

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
LAWRENCE-DOUGLAS COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

August 28, 2017
5:30 p.m.

AGENDA

Babcock Place
Meal Site

1. Swearing-In of Jamie Davison for First Term as LDCHA Commissioner

The meeting was called to order by Chair Powers at 5:30 pm. Executive Director Oury administered the oath of office as a Commissioner representing Douglas County to Jamie Davison.

2. Call of Roll

Upon call of roll, the following Commissioners responded present:

Jamie Davison
Maria Duran
Ellen Paulsen
Joshua Powers
Bronson Star

Also present were members of the public Pat Benabe, Terri Roth, Glenda Davis, Maggie Crowder, Cindy Hanna, Wanda Hand, and Helen San Mario, and LDCHA staff members Beverly Hyatt, Ruth Lichtwardt, and Shannon Oury.

3. Approve Minutes of the June 27 Board of Commissioners Meeting

Commissioner Paulsen moved to approve the Minutes as presented. Vice Chair Duran seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Receive Comments from Tenants and Public

There were questions from the audience regarding the upcoming changes to the non-smoking perimeter around the building and whether a covered space will be provided for smokers. Executive Director Oury answered that the LDCHA's current non-smoking policy still applies until the HUD-mandated 25-foot perimeter rule goes into effect in July of 2018, and that the Board has begun considering options for a covered smoking shelter.

Babcock Place resident Wanda Hand made several comments regarding the lack of enough parking spaces in the lot for all the residents who have cars. She said the Babcock Bus takes up several spaces, a van which was donated to Clinton Place and is not being used takes up one space and the tags are about to expire, and another resident's car which is never moved has been in the same spot for months. There was discussion by other residents about non-residents parking in the lot but not being towed, and Commissioner Duran supplied information on some current enforcement measures. Other residents said they disliked parking in the street and could not afford repairs if the cars were hit, as has happened to some. Ms. Oury explained that the LDCHA has looked at various

options to fit in a few more parking spots but that there will never be enough space to provide on-site parking for all Babcock Place residents. The neighborhood dwellings around Babcock Place have the same issue, with some homeowners and renters needing to park in the street, and some residents at Edgewood Homes also have to park in the street. Chair Powers thanked everyone for their comments.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Receive July 2017 Public Housing Financial Reports
- B. Receive July 2017 Clinton Place Financial Reports
- C. Receive July 2017 Section 8/VASH Program Report
- D. Receive Lawrence Expanded Housing Semiannual Financial Report
- E. Receive Building Independence III (BIND) Semiannual Financial Report
- F. Receive Quarterly Demographic Report
- G. Resolution 2017-15: Approve Language Assistance Plan

Vice Chair Duran moved to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Commissioner Star seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

6. REGULAR AGENDA

A. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Oury reported that a review team from HUD will be in the office from September 12-14 to perform a validation review of the Section 8 reserves which were transitioned to HUD. She gave more detail on the background of the reserves transition for the benefit of Commissioner Davison. This visit is part of the transition process. HUD still says the transitioned funds belong to LDCHA and the agency will continue to have access.

Ms. Oury outlined the possible Congressional funding scenarios, the most likely of which is another Continuing Resolution. The several proposed budgets are vastly different and there are only 15 days before the deadline. If the government shuts down, as happened for 15 days in 2013, the LDCHA could weather the shutdown as long as it is not very long. Last time HUD sent operating funds prior to the shutdown. However, it would create difficulty for residents who would not get their Social Security payments. The LDCHA would consider the situation a hardship for those residents, and they would not be issued late rent notices. Ms. Oury pointed out that the President's version of the budget would legislatively allow a setoff of MTW reserves, meaning the transitioned reserves held by HUD which were previously mentioned could be swept.

Ms. Oury outlined the process of the annual MTW Plan submission. She highlighted the proposed Activity in the Plan to project base several vouchers for the proposed units to be built in conjunction with the Bert Nash Crisis Center if the LDCHA is not able to obtain a grant to support the vouchers. The Plan has been posted for public comment. During the MTW site visit earlier in the month, the MTW representatives suggested adding two sentences for clarification to that Activity. An addition has also been made to the Admin/ACOP to incorporate a new HUD regulation regarding denial of porting Section 8 vouchers. The changes can be made now and will be posted on the website as well as discussed at the public hearing on Thursday if the Board approves.

Chair Powers asked the Board members to vote on approving the changes. Approval was unanimous.

In addition, the MTW representatives requested that photos and information on two of the MTW-funded Activities, the Car Repair program and the two Bike programs. They have been identified by HUD as “promising practices” that HUD wants to share with other agencies.

The management review of the State HOME grant had no findings, and only one concern, which staff has addressed through changing part of the record-keeping process.

Ms. Oury reported that the LDCHA recently received two Merit Awards from NAHRO for the MTW Homeless Transitional Vouchers, and the Dinner at the Huppee program.

Ms. Oury gave background on the HUD regulations that all jurisdictions that receive HUD or community development funds perform a Fair Housing assessment. The report is required to use HUD-provided data, and some of the data is incorrect or missing. HUD knows this and has instructed that the data be used anyway. LDCHA staff has also included data from other sources to improve accuracy. The LDCHA has been working with City staff on the report for several months, and the draft has now been posted on the City website for public comment. It will be brought to the Board for approval at the September meeting. The executive summary and the goals will be included in the meeting packet. In the meantime, a link to the full 312-page document on the website was included in this month’s packet.

Chair Powers congratulated the agency staff on receiving recognition on “best practices” in spite of the uncertain funding environment. There was a question from Pat Benabe on what would happen if HUD decides to raise rent from 30% to 35% of income. Ms. Oury gave a brief explanation of the likely process, emphasizing that it would ultimately depend on the way the legislation is written. There was discussion on the direction that HUD seems to be taking, and the RAD program.

B. Resolution 2017-16: MTW Section 8 / VASH Budget Revision #1

Executive Director Oury explained that when the Section 8 operating budget was adopted in February, it was based on conservative estimates since the agency had no idea what the funding would actually be. When the subsidy amount was finally released, the proration was 2% higher than the 95% which the agency had budgeted for, so the budget has been revised to reflect the higher amount of funding. In early spring, a freeze was put on agency hiring, COLA and merit pay since the final amount was not known. Ms. Oury said that the revised budget would allow for the hiring freeze to be removed and the COLA and merit pay to be awarded to eligible employees if approved by the Board. Some of the MTW activities such as the Car Repair program were also placed on hold and this budget would reactivate them.

Commissioner Star moved to approve Resolution 2017-16 as presented. Vice Chair Duran seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Resolution 2017-17: Review and Approve 2018 Utility Allowances for Public Housing and Tenant Based Programs (Section 8 & HOME)

Executive Director Oury described the Utility Allowance program and explained that Babcock Place residents do not get a utility allowance since all utilities are paid by the LDCHA, but all other residents get the allowance based on utilities paid by the resident. The agency surveys utility rates throughout Douglas County annually in order to determine the amount of the allowance. If the change in rates changes more than 10% then the agency will reset the amounts. For next year, staff is recommending that no change be made to the allowance. The utility rates have not changed more than 10% over 2016, and the agency did raise the allowance several times during the past few years even when the rates did not rise more than 10%. Additionally, the agency is very apprehensive about the funding picture for 2018 and is concerned that raising the allowance would have a negative impact on what is expected to be a very tight budget.

Commissioner Paulsen moved to approve Resolution 2017-17 as presented. Vice Chair Duran seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Discuss Updated Mission and Vision Statements

Executive Director Oury described how when she first began at LDCHA she looked up the mission statement and was underwhelmed. It referred, for instance, to providing “adequate” housing, yet the agency has long provided housing that is better than “adequate.” The wording was modified slightly to change that to “quality” but the mission statement remained substantially the same. The agency has not had a vision statement.

After the Kansas Leadership Center training, which 18 staff members attended, staff was inspired to update the mission statement. Ms. Oury detailed the meetings which were held with general staff and then management staff to develop both a new mission and a vision statement. The mission statement is what the agency does and why it does it, the vision statement is what the agency would do if money were no object. Ms. Oury requested the feedback of the Board members on the two proposed statements.

Comments from the Board included agreeing with both statements and that the mission statement was more readable. There was one question about whether a phrase about being “free from discrimination” is required of the agency. Ms. Oury explained that using the term is not required and that including the words “all” and “accessible” in the statements was meant to emphasize inclusivity. Chair Powers spoke about the difficulty of the process of coming up with a succinct and understandable statement and that he was pleased it had been developed through staff participation.

Vice Chair Duran moved to approve the new mission and visions statements. Commissioner Star seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

E. Discuss 326 Michigan Easement and Approve Board Chair to Execute

Executive Director Oury called the Board’s attention to the photos and maps of the properties which were included in the packet, and reported that the agenda item had transformed due to changed information. The Chair will not be asked to sign the document yet.

She explained that months ago she had been told at a meeting with the new CEO of the hospital that properties to the north of the LDCHA's scattered site house at 326 Michigan St. had been purchased by the hospital and were being torn down to expand parking. Some weeks after that, Ms. Oury was asked if anyone had spoken to her about a public utility easement which would extend to the agency's property and to the one other remaining house which is next door to the south, at 330 Michigan St. She had not heard about this and asked that the information be sent. She also sent staff to the planning meetings for discussion and the Maintenance Director examined the property. An easement agreement from the City was sent to LDCHA which differed from what was originally described, in that it was granting the easement to the private property on the south side rather than to the City. Upon investigation it was revealed that the intent of the City had changed and that the public line was going to come only to the edge of the property, and that they had sent the easement request on behalf of the private property. However, the Maintenance Director does not believe that the private lines actually connect as shown on the City map and therefore Ms. Oury believes that nothing should be agreed to until all the issues are clarified. Chair Powers stated he would like to know the constraints of moving lines and costs and believes the LDCHA should be held harmless for any changes. The LDCHA's attorney is working on it, and the issue will come back before the Board after more information is known.

F. Discuss Reorganization of LDCHA Departments

Executive Director Oury explained that the current agency organizational chart extends back to about 1999-2000. She said that one of the positions, Initial Occupancy Specialist, had been filled for nineteen years by Lori Tarwater. Ms. Tarwater passed away unexpectedly and there have been two people in that position since, both of whom have since resigned. They both experienced difficulty keeping on top of the work when vouchers were being issued, so Ms. Oury did a flow chart of the work involved in that position. She came to the conclusion that perhaps it was Ms. Tarwater's high level of experience and efficiency which had allowed her to be uniquely successful in that position, and that the department likely needed some reorganization. Ms. Oury also read a Price Waterhouse study which had been completed in 2001 for the agency, in which a data analyst position was recommended. There was no such position when Ms. Oury began at the agency and she created it a few years ago. The data analyst position is not quite right, and should be used to provide more assistance to the Finance Director.

Due to these and other issues, the LDCHA is now looking at a more comprehensive reorganization. Strategic planning and a website upgrade are approved in the 2017 MTW Plan and included again in the 2018 Plan. A Kansas Health Foundation grant will be applied for to bring in an expert who has worked for two MTW agencies as a strategic advisor. Additionally, the wage chart is out of date, as evidenced by the fact that Ms. Oury has had to ask the Board's permission to offer wages higher than authorized in the chart when hiring new directors, and there are other positions which likely need to be upgraded or perhaps even downgraded. Ms. Oury would do this in a budget neutral manner. She would like the Board's authorization to remove the current salary and hiring freeze so the agency can fill the critical positions.

Chair Powers asked what would happen if the grant were not awarded, and Ms. Oury said the agency would move forward with making the changes without hiring the outside expert. Mr. Powers said that his time on the Board had shown the agency staff to be detail-oriented and strategic thinkers, and that he would support the agency's effort to look at itself to make itself even better, with a preference that it be budget neutral. There were questions from the Board about the time frame and budget, and the fees for the expert. Mr. Powers surveyed the Board members and authorized Ms. Oury to begin the process as outlined. The Board will take action at the appropriate time.

Commissioner Star moved to remove the salary and hiring freeze. Vice Chair Duran seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

G. Discuss November and December Meeting Dates

Executive Director Oury pointed out that the November meeting as currently scheduled per the By-laws will take place the Monday after Thanksgiving, and suggested the Board members might want to consider moving the date if it will conflict with their holiday plans. If the date is kept the same, the Board packet will be sent out earlier than usual. The December meeting as scheduled falls on Christmas Day, and cannot be moved to the following Monday per the usual stipulation in the By-laws since that is New Year's Day. Ms. Oury reminded the Board that when the meeting is moved earlier, the financial reports are not generally ready yet because the fee accountant cannot get them prepared in time.

Following brief discussion, the Board decided to keep the November meeting on the day scheduled but to move the December meeting.

Commissioner Paulsen moved to change the date of the December meeting to Monday, December 18. Vice Chair Duran seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Calendar and Announcements

Executive Director Oury will be out of the office Sept. 11-12 for HAI meetings, and all LDCHA offices will be closed for Labor Day.

8. Adjournment

There being no further items of business, Vice Chair Duran moved to adjourn. Commissioner Paulsen seconded. The meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

Chair

Secretary

Attest