

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA, SC  
February 6, 2019

The Board of Commissioners of The Housing Authority of the City of Columbia, SC convened for a Special Called Meeting on Thursday, February 6, 2019 at Noon 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: Bobby D. Gist, Chairperson  
Ernest Cromartie, III, Commissioner  
Alexena Furgess, Commissioner  
George Green, Commissioner  
Jennifer Rubin, Commissioner  
Gilbert Walker, Executive Director  
Ed Eubanks, Legal Counsel

ABSENT: Selena Pickens, Commissioner  
Bessie Watson, Commissioner

STAFF: Howard Thomas, Melanie Baker, Donna Gilbert, Ramonda Pollard, Lee McRoberts, Julia Prater

VISITORS: Bob Coble, Diane Sumpter, Tim Rogers, Members of the Media

Mr. Gist called the meeting to order at Noon and Mr. Green opened with a prayer.

Mr. Cromartie gave an overview of the Agenda items and stated a request had been made to move the Executive Session up on the Agenda to occur directly after item 3. Upon motion of Mrs. Rubin, seconded by Mrs. Furgess it was unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker gave an update on the relocation of the displaced residents from Allen Benedict Court. Since the last meeting 179 Section 8 vouchers have been issued and 64 residents have requested to be placed in other Public Housing, 31 families still need to be assessed and staff is diligently looking for them to complete this process. Staff is working with private landlords to identify 2 bedroom units that fit the 1 bedroom payment standards as 1 bedroom units are the least available overall and the most needed. Staff is also working with residents to familiarize them with the Section 8 program and to assist with setting up utility accounts.

Residents have been given a choice to move themselves or have a moving company move them; if they choose to move themselves, they will receive a moving stipend based on bedroom size, to date everyone has selected to move themselves.

Mr. Cromartie said that the Authority should be offering all possible supports to get residents into permanent housing and that the process should be as seamless as possible. Mr. Walker said that an information hotline has been established and CHA Staff placed at each hotel location during the day to ensure residents have access to information and resources.

Mr. Walker stated that all CHA properties with natural gas have had carbon monoxide detectors installed now and that staff is working through the 250 single family homes to install detectors. The process of identifying and installing the detectors in the single family homes will take a little longer as they are spread throughout the county; Mr. Walker estimated that this process should be complete by the end of next week. Smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are also being checked as the carbon monoxide detectors are installed. Section 8 units will also be inspected for carbon monoxide detectors; there are 4000 privately owned units in this program and the process will take time. Mr. Cromartie asked if the CHA Board could do anything to facilitate the Section 8 inspection process as the Board is committed to doing everything possible to address the issue of carbon monoxide detectors. Mr. Walker said the process is time consuming and labor intensive and takes time to notify landlords. Mrs. Rubin asked if carbon monoxide detectors were required by HUD; Mr. Walker said that the issue had not come up during the most recent inspections and that he had recently learned a law passed in 2015 requiring them in all homes.

Mr. Cromartie made the following motion; the Board authorizes CHA to engage private contractors, consistent with procurement regulations, to provide manpower to install carbon monoxide detectors in Section 8 and Public Housing units as required by law to provide safe housing, seconded by Mrs. Furgess it was unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker gave an update on the Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) grant process. Staff received notification last week that CHA was not selected as a finalist for this grant. This was the 7<sup>th</sup> time an application for assistance has been submitted to redevelop the Allen Benedict Court property; none have been successful to date. Mr. Walker has been working with the legislative delegation and HUD staff to secure permanent vouchers for the Allen Benedict Court residents; he has been told that the vouchers are being processed and should be in the CHA system by next week. As CHA did not want to slow the process of residents being able to locate permanent housing, vouchers have been issued as regular vouchers and the tenant protection vouchers will be absorbed into the system once received.

Mrs. Furgess asked if counseling services have been made available to the residents. Mr. Walker said that community resources are being put into place and that counselors will be on site at the Tillis Center.

Mrs. Rubin said that the Board needs an accounting of the funds spent to date on this situation. Mr. Walker said that the Authority is working with the Insurance Reserve Fund and that like the 2015 floods is spending whatever is needed up front and will determine what is reimbursable from insurance at a later date.

Mr. Cromartie stated that there was need for an executive session to discuss legal and contractual matters. Upon motion of Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Green, it was unanimously decided to enter Executive Session at 12:41 p.m.

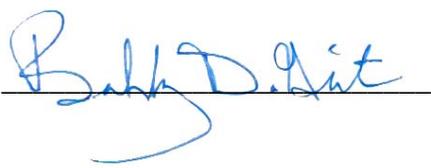
At 1:41 p.m. Mr. Cromartie stated that Regular Session was back in session and that no votes had been taken in Executive Session.

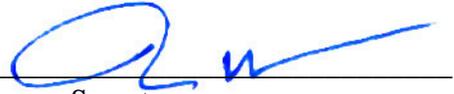
Mr. Coble said that the Board had approved a motion at the last meeting to have a comprehensive and independent review conducted regarding the tragedy at Allen Benedict Court. Attorneys are currently reviewing the procurement regulations and legal issues relating to how this request for proposals should be handled; counsel anticipates having a final document to review next week.

Mr. Coble stated that the election of officers for the CHA Board will be held at the next regular meeting. He announced that Commissioners Bessie Watson and Jennifer Rubin have resigned and the City will be replacing them soon.

Mr. Cromartie stated that the Board is committed to accountability and understanding what happened in order to prevent it from occurring again.

Upon motion of Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mrs. Rubin it was unanimously decided to end the meeting at 1:46 p.m.

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

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Secretary