McRoy, Assistant Director Planning and Development; Megan Santee (Legal), Patricia Aldridge (Legal) and Mary Ann Martell, Secretary. Guests present were: Stephanie Baker, Courtney Jordan, and Paul(a college student).

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Brailsford called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m.

1.0

Routine Announcements, Recognitions and Presentations

Mary Ann Martell, a temporary employee, was hired as Housing Secretary effective June 5, 2007.

DISPOSITION OF MINUTES

2.0

Chairman Brailsford asked for approval of the minutes of the May 22, 2007 meeting and the minutes of the special called meeting of May 30, 2007. Dr. Tanya Smith-Brice stated that her name was misspelled in the minutes. Her first name Tanya is spelled with a Ta not To. Correction noted. There being no other corrections, etc., Commissioner Island made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular scheduled meeting of May 22, 2007, with the correction of Tanya Smith-Brice's name. Commissioner Smith-Brice seconded the motion.

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

NAYS: None

The motion carried.

By Board consensus, the minutes of the special called meeting of May 30, 2007, were also approved with the correction of Tanya Smith-Brice's name.

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. Ed McRoy asked to pull Agenda Item #4.1 for discussion and correction. Commissioner Island made a motion to approve Consent Agenda Items # 4.2 a, b, c, and d. Commissioner Smith-Brice seconded the motion.

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

NAYS: None

The motion carried.

In regards to Consent Agenda Item # 4.1, Mr. McRoy said there was an extra page in the supporting documents, page number 43, in the Annual Plan, perhaps left over from an earlier year. Page 43 needs to be eliminated from the plan. With no further discussion on this agenda item, Commissioner Smith-Brice made a motion to accept Consent Agenda Item 4.1, the Resolution approving the Housing Authority City of Abilene 2007-2008 Annual Plan, Five-Year Plan, Capital Fund Program and Supporting Policies with the deletion of page 43. Commissioner Island seconded the motion.

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

NAYS: None

The motion carried.

REGULAR AGENDA

5.0 **Discussion and possible action regarding the acquisition of professional consultant services by the Housing Authority for the following:**

1) a feasibility/impact study evaluating the costs and benefits of the Housing Authority becoming a fully independent agency and 2) transitional assistance and advice during the current vacancy and job search for an Executive Director.

Ed McRoy relayed to the Board that at the last meeting he provided an RFQ draft for requisition of a consultant to perform an impact study on becoming independent. Since then he has contacted vendors for what it entailed to secure their services and then for what services they would provide. He has contacted NAHRO and Nelrod potentially to inquire on what services they could provide while Ebony Bond was out on leave. Needless to say, this was very costly. Another option, Mr. McRoy stated was to see if they could combine services. He was told an on-site evaluation would have to be done initially. The proposal would include this study and advice and assistance to staff. This could also be an opportunity for the consultant to provide feedback on filling the Executive Director position. NAHRO told him they have dealt with troubled agencies in the past and has experience with housing authorities, but they would want an actual proposal. Mr. McRoy told the Board he does not have the proposal ready for them. Commissioner Island replied that she would prefer “troubled” be changed to “transitional” since we are not a troubled agency. For this solicitation for a consultant agency Ed said he also needed to confirm that we were in compliance with our procurement policies since ours are different than the City’s policies. Ed indicated he should have the draft ready by mid-July or the end of July which could include a 30-day onsite and off site review. He has no knowledge of the cost; however, he estimated it could be from \$20,000 to \$35, 000 for the study. Again, Ed stated he is in no position to

take action yet.

Chairman Brailsford inquired if the \$20,000 to \$35,000 would cover just the impact study. Commissioner Smith-Brice asked Mr. McRoy about how he explored Nelrod and NAHRO for their services. She wanted to know what questions he asked them and the process he used. Initially, Mr. McRoy answered he asked for an interim director for thirty days or longer. The price tag was \$19,000 for an interim director. He also contacted a consulting company from San Antonio. NAHRO quoted a price of \$95 an hour. Commissioner Smith-Brice questioned how Ed came up with the guesstimate of \$20,000 to \$35,000. She thought it was for a feasibility study and could not understand the discussion regarding an interim director. It was communicated that Ebony Bond was out on FMLA for an extended leave and returning July 9. Jon James, Director of Planning and Development, stated that this was started before Ebony left for leave in hopes of getting someone in here to train before she left. It was expressed by the Board that they should have been aware of Ebony's absence and to know of this need.

Commissioner Smith-Brice stated that Mr. McRoy's task was to look into obtaining a feasibility impact study. It was already determined that we did not need someone externally to look for an Executive Director due to finances. She thought efforts were being made to procure a consultant for the feasibility study and to find out the cost of their services. How and why was the interim executive director even addressed? Mr. McRoy explained that in the City structure the Housing Authority Executive Director would be the equivalent of a mid-level management position. If there is a vacancy, there are agencies to provide staffing services. At the last board meeting, an RFQ was discussed for an impact study. However, he further explained that with the short notice from Ebony that she would be out, he felt there was a need to seek services to provide help for the staff while she was out. Therefore, he looked into the cost of an interim executive director and received proposals from Nelrod and NAHRO, however, the costs were too high since the proposals included costs of transportation, housing, etc. Commissioner Smith-Brice asked Ed if the City would typically hire temporary staff for a brief vacancy. Mr. McRoy said with the executive director position vacant and the program coordinator out, he believed there was a need. Commissioner Smith-Brice agreed that \$4,000 a week would be too high. Mr. McRoy continued that Ebony was confident that the staff was trained and that the agency would survive for a couple of weeks, therefore, since the costs of an interim director were too high, they dropped that plan. Mr. McRoy said he was still looking into the impact studies and had contacted Nelrod and Nan McKay. While exploring, he was scrambling and trying to combine other needs with the contract. Though his main focus was the impact study, he was trying to add in another factor which would include the staff asking them questions if they needed assistance.

Commissioner Smith-Brice responded that this has become a "bit messy" since the Board was specific on their directive which was to compile an RFQ draft. This would include sending out requests and getting responses back and then choosing a consulting firm. Instead of the process being honored, it appears the push was to find a consultant who could also do the work of the executive director. This is serious, Commissioner Smith-Brice continued, the Board should have been made aware of this process. What if Nelrod had come up with a contract factoring in this extra cost? She believes this disempowered

the Board. This process was made without the Board's knowledge and input. Commissioner Island agreed and also said it should have been communicated to the Board about Ebony's leave. She also said since HUD funds would have been involved in this contract, it would have required the Board to vote on this. If not, the Board could refuse to pay the bill. Although our personnel are provided through the City, the Board still has a right to decide on this consultant contract since HUD funds are being expended. The City should keep the Board informed and aware of any changes. Commissioner Smith-Brice expressed her appreciation to Mr. McRoy for thinking ahead. She believes the City and the Housing Authority can develop a new relationship and partner respectively.

Regarding the RFQ, she asked Mr. McRoy if there was going to be one. Mr. McRoy replied that the RFQ went to Legal and then to Purchasing, however, they can't find it, therefore, another one may have to be generated. Also, he has not reviewed the Housing Authority's procurement policies. Commissioner Island clarified that when she spoke of "paying the bill", she was saying that the Board had the right to negotiate and wanted to make that part of the contract. Mr. McRoy concurred that the Board would have to vote on the consultant contract. He said he was charged to get the RFQ ready and to get the proposals for the consultant. He said he is moving forward with this and will be getting more aggressive towards the impact study. Jon James, Director of Planning and Development, said the RFQ is not being sent out and just trying to get a temp executive director would have been quite limiting. Commissioner Smith-Brice said thirty days would not have been effective for a temporary executive director to act as a consultant firm. Jon James said the consultant firm would have been someone to help with asking the proper questions. Commissioner Smith-Brice said the search firm would do that. We have to get the RFQ process going. The search for an Executive Director is a separate entity and we need to keep it that way to make it clear. Mr. McRoy said he would concentrate on the impact study and the RFQ. Commissioner Smith-Brice stated that the Board needs to screen the RFQ responses. She said the Board's directive is to continue with the RFQ process, but the Board wants to see the actual RFQ in order to make changes, etc. In regards to Agenda Item 5.1, number 2 needs to be dropped.

5.2 Discussion and approval of leasing a postal meter for the Housing Authority

Courtney Jordan, a representative from Pitney Bowes, was introduced. Commissioner Smith-Brice reminded the Board that at last month's Board meeting, Ebony distributed hand-outs regarding options and pricing on different postal meters. Courtney Jordan gave out new literature regarding the postal meters and informed the Board that she removed the first option since it was too small of a machine and overall it would be too costly. Since the new postal rates that became effective May 14th can be confusing, option 1 from Ebony's proposal could have led to a delay in postage since it did not automatically decide if the postal item was a letter, flat or parcel. She added a new option, machine DM550, which has a "weigh-on the way" modular and determines letter, flat or parcel. This modular can also be added at a later date.

Courtney briefly covered the options: Option 1, the DM500, is for a small system, at \$277 monthly. It does provide an electronic return receipt. However, this unit does not automatically calculate if the item is a letter, flat or parcel. Option 2, the DM550,

without “weigh-on-the way”, at \$341 monthly. The modular could be added at a later date. Option 3, the DM550, with “weigh-on-the way”, at \$447 monthly. She said if we send very much certified mail all the options would have the capability for a return receipt. The ink cartridge does last about two years and the unit could also provide tracking numbers. The new postal rates made mailing more difficult since now a first class letter can’t be over ¼” thick or it goes to a different class. Without the “weigh-on-the way” feature, a person has to ask is it a letter, flat or parcel. Jon James asked if the City has that feature since return receipt can be a legal binding document.

Commissioner Island had concerns about the new mail rates also and that purchasing a machine could solve some of these problems. Commissioner Smith-Brice suggested option 2, the DM550, since it is upgradeable. Courtney also conveyed to the Board that option 1 was made of plastic while the other two options were made of metal and very durable. With system 2, the modular could be added at a later date. The Housing Authority would stay current with system 2. Mr. McRoy inquired about the dimensions of the unit and was told it was 55” long. Again, Commissioner Smith-Brice suggested the basic DM550, option 2. It would be a step in becoming independent. Courtney Jordan recommended option 2 since it was upgradeable. She said there are two resident service representatives in town to train and inform the customers of any changes in the postal rates, etc. Courtney also announced a Pitney Bowes free two-hour postal rate seminar at the Civic Center next week and encouraged attendance. With no further discussion, Commissioner Smith-Brice made a motion to approve the leasing of a postal meter, option 2, the DM550, and to upgrade at a later date. Commissioner Island seconded the motion.

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

NAYS: None

The motion carried.

The postal meter leasing was approved. The contract will be sent to Mr. McRoy to sign and he will check on the City side for legalities, etc. A copy of the contract will be forwarded to the Board.

5.3 Discussion and update on the hiring process for the Housing Administrator position

Jon James informed the Board that the draft went out for the Housing Administrator and some changes were made. The position ad has now gone to various agencies. There was a slight problem getting the ad on NAHRO’s website since an ID user was needed to log-on. The position ad is on PHADA’s website and the City’s jobsite. Currently, we have received a couple of applications. Jon James stated that two board members are needed for the interview committee. We could wait another week or ten days, and then start the process of narrowing down the applications, interviewing, etc. Jon James stated that the position would remain open until filled. The applications and resumes will be reviewed as they come in and interviews will be scheduled after the committee reviews the applications. Mr. McRoy suggested we should not wait until they all come in since the applicants could get hired by another organization.

Commissioner Smith-Brice proposed that a deadline be set internally. As an application comes in, correspondence should be sent out immediately acknowledging it was received and we will be in contact very shortly. If an internal deadline is set and you interview as

you go, the danger is that the tenth person could be the one. Mr. James asked for a recommendation for a time period. Commissioner Island said that perhaps the interview committee could decide this.

Mr. McRoy asked the Board to choose two individuals for the committee. Commissioner Island interjected that the individuals need to keep in mind that this could be time intensive. The Board Chair recommended Commissioners Island and Smith-Brice. It was also addressed that the two keep the other two Commissioners, Brailsford and Barthelemy, informed of the process. Jon James reported that the personnel on the City side on the interview committee consists of: Jon James, Ed McRoy, and Assistant City Manager, David Vela.

Chairman Brailsford asked if there was any more discussion or questions. If not, the Board will go into Executive Session.

6.0 EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board went into Executive Session at 11:10 a.m.

6.1 Discussion on opinion from the Supreme Court on Gene Duke Builders vs. Abilene Housing Authority

No action was taken in the Executive Session. At 11:23 a.m., Chairman Brailsford announced the Board was coming out of Executive Session. The meeting resumed.

7.0 ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Barthelemy made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Island seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.