

# MINUTES

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

**Meeting of November 15, 2007, 9:30 a.m.**

The Housing Authority of the City of Abilene, Texas, met in a Regular Session on November 15, 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; Ed McRoy, Assistant Director Planning and Development; Genette Edmond, Public Housing Manager; Tanya Johnson, Resident Services Coordinator; Megan Santee, Attorney City Manager's Office; Stanley Smith, Legal Department, Henry Loza, Housing Counselor and Mary Ann Martell, Housing Secretary. Guests present were: Mona Anderson, Patsy Ivey and David Webb.

### CALL TO ORDER

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

#### **1.0 Routine Announcements, Recognitions and Presentations**

Ebony Bond, Programs Coordinator/Interim Director, introduced new Housing Counselor, Henry Loza, who replaced Vicky Ribordy. He had worked at the West Texas Rehab for many years.

Ms. Bond also expressed sympathy in the loss of Housing Services Specialist Jeannette Girtz who passed away on 10/27/07.

Recently, Ebony Bond had attended HUD training to help with the transition into the role as executive director and received specific handouts for the Board which she distributed to them.

#### **2.0 Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held October 18, 2007, and the Special Call Meeting, held November 1, 2007.**

Chairman Brailsford called for a motion to accept the minutes of the October 18, 2007, meeting and for the Special Call Meeting of November 1, 2007. Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to approve the minutes as printed for the October 18, 2007, meeting and the November 1, 2007, Special Call Meeting. Commissioner Barthelemy 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**

Two Section 8 Landlords were in attendance, Patsy Ivey and David Webb.

Patsy Ivey requested that the Board consider direct deposit for the landlord checks since her business is being affected when checks are late due to the postal service, etc. With direct deposit, there would be no need for envelopes, checks, or postage. Checks would not be late. She said she knows many landlords who won't take HUD payments due to checks being late.

Commissioner Smith Brice replied that presently direct deposit is in the process of being implemented. Mr. McRoy, Assistant Director of Planning and Development, stated that the system is in place for direct deposit for the HAP payments. A test run should be in place by the end of the year.

Commissioner Smith Brice stated that since the issue is Ms. Ivey not receiving her payments on time which affects her business, the question the Board needs to address is how we can get her checks to her in a timely manner. Discussion occurred on the check process with the HAP payments. Commissioner Island said that since the Housing Authority (HA) is connected to the City, the accounting process is duplicated for HUD and for the City. This process is cumbersome for staff since two budgets have to be created, etc. The Board reassured Ms. Ivey that they would look into the procedures more and try to expedite the process where she and others will receive HAP payments timelier.

David Webb addressed the Board concerning the need for direct deposit for the landlord checks and late fees.

Mr. Webb conveyed that he felt the HA could do better than getting the landlord checks out by the fifth working day. He expressed that many times he had received his check late. Megan Santee, Attorney, informed Mr. Webb that date is set by the City and not the HA and that it has been discussed time-after-time with him.

The 20<sup>th</sup> cutoff date was discussed also. Ebony Bond told the Board that the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month is the cutoff date for files to get to accounting. A survey was sent out to the landlords and the majority chose the 20<sup>th</sup> for the cutoff on new contracts. Ms. Bond informed the Board that the accountant prepares the checks, but then he has to enter them into the City's system which can only be done at certain times. Commissioner Smith Brice said that helps to confirm the fact that the housing authority needs to become independent.

Discussion followed on how several landlords have been taking complaints to the City Council instead of the Housing Authority Board. Some of these issues are not being relayed to the board, and therefore, are not handled expeditiously. The City is not abreast with HA policies and HUD policies and that is why it is important for the landlords to address the board.

Ebony Bond also informed the Board that additional personnel, an accounting technician,

has been hired to assist Paul. After discussion regarding the accounting procedures, Commissioner Island said, at this point, we need guidelines and then we need to follow then at 100%. Ms. Bond replied that we have the Administrative Plan that we currently follow and if we do not follow that plan, HUD can take points away. The Board agreed that following the Admin Plan along with initiating direct deposit will improve the situation.

#### **4.0 CONSENT AGENDA**

##### **4.1 Resolutions**

Chairman Brailsford asked for a motion to approve the items on the Consent Agenda, 4.1; 4.2; 4.3; 4.4; 4.5; and 4.6. Ebony Bond asked to pull Item #4.1. Commissioner Smith Brice asked to pull Item #4.2 and 4.5. David Webb asked to pull Items 4.3, 4.5, and 4.6. Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to approve Agenda Item #4.4 on the Consent Agenda. 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 Resolution approving the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) Certification for Fiscal Year Ending 9-30-07, Ms. Bond informed the Board that this was a self-certification and often times; HUD will come back with something different. HUD will examine the MTCS reports for the last couple of months using 9-14 indicators. We are expecting HUD to come back with a discrepancy on #12, the annual HQS reports. These reports are not accurate on the MTCS reports since the input was not being done correctly in Yardi. Also, regarding item #13, lease-up, we are anticipating a 0 rating. Several months ago, our funding was cut; however, our voucher size wasn't cut. We still have our 1,029 vouchers in which HUD expects us to use the funding that was overpaid to us. Financially, the HA is strong, and Ebony Bond stated we have "tapped" into our reserves at about \$125,000 monthly.

When HUD reviews this year, our 2008 budget may be increased due to our increase in lease-up. Presently, our lease-up is at 83%, but it needs to be at about 85%. Ms. Bond reported to the Board that the counselors are now doing monthly reports of their new admissions, terminations, and recertifications. This will assist in pulling more applicants when tenants are terminated from the program. Ms. Bond reported to the Board that recently the counselors have finished with the large pull of applicants from March. As a result, fifty-two applicants were pulled off the waiting list in October. She stressed that the HA will be working diligently on increasing lease-up.

Commissioner Island said these monthly counselor reports will help, but we must improve our "lease-up" because we cannot live out of savings.

In addition, Ebony Bond said #14 indicator, Family Self-Sufficiency, states differently on the MTCS reports than our actual numbers. It has not recognized those people that have graduated so there may be a HUD discrepancy. Overall, Ms. Bond said our SEMAP score should be higher than last year.

Consent Agenda Item 4.2 is the Resolution approving write-off of delinquent accounts receivables for the Low Rent Public Housing Program. Commissioner Smith Brice asked if these were deceased tenants and if we could charge their estates. These accounts are those outstanding from damages to the unit. In most cases, the security deposit has been retained to help and these are the balances. For Public Housing, any amount owed over \$2500 is reported to HUD I.G. and for Section 8; any amount owed over \$3000 is reported.

Consent Agenda Item #4.3 is a resolution approving changes to the Housing Authority City of Abilene 2007 Administrative Plan. Mr. Webb had pulled it since he wanted to know what the amendments to it are since it had recently been approved. Moving on, Ebony Bond said there are two changes to the written policy that were in the previous plan, however, they were not in the new plan. In Chapter 6, if a tenant has an income change of \$100 or less a month, the counselor would not need to do an interim, however, it would be documented. That income change would be factored in the annual recertification. Also, stated by Ebony Bond was the fact that other housing authorities have increased their amount to \$200 or more to reduce the stress on staff. The change to Chapter 8 would help reduce the number of failed inspections. Currently, when a family occupies a unit, at the time of inspection, an adult family member must be present. The presence of the owner or owner's representative is encouraged, but not required. The change would require the presence of the owner or owner's representative and/or an adult family member of the household at the inspection. Commissioner Smith Brice said attendance at the inspection needs to be discussed between the landlord and tenant. Also, if the income change of \$100 or less was in the former Admin Plan, she asked why it was left out of the current Admin Plan. Commissioner Smith Brice voiced that she was not comfortable with this change and did not want to move on this at this time since it needed more clarity. Mark Zachary's office should be called to see why this was left out. Legal advised to table this item until it could be reviewed.

Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to table Consent Agenda Item #4.3. 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 presented an overview of Consent Agenda Item #4.5., a resolution approving the Housing Authority of the City of Abilene's corrective and implementation plan to ensure revenue is reconciled each year between the PHA and the fee accountant and to resolve the underreported revenue for the Housing Choice Voucher and Low Rent Programs. The HA had been sending the fee accountant the monthly financials. The audit had two findings. The fee accountant had booked money in the wrong year and a cash basis was used instead of accrual basis. Staff at the HA did not see a copy of the REAC submissions until after they were submitted at the end of the year. Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to approve Consent Agenda Item #4.5. Commissioner Island seconded the motion. The Board voted.

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

NAYS: None

***The motion carried.***

Regarding Consent Agenda Item #4.6, the Monthly Status Reports, David Webb stated he had put in a open record request to receive a statement of the monthly budget. However, he said he would like a statement showing the income and expenses compared to the allocated income and expenses on the annual budget. Ms. Bond said HUD is only interested in the administrative costs and the operating costs. Also, on Item #4.6, Ebony Bond said we would be receiving Capital Funds to make improvements and modernization at Public Housing which can include air conditioning, roofing, etc. She informed the Board that we have been approached by the Energy Efficiency Company and AEP to make energy improvements totaling \$300,000 at our Public Housing sites. They can assist with lighting, replacing refrigerators that are over seven-years old, and with air conditioning at Riveria. The CFP allocated for those items can be utilized in other areas perhaps repairing playgrounds.

Commissioner Island made a motion to approve Consent Agenda Item #4.6. This was seconded by Commissioner Smith Brice. The Board voted.

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

NAYS: None

***The motion carried.***

Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to accept Consent Agenda Items #4.1 and #4.2. 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 Discussion and approval of Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Status/Financial Report for October 2007**

Per request from the Board, the Status Report for Section 8 has been moved to the Regular Agenda for discussion. Ebony Bond addressed a question regarding FSS. The FSS program was established in the mid 1990's and was later phased out. The HA was allotted a number of slots. Once the program participant completes their goal, that FSS slot is gone. There are no more slots. Commissioner Smith Brice made a motion to approve 5.1, the Housing Choice Voucher Program Status Report. Commissioner Island seconded the motion. The Board voted.

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

NAYS: None

***The motion carried.***

### **5.2 Low Rent Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) Management Operations**

Ms. Bond informed the Board that she received a letter from May stating the PHAS was not due this year since Public Housing's PHAS score was a standard performer. Therefore, it is completed every other year and submitted to HUD every other year.

### **5.3 Update and discussion on status of the acquisition of professional consultant services by the Housing Authority for an impact study and implementation plan for the transition of the Housing Authority into a fully independent agency.**

An RFQ had been sent out for acquisition of a consulting firm to perform a study on the HA becoming an independent agency. However, now since the meeting between the HA Board and the City Council, it is clear in what direction the HA is taking, thus, it would be favorable to have the firm assist in the facilitation of this change. The HA received six responses. Mr. McRoy told the Board that Commissioner Smith Brice and he reviewed the responses separately. Commissioner Smith Brice said they narrowed the six down to their top two preferences which are Gilmore Kean from Washington, D.C. and Patterson and Associates Consulting in San Antonio.

Mr. McRoy relayed a message from Jon James that the City Council is interested in having a transitional plan for the HA in place by the target date of 2/01/08. Commissioner Smith Brice interjected that the evaluation and transitional study cannot be rushed. Perhaps the City and the HA needs to meet and discuss this matter since the date should be a joint decision. Mr. McRoy explained to the Board that the contract between the HA and the City could be amended; perhaps the first step could be to eliminate the hiring of the executive director selection. Commissioner Smith Brice asked Mr. McRoy to relay a message back to the City stating that the Board would like to have something in writing of what the City wants. She also said it seems unreasonable of the City to just pull a date from somewhere. Commissioner Island explicitly stated that the HA contracts with the City; the City does not contract with the HA.

Commissioner Smith Brice asked the Board's permission for Mr. McRoy to talk to the two consulting firms since the focus has changed somewhat and they need to be notified of the changes. The Board confirmed that Mr. McRoy could contact the consultants and obtain more information. Megan Santee, a City attorney, suggested having the firms give presentations to the Board and then "come back with a contract" after both sides let the other know what they need. Commissioner Island asked Chairman Brailsford if he wanted to appoint Commissioner Smith Brice to obtain more information from the consulting firms now instead of waiting until January. The Board could hear what the consultants have to say at a Special Call Meeting in December and see their model towards the HA becoming independent. Chairman Brailsford agreed that it would be fine for the firms to give presentations.

### **5.8 Update on housing issues of resident, Menyon Booker**

Since Commissioner Smith Brice had to leave the meeting, the Board okayed to move ahead with Item #5.8 on the Regular Agenda and then continue with 5.4.

Ebony Bond gave an update on Menyon Booker, a tenant who had met with the Board at the last Board meeting. The HA completed the contract which reflects a December 1<sup>st</sup> HAP payment of \$0 due to the 10% increase in Ms. Booker's income. It was decreased to \$0 from \$34. In order to put her in a place where she would have been before this incident, her electric bill was paid for October and \$74 was paid towards her childcare. The policy states she can remain on the program for six months even though she is not receiving any rental assistance.

**5.5 Discussion on a Board review of the 2007 Administration Plan**

Ms. Bond affirmed that the staff is improving its customer service. The Admin Plan states that application intake is Tuesdays and Thursdays and applications are given out Mondays through Thursdays, however, we would like to change to Mondays through Fridays, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Commissioner Smith Brice is planning a review of the Admin Plan.

**5.4 Discussion and update on hiring process for the Housing Administrator position**

Mr. McRoy informed the Board that all housing administrator applications have been returned to Human Resources. The City is giving direction for the Board to take back that responsibility. He said that a component of the consultant’s project could be to assist in securing an executive director.

**5.6 Discussion on available activities for the youth of the residents at Low Rent Public Housing**

Tonya Johnson, Resident Services Coordinator, gave a brief report on the youth activities for the youth. She mentioned the tutoring center at Riveria which has had a good response from adults and children. A teacher from AISD, Mr. Reeves, helped at the tutoring center focusing on refugees, etc., for one hour, one day a week. Now, a group of Abilene High School students is tutoring at the center on that night. This is going to be extended to 1 ½ hours. Another group is interested in tutoring on Wednesday night so an additional day may be added.

**5.7 Discussion on vacancy of Housing Services Specialist part-time position**

Ebony Bond reported to the Board that currently we have two full-time Housing Services Specialists. She believes that the part-time position is no longer necessary; however, she will evaluate the situation and inform the Board if deemed necessary. The money could be better utilized in the accounting department.

**7.0 Adjournment**

Commissioner Barthelemy made a motion to adjourn the Board meeting. This was seconded by Commissioner Island. The Board adjourned at 12:46 p.m.

These minutes of the Housing Authority City of Abilene Board of Commissioners meeting held on 11/15/07, respectfully submitted and approved on January 17, 2008.

Mr. V.E. Brailsford  
Chairman, Board of Commissioners

01/17/08  
Date

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Executive Secretary, Board of Commissioners

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Date