

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA, SC  
March 21, 2019

The Board of Commissioners of The Housing Authority of the City of Columbia, SC convened on Thursday, March 21, 2019 at 4:32 p.m. in the CHA Board Room.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order and upon roll call, those present and absent for the Housing Authority of the City of Columbia were as follows:

PRESENT: Ernest Cromartie, III, Acting Chair  
James Chatfield, Commissioner  
George Green, Commissioner  
Georgia Mjartan, Commissioner  
Selena Pickens, Commissioner  
Kara Simmons, Commissioner  
Anne Sinclair, Commissioner  
Gilbert Walker, Executive Director  
Ed Eubanks, Legal Counsel

STAFF: Howard Thomas, Melanie Baker, Donna Gilbert, Ramonda Pollard, Lee McRoberts, Cindy Godbey, Cynthia Hardy

VISITORS: Bob Coble, Diane Sumpter, Jamie Devine, members of the public, members of the media

Mr. Cromartie called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

Mr. Cromartie asked Ms. Sinclair, Ms. Simmons, Mr. Chatfield, and Ms. Mjartan to recite the Oath of Commissioner. Ms. Mjartan stated, prior to her Oath, that her husband works for a bank that has a business relationship with the Authority but that she has no direct interest in those matters and will consult with legal counsel if needed.

Mr. Cromartie stated there was a need for an Executive Session to discuss a FOIA matter. Upon motion of Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Ms. Sinclair it was unanimously decided to enter Executive Session at 4:40 p.m.

At 4:55 p.m., Mr. Cromartie stated that Regular Session had resumed. Attorney Bob Coble stated that the Board held an orientation on Monday, March 11 and that due to a question regarding when terms of the new Commissioners began it was believed no quorum was present and no public notice was given. No business was discussed at the orientation, background information on the Authority was given and all information will be placed on the CHA website in order to be transparent.

Mr. Cromartie called for the election of Officers. Ms. Sinclair nominated Mr. Ernest Cromartie, III as Chair, seconded by Mr. Green, Mr. Cromartie was unanimously elected. Mr.

Cromartie called for nominations for Vice Chair. Ms. Mjartan nominated Ms. Sinclair, seconded by Mr. Cromartie, Ms. Sinclair was unanimously elected.

Mr. Cromartie stated that the minutes of the February 21, 2019 meeting should be amended as follows; the 2<sup>nd</sup> portion of Mr. Cromartie's motions on the last page should include "in conjunction with legal counsel" regarding the report to be made by the Health and Human Safety Officer directly to the Board. Ms. Mjartan also asked that the statement regarding the Health and Human Safety Officer be clarified so that it is clear the report should be made to the Board not that the position will report directly to the Board. Upon motion of Mr. Green, seconded by Ms. Pickens, the minutes were approved as amended.

Mr. Walker gave the Bills and Communications report. All bills are current and have been paid on time. Mr. Walker reviews and approves all bills paid by the Authority after they are processed by the requestor, and department heads. Mr. Cromartie asked for confirmation that the Authority is current with all bills at hotels being utilized for displaced Allen Benedict Court residents. Mr. Walker said that he is not aware of any outstanding balances at the hotels and payments are being made regularly to them. Ms. Sinclair asked for clarification on the "Communications" portion of this Agenda item, Mr. Walker said that he has always regarded it as general communications with vendors and the community.

Mr. Walker gave the Secretary Treasurer's report and asked Ms. Prater to give a presentation on development activities at the Authority. Ms. Prater stated that the approach to new housing developments for housing authorities began to shift from high density large communities to smaller, lower density, scattered sites about 40 years ago. CHA built several of these communities in the 1980's and 1990's, including the first homeownership units at Jagers Terrace in 1999 which employed a rent to own process for residents wishing to become homeowners.

In 1983 the non-profit arm of CHA was established, Columbia Housing Authority Developments, Inc. (CHAD). CHAD has county wide jurisdiction, qualifies for grants only available to non-profits and acts as a partner to CHA on various projects. The CHA Board appoints Directors to the 7 member Board; the Board is comprised of 7 members total, 3 CHA Board members and 4 non-CHA Board members.

In the late 1990's and early 2000's CHA was successful with several HOPE VI grant applications and received funding for the demolition of Hendley Homes and Saxon Homes, the construction of the Celia Saxon community and the construction of the Rosewood Hills Community. Both of the redeveloped neighborhoods were designed as mixed income communities and included a mixture of homeownership and affordable rental units.

In 2009, CHA received a \$10 million dollar grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and used that funding to begin the development of 60 public housing units in the River's Edge community. There were an additional 63 affordable units built on this site by a private developer.

In 2014, CHA received a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) grant to begin planning the redevelopment of Gonzales Gardens. Homeownership units built along Lyons St. sold

quickly in 2016 and an additional 8 homeownership units are under construction on McDuffie. Townhomes and a senior mid-rise are also planned for the site and staff is in the process of identifying funding to close a construction financing gap now. The Community Building was not demolished and will be renovated to look much like the original building and will house a historical presentation about the property.

Ms. Mjartan asked if the HOPE VI program became the Choice Neighborhood s Initiative program, Ms. Prater said that they are basically the same. Mr. Walker added that the Celia Saxon Commercial Site was also a part of the Celia Saxon redevelopment and that CHAD was the owner and developer of that property. Ms. Simmons asked if all of the units being developed at Gonzales Gardens will be homeownership, Ms. Prater said that only some of the units will be for sale and that the remainder will be rentals.

Mr. Cromartie thanked Ms. Prater for her presentation and stated that the Board should address the selection of CHAD members. Ms. Sinclair asked how CHAD members are selected, Ms. Prater said that the CHA Board appoints them. Ms. Mjartan suggested using the remaining applications of people that applied for the CHA Board as a potential source for members, Ms. Sinclair said that the skill set of the individuals selected needs to be considered as knowledge of finances and property will be important given the activities of CHAD.

Mr. Walker said that it would be helpful to get a full CHAD Board in place as soon as possible but that waiting another 30 days would not pose a problem. Ms. Mjartan suggested appointing the CHA members now, Mr. Cromartie stated that the appointment of CHAD Directors was not on the Agenda and that those appointments should be deferred to the next meeting to meet FOIA requirements.

There was a general discussion regarding whether or not the appointment of CHA Board Committees was allowable as it was also not on the Agenda. Attorney Bob Coble said that as those appointments were of present members and to standing Committees the Agenda could be amended to include that activity. Upon motion of Ms. Mjartan, seconded by Ms. Sinclair it was unanimously decided to amend the Agenda for the March 18, 2019 meeting of the CHA Board of Commissioners to include the appointment of members to existing CHA Committees.

Mr. Cromartie read the descriptions of the Executive, Finance and Human Services Committees. There was a discussion regarding who would like to serve and who would be best suited to serve on each Committee. Ms. Mjartan suggested that the Chairs of the Finance and Human Services Committees make up the other 2 seats on the Executive Committee; Mr. Cromartie agreed and said that Committee would be filled once those Chairs are in place. Upon motion of Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Ms. Mjartan the following Committee appointments were unanimously made:

Finance – Selena Pickens, James Chatfield, Anne Sinclair

Human Services – Kara Simmons, Georgia Mjartan, George Green

Development – Selena Pickens, James Chatfield, Kara Simmons

Mr. Thomas gave an update on the relocation of displaced residents from Allen Benedict Court. Seventy families continue to search for permanent housing, 167 have identified permanent housing, 122 families have moved into permanent housing, 23 families are waiting to have units inspected, 15 leases have been approved, 5 have ported to other locations and 2 families no longer require assistance. A news release was issued earlier in the week appealing for new Section 8 landlords and staff has received a number of calls in response to that request and is working to determine if the units are suitable. Mr. Cromartie stated that he was grateful for the community's willingness to work with us and our residents.

Mr. Chatfield asked what efforts staff is making to help place the remaining residents that have not located a permanent unit. Mr. Thomas said that CHA staff person is scheduled to be at the individual hotels everyday from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. to address specific needs and coordinate transportation. CHA is providing transport to and from potential sites, assisting with move in paperwork and doing whatever is necessary to help residents get into long term housing. Mr. Green asked if the neighborhoods where residents are relocating are safe, Mr. Thomas said that the residents with Section 8 vouchers can pick where they move, a list will be compiled by zip code to show where people are moving.

Ms. Sinclair asked what kind of support the residents will receive once they have moved. Mr. Thomas said that families will receive a visit from a staff person 30 days after moving in to see how they are doing; case managers are also available to assist with services and other needs. Ms. Simmons asked what the ratio of social workers to residents is; Mr. Thomas said that CHA has 4 case managers on staff and that several organizations of social workers are also working with displaced ABC families.

Ms. Mjartan asked for a breakdown of children that were displaced from Allen Benedict Court and made a formal request that the Executive Director work with the Richland County School District One to ensure the protections of the McKinney Vento Act are made available to those families. The McKinney Vento Act ensures the rights of homeless families and adults are protected; in this case it would allow displaced children to remain in their home school through the end of the 2018/2019 school year. Mr. Walker said that he is aware of the significant impact traumatic events can have on children and has directed staff to do everything possible to work with children and their families to lessen the trauma. Mr. Thomas stated that staff is working closely with district personnel and that they have been very accommodating to date.

Ms. Sinclair asked if the Authority has relationships with other agencies to secure services for residents if psychological or mental issues are identified. Ms. Hardy said that a health event is being planned for the Spring, the health fair will include free screenings and information. Staff is looking at options to address behavioral health concerns and is working through that process now. Ms. Hardy also said that customer service and readiness training is being planned for the staff and that sessions to engage the ABC residents are being planned.

Ms. Mjartan motioned that the CHA Board request Richland School District One allow the displaced Allen Benedict Court resident children to remain in their school of origin and provide transportation to those students through the remainder of the 2018/2019 school year, seconded by Ms. Pickens it was unanimously approved.

Mr. Cromartie asked for an update on the motions made regarding accountability at the February meeting. Mr. Walker said that the evaluation and reorganization of the management structure at CHA is in progress, when complete it will be taken to the Executive Committee who will present it to the full Board. Mr. Cromartie asked when a draft and proposal would be ready for the Committee and full Board to review, Mr. Walker said that a draft is ready and can be sent out next week.

Mr. Walker said that staff is currently researching the job descriptions for the Health and Human Safety Officer and Quality Control Officer and that they will be included on the new organizational chart. Mr. Cromartie added that the Annual Report to be given by the Health and Human Safety Officer should not be part of the Annual Plan but a separate report detailing all Federal, State and Local code updates made directly to the Board. Mr. Eubanks said that he is currently working to compile that report for the Board this year and should have it ready within 30 days.

Ms. Sinclair requested that an individual report be prepared on each motion going forward.

Mr. Cromartie gave an update on the motion requesting a letter be prepared and sent to City Council requesting that CHA staff be notified every time they are on CHA property. A meeting has been scheduled with the City Manager and representatives from the Columbia Fire Department to discuss this issue on April 1, 2019. Mr. Cromartie invited the rest of the Board to attend.

Ms. Mjartan asked if a transition schedule has been established for the replacement of the Executive Director. Mr. Coble said that the Board will set the timeline and now that a full Board is in place plans can begin to progress. Mr. Walker will remain until June 30, 2019 and has committed to helping in any way possible to make the transition smooth. Mr. Coble said that a job description is being prepared for an Acting Executive Director who will serve until a national search can be completed and a permanent person identified. Mr. Coble suggested that the Board decide at their next meeting how to work with potential candidates and that a national search firm who specializes in housing be hired to assist in the search for an Executive Director. Ms. Mjartan said that a special called meeting may need to be called in order to discuss the specifics of the time line so not to fall behind.

Ms. Pickens asked for a status report on the inspection process. Mr. Thomas said that an outside inspection company has been hired to help with inspections for displaced Allen Benedict Court residents and that there are currently 4 inspectors working solely on those units. Ms. Simmons asked that an update on inspections be included in the monthly report.

Mr. Thomas gave an update on Security in Public Housing. There were 24 incidents for the previous month compared to 31 incidents during the same time last year; 19 of the incidents were committed by non-residents and 5 were committed by residents. The most serious incident was a fight between neighbors at Waverly.

Ms. Pickens asked if residents from Allen Benedict Court have moved all of their belongings out yet. Mr. Thomas said that security is still on the site and that people are being escorted on and off the property as needed.

Ms. Pollard gave an update on Section 8. The Veteran's Assisted Supportive Housing (VASH) is 91% leased up; 380 of 414 vouchers are being utilized and an additional 20 veterans are looking for housing. The Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) program is 100% leased up and staff continues to work closely with displaced Allen Benedict Court residents to secure permanent housing. A landlord forum will be held on April 4, 2019; this is an annual event designed to provide information and resources to current and potential Section 8 landlords.

Mr. Cromartie stated that there was no need for an additional Executive Session.

There being no further business Mr. Cromartie motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Green it was unanimously decided to end the meeting at 6:42 pm.

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Secretary

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_