

MINUTES

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF ABILENE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Meeting of October 18, 2007, 9:30 a.m.

The Housing Authority of the City of Abilene, Texas, met in a Regular Session on October 18, 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: Tanya Smith Brice, Mary Jay Island and Dale Barthelemy.

Staff members present were: Ebony Bond, Programs Coordinator/Interim Director; Genette Edmond, Public Housing Manager; Tanya Johnson, Resident Services Coordinator; Megan Santee, Legal Department; Stanley Smith, Legal Department, and Mary Ann Martell, Housing Secretary. Guests present were: Mona Anderson and Julie Work.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Brailsford called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

1.0 Routine Announcements, Recognitions and Presentations

There were no routine announcements, recognitions and presentations.

2.0 Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held September 20, 2007

Chairman Brailsford called a motion to accept the minutes of the September 20, 2007, meeting, if there was not any discussion. Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to approve the minutes as printed for the September 20, 2007, Board meeting.

Commissioner Island seconded the motion.

The Board voted.

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

NAYS: None

The motion carried.

3.0 Open discussion for Citizen General Comment and Resident/Landlord Input

Ebony Bond, Programs Coordinator/Interim Director, stated that one person was going to attend the meeting, however, she was not present.

4.0 CONSENT AGENDA

4.1 Monthly Status Reports

Chairman Brailsford asked for a motion to approve the Monthly Status Reports. Commissioner Island asked to pull Agenda Item #4.1a. regarding Lease-up for discussion. Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to approve Agenda Items #4.1 b., c., and d. as written. Commissioner Island seconded the motion. The Board voted.

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

NAYS: None

The motion carried.

Regarding Agenda Item #4.1 a., Commissioner Island asked for the status of lease-up which she remarked is a very critical issue. Until it is at an acceptable level, she would like that status report on the Regular Agenda so it can be discussed. HUD was giving us over \$400,000, but we were only spending \$200,000+. The auditor pointed out during his report that HUD could ask for some of that money back. Commissioner Island inquired on where we are for lease-up.

Ebony Bond replied that this concern regarding lease-up has been going on for some time. Roberta Thompson was in contact with HUD and was fully aware of what the results could be for our funding. Ms. Bond elaborated that funding is based on the calendar year. A revised budget was calculated and our monthly budget was reduced. Our monthly HAP budget of \$294,000 was revised to \$288,000.

Currently, we have not pulled anymore applicants from the waiting list since we are still working on the 300+ files from the March pull. We have applicants with vouchers still looking for units. Adjustments have been made since the decrease in funding and we are carefully looking at the monthly budget. Ms. Bond said we should have 850 participants in the program. HUD figures calculate \$340 per unit while our figure is at \$350 per unit. She reassured the Board that we are in-line with lease-up based on the revised budget.

Commissioner Island voiced that she is still concerned about the adjustment that could be made. Ms. Bond said we would use the reserve money for expenditures. Commissioner Island asked if there was a plan or strategy in place since we had been spending only ½ of the funds that HUD was sending us. What could they reclaim?

Ebony Bond responded that the HUD subsidy is currently \$169,000, and for prior months it was \$407,000. We will use reserves/the overage for the difference in expenses. She added that the HA will look at the reserves and the financial statements from Coy Watkins to see if HUD would deduct \$500,000 and if that amount would be available.

Commissioner Island stated that at the next meeting, the Board would like to know how much is being taken out of the reserves to cover the monthly expenses and if the HA is having to dip into savings. Ms. Bond said she would provide a memo regarding the funding and fiscal pull from the reserves that is covering the expenses.

In addition, Ms. Bond relayed to the Board that an FSS participant has completed their goal and an escrow check of over \$9,000 has been paid out. The recipient has moved from Abilene, has a job and has purchased a house. Commissioner Brice asked about more slots in the FSS program since we have only seven. Ms. Bond said she thinks we have to apply for them, but she will find out. Genette Edmond, Program Manager at Public Housing, said that the FSS slots were part of Operation Bootstrap. At start-up, we

were given 40 slots and once used, those slots are gone. She believes to receive more slots, an HA has to show they have people willing to get onto the program.

Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to accept Agenda item 4.1 a. as written.

Commissioner Island seconded the motion. The Board voted.

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

NAYS: None

The motion carried.

5.0 REGULAR AGENDA

5.1 Update on status of RFQ regarding the acquisition of professional consultant Services by the Housing Authority for a feasibility/impact study evaluating the costs Benefits of the Housing Authority becoming a fully independent agency

About eight or nine agencies submitted their qualifications by the deadline for the transitional feasibility study. These will have to be reviewed and graded. More will be discussed on these at a later time.

Commissioner Island wanted to know how the search was going for an attorney for the HA. Ebony Bond said she had spoken with one and will be conducting a phone conference with another attorney.

Commissioner Smith Brice revealed that during the discussions for a Housing Administrator, the City asked if the Board was ready for the split between the City and the Housing Authority. She hopes that Commissioner Island and she were not out of line, but they responded with a, "Yes." Furthermore, Commissioner Smith Brice said she asked for a meeting with the Board and the City Council members. This should help with the process to have an open discussion and then to move forward. November 1 is a tentative date for a meeting with the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners and the City Council regarding the split.

Commissioner Smith Brice also said that the Board needs to develop criteria for the RFQ responses in order that they can be assessed. Before finding a new Housing director, the Board needs to know what direction the HA is heading, in order to develop a plan.

The Board felt that Ebony Bond as Programs Coordinator and Interim Director needs to be kept abreast of the situation regarding the split, etc.

Again, Commissioner Island remarked about the HA getting an attorney onboard. An attorney and consultant are needed to look at the needs, etc. of becoming independent. Ms. Bond said she is planning on talking with an attorney and hoping to schedule a conference call. Chairman Brailsford asked if the attorney was separate from the RFQ and the split. Commissioner Island said we need one regardless of that situation. Chairman Brailsford agreed that it is the Board's responsibility to get the attorney.

Commissioner Island suggested that Chairman Brailsford and Commissioner Smith Brice get together and get names and get an attorney onboard to represent the HA in all issues, etc. This could be put on the Agenda for an executive session.

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

No update was given on the position.

5.3 Board of Commissioners' term of expiration and application to recommend new Board member

Ebony Bond informed the Board that Commissioner Island's and Commissioner Barthelemy's term was expiring in November. She also asked for suggestions for the vacancy on the Board which has been vacant for almost a year. Forms were passed out for the Board to complete. She asked Commissioner Barthelemy if he wanted to be reappointed for another term. He answered, "Yes." When Ms Bond asked Commissioner Island if she wanted to be reappointed for another term, she replied that she would give her answer later.

The reappointment form will be completed for Commissioner Barthelemy and sent over to the City Secretary.

5.4 Discussion of HUD's Final CY Proration for

Ebony Bond reviewed with the Board a letter dated October 11, 2007, from HUD showing the increased funding percentage for Public Housing for 2007. Public Housing's percentage was 76% and was it increased to 83.4%.

Commissioner Island asked about the Drug Elimination Grant which had provided funds to work with the school kids. Genette Edmonds said that grant had ended. This concerned Commissioner Island who wanted to know what the kids were doing. The reports are in the memo from Public Housing.

Commissioner Island requested that a verbal report be given on the activities for the kids at Public Housing at the next Board meeting. She also asked to add a quarterly investment report to the next agenda.

5.5 Discussion and review of possible investment property.

Ebony Bond said she had received some information on some property that was for sale, however, she will make copies of this and this Agenda item will be tabled. She was told this needs to be in an executive session.

6.0 Executive Session

The Board went into Executive Session at 10:45 a.m. The Board came out of Executive Session at 10:50 a.m., with no action taken.

3.0 Open Discussion for Citizen General Comment and Resident/Landlord Input

Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to revisit Agenda item 3.0 Open Discussion for Citizen General Comment and Resident/Landlord Input. This was seconded by

Commissioner Island. The Board voted.

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

NAYS: None

The motion carried.

Ebony Bond introduced Menyon Booker who asked to speak at the Board meeting regarding some Housing issues.

Menyon Booker reported the following events leading up to her housing assistance being terminated:

- She had received a housing voucher in June and it expired in August. She found a unit that was to be inspected on August 24, and was told after it passed she could move in, etc.
- At work, she was offered a different position. She brought in her 9/07/07 paystub and reported the changes.
- She received a letter stating that as of 9/24/07, her unit had passed and that her contract was ready. It stated she would pay \$500 and the PHA would pay \$34. On 9/27/07, she came back to speak to Lori Baker since she was confused about her rent and was told she did not take walk-ins.
- She then received a letter saying the contract had been terminated and was voided due to her income being over for a household of three.
- Now, she wanted to know what about September's rent and the \$800 childcare expense she had. She had been told by Joana Wuest that her share of the rent would be \$256 and then Lori Baker tells her sorry, but that she could file a grievance. She then called Ebony Bond and was told the voucher was preliminary and that you are not on housing until the contract is signed. Ms. Booker told the Board that she has to come up with \$812 for rent and \$294 by the 19th for her electric bill, plus she has the childcare expense. Her electricity got cut off. She says it seems as if a person tries to better themselves, they just get beaten down. She does feel she has been done wrong. If the voucher was just preliminary and she wasn't on housing, she would never have transferred her utilities, etc. She told the Board that she was here to tell her story and so it would not happen to anyone else.

Program Coordinator Ebony Bond explained to the Board what happened in this circumstance is that Ms. Booker's income changed right before the inspection. Her increased income resulted in her being over the income limits for a family of three. However, the contract had been ran and HUD was going to pay \$34. It has already been discussed that the contract should be honored since the contract was in her possession and already done. With the income change being reported within the ten days, it would be effective in August.

Discussion occurred on the circumstances leading up to this situation with Ms. Booker and what could be done to help her now. Policy was discussed and the need to review policy.

Ebony Bond said initially the original income was used plus the childcare expense, however, this did not include an increase in child support, too. From August 24 to October, the tenant would pay the difference. Ebony could reinstate Ms. Booker with the official date of 8/24/07, but her October and November portion would be higher.

Commissioner Island seemed to think this was a “no fault” situation. The tenant followed the procedures, but policy made it a “no fault” situation.

The Board directed Ebony Bond to correct this situation and try to take Ms. Booker back to where she would have been before this experience. The Board requested a report at the next Board meeting. Policy will be reviewed later.

Ms. Bond stated she would contact Ms. Booker’s landlord and try to resolve the issue. She would update the Board at the next Board meeting.

7.0 Adjournment

Commissioner Barthelemy made a motion to adjourn the Board meeting. This was seconded by Commissioner Island. The Board adjourned at 12:14 a.m.