

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA, SC  
February 15, 2018

The Board of Commissioners of The Housing Authority of the City of Columbia, SC convened on Thursday, February 15, 2018 at 4:50 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: Bobby D. Gist, Chairperson  
Ernest Cromartie, III, Commissioner  
Alexena Furgess, Commissioner  
George Green, Commissioner  
Selena Pickens, Commissioner  
Jennifer Rubin, Commissioner  
Bessie Watson, Commissioner  
Gilbert Walker, Executive Director  
Ed Eubanks, Legal Counsel

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

VISITORS: Tommy Barton (via phone)

Mr. Gist called the meeting to order at 4:50 pm and Mr. Green opened with a prayer.

Mrs. Rubin stated that the January 18, 2018 minutes should be amended to show she was not in attendance. Upon motion of Mrs. Watson, seconded by Mrs. Rubin, the minutes of the January 18, 2018 meeting were unanimously approved as amended.

Mr. Walker introduced auditor Tommy Barton who joined the meeting via phone. Mr. Barton presented his overview of the 2017 Financial Audit to the Finance Committee earlier in the week and will give remarks to the full Board regarding the results. Mr. Walker stated that while there was improvement from last year, four findings were recorded; there were a few file mistakes, a smoke detector battery that was not changed within the 24 hour allowable period and some mistakes in the general ledger.

Mr. Barton stated that the Authority maintains a very strong financial position with a net financial position of \$87 million and \$31 million in liabilities. Several properties were disposed of during the year which added to the cash position.

Mr. Barton stated that the findings were detailed in the Management Letter and gave a briefing on each of them. The first finding (2017-001) is classified as a material weakness and relates to financial controls. Numbers on the general ledger kept changing and were substantially different from what was reported in the FDS system.

There was a general discussion regarding the circumstances that led to this issue. Ms. Baker stated that the accounting software currently in use requires a manual closeout of each account and that due to a delay in closing, the process became confusing and difficult to manage. Going forward, staff will begin the closeout process earlier to ensure accuracy. Mr. Walker said that the Authority employs an outside financial consultant, Philippe Lindsay, to help with these matters. Mr. Lindsay has committed to being onsite earlier and making adjustments sooner to prevent future mistakes.

Mr. Barton said that he would be surprised if this issue was a problem in the coming year as Ms. Baker and Mr. Lindsay, are working closely together to manage the system more effectively. Mr. Cromartie said that staff should convey the Board's displeasure with the audit results to Mr. Lindsay and their expectation for improvement in the coming year.

Finding 2 (2017-002) was related to inaccurate reporting of the Housing Choice Voucher program on the FDS system.

Finding 3 (2017-003) was related to mistakes found in HCV files. This finding is a repeat from last year but showed significant improvement.

Finding 4 (2017-004) was related to a smoke detector that was not repaired within the prescribed 24 hour period. As this is a health and safety violation, it must be noted but is not expected to repeat next year.

Mr. Barton asked if there were any questions. Mr. Cromartie asked what contributed to the Authority having a strong financial position. Mr. Barton said that it is a combination of the cash position, equity and other factors. Mrs. Watson asked what HUD's reaction might be to the report. Mr. Barton stated that he does not anticipate a problem, a corrective action plan is in place and will be sent to HUD for their review. Mr. Walker thanked Mr. Barton for his presentation and work on the audit and Mr. Barton left the meeting.

Mr. Walker gave an update on the Commercial Site. Roof leaks have been an issue and staff is putting together a Request for Proposals to repair the problem areas. All spaces are occupied and appear to be doing well. The Foodshare Program will begin classes on healthy cooking soon and the program has been well received by the community overall.

Mr. Walker reported that the preliminary draft of the audit of Celia Saxon II has been received and looks good. The final will be shared with the Board once it has been finalized.

Mr. Walker gave an update on Gonzales Gardens. Four of the homeownership units in the Lyons Street area have closed and two more are under contract. Staff is working to identify buyers at 50% and 80% of median income and assist them in securing financing and programs to aid in their purchase. Demolition is complete on the site and staff is waiting for grass to grow in order to get final closeout from the State Housing and Finance Authority. The Choice Neighborhood Initiative grant application for additional development funds has been submitted. Mr. Walker said that expects a decision on the CNI application sometime in March.

Staff is in the process of applying for 9% tax credits to build a senior community at the Gonzales Gardens site; the community will be similar to the senior complex at Rosewood and will include a low-rise building and free standing cottages. Mr. Walker said that the Senior complex will be constructed facing Forest Dr. and will require letting the community know about the change to the master plan. There was a discussion regarding the move of the seniors to the front of the site, there was some concern about noise and traffic; Mr. Green stated that there had been similar concerns in Rosewood but has not been a problem for the residents. Ms. Pickens said that she is concerned about the community reaction to the change given the neighborhood's reaction to changes in the past, she asked that the Board be invited to the community meeting.

Mr. Walker stated that a Resolution was required by First Citizens Bank to establish a new account. Upon motion of Mrs. Watson, seconded by Mrs. Rubin, it was unanimously approved. (To be known as Resolution 640)

Mr. Walker gave a report on committee activities.

Mr. Walker stated that there was no new business to report for the Committees.

Mr. Thomas gave an Operations Report for Public Housing. There were 31 reports last year versus 19 this year. Additional officers and patrols at night and on the weekends are helping keep crime down.

Mr. Thomas gave a report on the HCV Program. The VASH Program is currently leased at 93% with 387 of 414 vouchers being filled. An orientation was held on February 13 and was attended by approximately 50 clients. Mr. Gist suggested working with the Governor's office on the VASH program as he is interested in veteran's issues.

Mr. Walker invited everyone to the Annual Black History luncheon being held next Friday at the Tillis Center. The Wall of Fame will be held on Friday, April 6 and the Golf Tournament is scheduled for Friday, May 4.

Mr. Walker stated that he proposed naming the new Richland County Library after Congressman Clyburn's Wife.

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

  
Secretary

APPROVED: 