

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA, SC
April 12, 2018

The Board of Commissioners of The Housing Authority of the City of Columbia, SC convened on Thursday, April 12, 2018 at 4:49 p.m in the Cecil Tillis Center.

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
Bessie Watson, Commissioner
Gilbert Walker, Executive Director
Ed Eubanks, Legal Counsel

ABSENT: Selena Pickens, Commissioner

STAFF: Howard Thomas, Ramonda Pollard, Lee McRoberts, Donna Gilbert,
Nancy Stoudenmire, Melanie Baker

Mr. Gist called the meeting to order at 4:49 pm and Mr. Green opened with a prayer.

Upon motion of Mrs. Furgess, seconded by Ms. Watson, the minutes of March 15, 2018 meeting were unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker reported that there were no Bills and Communications to report and that the Authority is doing well and is meeting all of its financial obligations.

Mr. Walker gave the Secretary Treasurer's report. Leaks at the Commercial Site have been repaired and no additional problems reported. The roof will need to be resealed at some point in the near future and will be put out for bid soon. The Foodshare program continues to do well and is holding regular classes on healthy meal preparation for residents.

All tax credit properties are occupied and performing well; staff received the preliminary draft of the audit on Celia Saxon I and II and TS Martin earlier today and will distribute copies once they are received. All 3 properties were profitable during the previous year; Celia Saxon I made \$23,726, Celia Saxon II made \$15,226 and TS Martin made \$31,314 and has a reserve of \$130,000. The balance of the HOME loan used at TS Martin will be forgiven this year as all requirements of the program have been met. Mrs. Furgess asked how the Authority's tax credit programs compare to comparable PHA's in the area; Ms. Baker said that the independent financial consultant says CHA's programs are in line with others for performance and size. There was a general discussion regarding the possibility of raising rents at TS Martin as they are

still at the same rate as when the property opened. Staff is looking at raising them by \$50 - \$100 per unit and will bring a recommendation back to the Board in May.

Mr. Walker reported that he recently spoke with a reporter from the Charleston Post & Courier regarding a story being written on affordable housing and housing authority programs in the State. Mrs. Furgess asked if staff is following up with local media if press release information is not covered after submission. Mr. Walker said that Ms. Miller should be following up on those issues. Mr. Cromartie said that staff should hold the local media to task for not covering more stories relating to the Authority.

Mr. Walker gave an update on Gonzales Gardens. All paperwork has been submitted to the State Housing & Finance Authority for reimbursement of demolition funds through the Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP). All homeownership units have closed or are under contract but three; the remaining units have income restrictions due to the funding source used for construction. Final approval has been received on the verbiage for the Historical Marker being placed at the site and staff is currently working through the design process for the Daycare and Administration buildings. Staff hopes to hear about the status of a 9% tax credit application submitted for the senior building sometime this summer.

Mr. Walker gave a report on Committee activities. The Development Committee will meet soon to review several proposed acquisitions and projects. The Finance Committee has no new business. The Human Services Committee is currently working on Mr. Walker's Annual Evaluation.

Mr. Thomas gave the Operation's Reports for Public Housing and Section 8. Security reports are down from last year for Public Housing and the program is doing well overall. The VASH lease up rate is 94.93% and staff attended a training recently held by HUD regarding the program; additional PHA's will be receiving these vouchers and staff will be able to work with other jurisdictions to get them filled. A landlord forum will be held on May 10, 2018 at the Tillis Center.

Mrs. Gilbert reported that the CHAD Scholarship Golf Tournament will be held on Friday, May 4, 2018 at Cobblestone Park in Blythewood. Tee time is 11am and a good turn out is expected. Eastover's May Day Celebration will be Saturday, May 5, 2018 and CHA is participating with a float in the parade and a cookout for residents.

Mr. Gist called for a brief recess before the Public Hearing began at 5:30 pm.

Mr. Walker welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming before presenting the 2018-2019 Plan.

CHA received a designation of Standard Performer with a score of 89 out of 100; staff is appealing the score. There are currently 1855 public housing units in inventory, 3800 Housing Choice Vouchers and 550 private market units.

The public housing waiting list is open for persons over 62 and 4 and 5 bedroom families. The general waiting list was opened on August 16, 2017 and closed February 1 2018. There are currently over 25,000 applicants on all CHA waiting lists, staff is working to identify additional ways to offer affordable housing to more individuals.

CHA operates on an annual budget of \$48 million dollars; this includes \$25.4 million for the HCV program. Fair Market Rents were approved for the HCV program in January and are available on the CHA website. Flat rents have been raised by HUD and will go into effect on July 1, 2018, minimum rent will stay at \$50. There is still uncertainty as to long term funding but the omnibus spending bill passed earlier this year increased funding for the short term.

Homeownership remains a priority. Twelve homes were built in the Gonzales Gardens area with another 13 planned for this year. Staff continues to work with participants in the Section 8 program as vouchers can be used towards homeownership in certain situations; 83 voucher holders have purchased homes since the program began 15 years ago. Three homes remain to sell from the Neighborhood Stabilization Plan and Real Estate Owned programs. Approximately 600 people attended CHA homeownership classes in 2017.

Security is still the Authority's biggest concern. Extra measures have been put into place at high activity communities and include additional cameras, gating Latimer Manor and hiring 2 additional Police Officers. Staff is working with City and County law enforcement to address drugs and gangs in the communities. Total reports fell to 179 incidents in 2017 versus 267 in 2016.

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was updated to better define sexual assault, include other grant programs and to set time periods. No changes were made to the Pet Policy but HUD is reviewing the definition of service animals due to recent issues nationwide.

New activities for 2017 included the submission of a \$30 million application under the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, the completion of demolition at Gonzales Gardens, possible conversion to the Rental Assistance Demonstration program if regulations change, the implementation of Project Based Vouchers at several communities, single family home updates and other capital fund projects. The remodeling and renovation of Marion Street will begin in 2018 and will be completed in phases by a variety of methods; the project is expected to take 2 years and cost \$2.5 million.

Goals for the coming year remain staying focused on increasing the availability of affordable housing, promoting fair housing and keeping staff well trained.

A HUD mandated Assessment of Fair Housing was completed in 2017 in partnership with Richland County; CHA was the first public housing authority in SC to complete this study. CHA is strongly committed to promoting fair housing by covering the topic in orientations, purchasing properties across the county and developing new affordable housing.

All required certifications were completed and the Resident Advisory Board convened to review and offer comments on the Plan.

Capital Improvements funds were used to demolish Gonzales Gardens in 2017 and will be used to help fund water system improvements at Marion Street. These funds were also used to complete single family home renovations. A home was declared a total loss after the October 2015 floods and the Authority has been informed that the County will not allow it to be rebuilt, staff is currently waiting for FEMA to purchase the property.

There were no changes to the Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plan.

The HCV Administrative Plan was changed to increase occupancy of 3 and 4 bedroom units and will be used to determine voucher size effective immediately.

Smoke free public housing has been in effect for over a year and has been received positively. There are cessation program referrals available to those wishing to quit and staff has worked with the Department of Health and Environmental Controls to implement. Signs are now posted in all communities and lease addendums signed by all residents.

After responding to questions and remarks, Mr. Gist introduced the Board of Commissioners. Upon motion of Mrs. Rubin, seconded by Mrs. Furgess, the 2018/2019 Annual Plan (to include the Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plan and Capital Fund) was approved.

There being no further business, it was unanimously decided to end the meeting at 6:10 pm.



Secretary

APPROVED: 
