

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Elkhart Housing Authority
February 15, 2024**

The Board of Commissioners for the Housing Authority, City of Elkhart met in regular attendance at 4:30 p.m.; on Thursday, February 15, 2024.

Board Members present: Loria Mayes, Dan Boecher, Kristen Smole, and Synthia Billings

Board Members present via dial-in: Willie Brown

Staff members present: Angelia Washington, Kenny Clark, Erik Mathavan, Amy Gonzalez, Tiphany Trivet, Cynthia Snowden, Jessica Brittain, Samantha Caretti, Tasha Andrews, and Morgan Gibson-Day

Harris Law Firm Attorney present: Jewell Harris via conference call

Audience members present: Tonda Hines, Krystal Dooley, Debra Williams, Tiffany Jackson, Alana Brown, Alexandra Lopez, Sh'Rhea Romain

❖ **Audience Concerns:**

- Sh'Rhea Romain stated that she is a former employee of the EHA, and she was discharged. She stated that she would like to speak to the board about the reason she was discharged. Commissioner Smole informed Sh'Rhea that they only speak about personnel matters in an executive session for the employee's privacy and also to be sure that we are following the regulations that are required by HUD. Commissioner Smole asked Sh'Rhea to provide her contact information at the end of the meeting so that it could be forwarded to our attorney. Sh'Rhea stated that she reached out to Harris Law Firm twice but there has been no response. Commissioner Smole assured Sh'Rhea that she would pass her information along to him.
- Alexandra Lopez stated that she has been trying to get into housing for about two years now. She said that she had already attended two orientations. She said that she listed her boyfriend's address on her application the first time she applied but she wasn't aware that she couldn't do that. She stated that the second time she listed her mother's address, but she never got a letter. Angelia asked Alexandra which program she applied for. Alexandra stated that she applied for public housing. She further stated that she has called the EHA several times but hasn't been able to speak with anyone. Angelia informed Alexandra that she would check the database. Alexandra stated that she also submitted an add-on so that she could be added to her fiancé's lease who resides at Waterfall. Angelia apologized to Alexandra for her difficulties with reaching someone at the agency and she informed her that she would look into this and get back to her tomorrow.
- Waterfall resident Tiffany Jackson stated that Waterfall residents have no security in the building. She said that one time security got into an altercation with someone who worked in the building. Commissioner Smole asked Tiffany to leave her contact information with Angelia and she would be happy to get back with her.
- Waterfall resident Debra Williams stated that she has been calling maintenance because it's always so cold in her unit. Debra stated that she is currently using her stove to heat her apartment. Angelia asked Debra what her unit number was. She said that she lives in 301. Angelia stated that we had just installed a new boiler. She asked Erik if it had been tested yet. Erik said yes. Angelia asked Kenny if he was aware of any work orders for 301. Kenny said no but he just spoke with the resident and assured her that he would have someone come by tomorrow to take a look. He said that her unit may need to be bled out.

- Waterfall resident Alana Brown asked if there was any other way to make rent payments for residents who are disabled and/or do not drive. She further stated that since the ATM was removed from the building, she had to walk to the store to get the money. She asked if there could be a drop box set up for them. Jessica stated that finance is in the process of implementing an online portal for the residents where they can share their concerns. She said that they have been looking into options and one option would cost the residents additional money, which was not feasible, but they do realize the importance of the feature. Angelia informed Alana that she can also pay ACH, which is an automatic withdrawal from your bank account, so you do not have to worry about writing a check or getting a money order. Alana also asked about being charged a late fee month after month. Jessica stated that if payment is not received by the 8th of the month, late fees continue accruing and that is our policy.
- Waterfall resident Lakita Taylor stated that she had her unit exterminated and once they put the bait down, it seemed to have attracted the pests instead of killing them. Angelia asked Lakita what her unit number was. She said it was 410. Angelia informed Lakita that she would address this concern with the exterminator and try to find out what was going on.

❖ **Approval of Minutes**

Exhibit A — Approval of Meeting Minutes — January 16, 2024, Regular Meeting

All commissioners present voted to approve the January 16, 2024, meeting minutes. Commissioner Brown voted to approve the January 16, 2024, meeting minutes via Facetime.

❖ **Approval of Vouchers**

Exhibit B — Approval of Vouchers — January 16, 2024

All commissioners present voted to approve the January 16, 2024, vouchers. Commissioner Brown voted to approve the January vouchers via Facetime.

❖ **Executive Director's Report**

Exhibit C — Executive Director's Report

- **Human Resources:** Angelia reported 1 new hire, Michael Robinson, Waterfall Custodian, and 2 ends of employment, Jasmine White, and Tiffany Sanders.
- **Comprehensive Improvements:**
 - Scattered Sites:** No work during this time.
 - Riverside Terrace:** No work during this time.
 - Washington Gardens:** The City of Elkhart provided a certification of electrical and gas inspection on the 334-A Chapman Ave burn unit allowing ServPro to continue the rehabilitation work.
 - Waterfall High-Rise:** Edward J. White, INC. commenced work on the boiler replacement project.
 - Rosedale High-Rise:** The small elevator passed state inspection and was officially placed into service thereby marking the completion of the elevator modernization project.
 - COCC:** No work during this time.
- **Housing Choice Voucher Program:** Angelia reported for the month of January, 61 Annual Certifications were completed, 58 Interim Certifications Completed, 3 Unit transfers, 3 New

Admissions and Absorbed Incoming Portabilities, 7 End of Participations, 50 Applications Remaining in Process, 700 Lease Ups on the last day of January and 95% Lease-Up Percentage.

- **Family Self Sufficiency Programs:** Angelia reported the Family Self Sufficiency program is currently serving 60 participants of which 36 participants are currently employed, 7 participants are attending college, 1 participant is enrolled in a job training program, 11 participants are disabled or unable to work. 20 participants are currently earning escrow, \$8,135 earned in escrow funds in January, and \$154,654.59 total current escrow balance.
- **Public Housing:** Angelia reported Rosedale's Occupancy rate for the month of January is 97%, Washington Gardens Occupancy rate for the month of January is 91%, Waterfall Occupancy rate for the month of January is 98%, Scattered-Sites Occupancy rate for the month of January is 100% and Riverside's Occupancy rate for the month of December is 98%. Angelia went on to say Public Housing's overall Occupancy rate for the month of December is 97%. She also stated that public housing received 138 applications, mailed 200 orientation letters, processed 99 applications, approved 40 applications, denied 5 applications, and 10 applications were withdrawn. We received 35 homeless applications, and 67 application(s) were approved and waiting for an available unit. Angelia reported there were 14 new admissions and 10 move-outs in December.
- **Maintenance:** Angelia reported that 6 move-outs were received and 4 were completed, 11 emergency requests received and completed, 386 tenant requests received and 380 were completed; and there were 43 annual inspections received and 43 completed, totaling 438 completed work orders.
- **Financials and Write-Offs:** Jessica Brittain reported for the month of January, Rosedale high-rise earned \$25,941.00 in Revenue and \$17,498.00 in Operating Subsidy Revenue. Jessica went on to say Rosedale high-rise had \$45,557.00 in Expense without depreciation. Jessica reported Rosedale high-rise had a loss for the month of January in the amount of \$(2,118.00). The previous past due rent was \$6,754.00, and the current past due rent is \$4,870.00. The decrease in past due rent is \$1,884.00.

Jessica reported for the month of January, Washington Gardens earned \$7,210.00 in Revenue and \$68,740.00 in Operating Subsidy Revenue. Jessica went on to say Washington Gardens had \$117,744.00 in Expense without depreciation. Jessica reported Washington Gardens had a loss for the month of January in the amount of \$41,794.00. The previous past due rent was \$28,426.00 and the current past due rent is 30,262.00. The increase in past due rent is \$(1,836.00).

Jessica reported for the month of January, Waterfall high-rise earned \$34,129.00 in Revenue and \$22,0555.00 in Operating Subsidy Revenue. Jessica went on to say Waterfall high-rise had \$51,289.00 in Expense without depreciation. Jessica reported Waterfall high-rise had a profit for the month of January in the amount of \$4,895.00. The previous past due rent was \$13,876.00 and the current past due rent is \$17,538.00. The increase in past due rent is \$(3,662.00).

Jessica reported for the month of January, Scattered Sites earned \$4,166.00 in Revenue and \$28,559.00 in Operating Subsidy Revenue. Jessica went on to say Scattered Sites had \$40,966.00 in Expense without depreciation. Jessica reported Scattered Sites had a loss for the month of January in the amount of \$(8,241.00). The previous past due rent was \$8,581.00 and the current past due rent is \$7,185.00. The decrease in past due rent is \$1,396.00.

Jessica reported for the month of January, Riverside high-rise earned \$36,468.00 in Revenue and \$23,709.00 in Operating Subsidy Revenue. Jessica went on to say Riverside high-rise had \$68,318.00 in Expense without depreciation. Jessica reported Riverside high-rise had a loss for the month of January in the amount of \$(8,141.00). The previous past due rent was \$3,857.00, and the current past due rent is \$2,401.00. The decrease in past due rent is \$1,456.00.

Jessica reported for the month of January, COCC earned \$175,291.00 in Revenue. Jessica went on to say the COCC had \$140,771.00 in Expense without depreciation. Jessica reported the COCC had a profit for the month of January in the amount of \$491,197.00.

Jessica reported HCV had a profit for the month of January, in the amount of \$16,315.00. The net position YTD is \$234,946.00.

❖ **Old Business:**

• **Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant**

Angelia stated that she and the board spoke previously about the funding opportunity, however, that money has not been released yet. She said that Choice Neighborhoods Planning did release funding for their implementation grant, but they require you to have a comprehensive plan in place before you can apply. She said that she invited the redevelopment committee to attend a meeting next week with a PHADA representative who has experience in redevelopment and has worked with Choice Neighborhoods numerous times. Commissioner Smole stated that two grants are released by Choice Neighborhoods, and one leads to the other. She said that you can skip the planning grant process if you have a comprehensive plan. Angelia stated that she met with Levon Johnson and they talked about how things were coming along with the redevelopment of Washington Gardens, she explained to him about having to have a plan in place before receiving the implementation grant and he said that he would check his resources to see if there was an agency or private doner available to help pay for planning so we do not have to wait for a planning grant to become available. Commissioner Smole stated that since the Benham plan is still happening, there is a chance that some of that planning is already being done because it is included in the greater plan for Benham.

❖ **New Business:**

• **Salary Study**

Angelia stated that there was a question about pay raises and our ability to attract qualified candidates and she included in this month's board packet, the company that we contract with to do our salary studies. She stated that we have used Nelrod for many years. She said that we are very happy with our salary pay rates and she does believe that a company should do a salary study at least once every 3 years and this will be our third year. She said that the salary study will be included in this upcoming year's budget. Commissioner Smole said she inquired about this a while ago when we were having trouble recruiting maintenance and she just wondered if we did that every few years or if we needed to do a more comprehensive one, but she was focused on recruitment and retention. She further stated that she wanted to be sure that we were being competitive, not just with other housing authorities but with comparable jobs in the area. Angelia stated that since housing authority jobs are hybrid, there is no standard for the jobs that we have specific to the housing authority and each housing authority is specific to the needs of that area. She further stated that we do a comprehensive study every 3 years but any time we need to reorganize a department like with public housing, we can do one. She stated that recently we did a salary study based on some concerns from the custodians and it was found that we were doing better than some agencies in the same industry. The commissioners asked Angelia to forward them the current salary study done in 2021.

• **Confidential Complaints to HR**

Commissioner Smole summed up Commissioner Brown's statements that he made via Facetime due to poor reception. Commissioner Smole stated that commissioners can look at policies related to the housing authority, and they would like a better understanding of what those

policies are, be able to review them, and update what needs updating. Angelia stated that she would email the commissioners a copy of our current handbook and the policy that she has been working on with the attorney, Nick Snow. She stated that the handbook policy has not been updated since 2016 and we are aware that it is time to update and revise where needed. Attorney Harris stated that they have been working on the policies for the board's consideration. He said that Commissioner Brown was right about the board having jurisdiction over all of the policies of the agency. He said that he does believe that it is a good practice for the board to look at all of its policies regularly to determine if any of them are out of date and to make sure that they are following current HUD regulations. Attorney Harris recommended setting up a workshop so that the policies can be broken down and areas of concern be identified. Commissioner Smole asked Attorney Harris if there were any other policies that they should be looking over. Attorney Harris stated that another one to look at would be the procurement policy. He said as HUD updates its procurement requirements as well as the state, we need to be sure that our policies are complicit with the state law and HUD procurement guidelines. Attorney Harris recommended meeting on different days so a day could be devoted to personnel policy-related issues. Attorney Harris informed the board that he would take a look at the procurement policy to see if any changes were needed and he would let the board know. Angelia said that she would get something scheduled. Jessica added that the procurement policy has been updated in the last couple of years and there were only minor changes like the micro-purchase limit and the petty cash amount.

- **Resolution 24:02 – A Resolution to Award the Contract for Replacement of Kitchen Cabinets, Countertops, Plumbing, and Range Vents at Riverside (Phase I)**

Angelia informed the commissioners that a lot of the kitchen cabinets and countertops were damaged and needed to be replaced. Commissioner Boecher asked what phase 1 consisted of. Erik stated that phase 1 consisted of 36 units. He said that they removed the contingency, which was \$5000, and they are doing the kitchen cabinets, countertops, plumbing underneath the sink, the sink basin, and the range vent hood on each unit totaling \$7,853. Commissioner Smole asked Erik how many bids he received. Erik stated that he received two, Brown & Brown and R. Yoder. All commissioners present voted to approve resolution 24:02. Commissioner Brown voted to approve resolution 24:02 via Facetime.

- **Security**

Commissioner Billings asked if there were plans to get more security in the building because she stated that the crime was getting out of hand. She said that she heard about people walking through the buildings with guns. Angelia asked Commissioner Billings if she had reported this to the manager. Commissioner Billings stated that she heard about it when the police were in the building one night. Angelia stated that normally when there is a situation like that, Majestic or a resident notifies management of the concern. Commissioner Smole asked Angelia to inform everyone about our current security. Angelia stated that we are currently contracted with Majestic Security, and we just recently had a meeting, and we established a need for them to maintain professional boundaries. She said that they previously had concerns about intermingling with residents and taking smoke breaks with them. She said that she did speak to the owner of the company to make sure that they were doing the job that they were being paid to do. She said that she has also been in contact with the police department, and she has asked them to step up patrols, primarily at Rosedale where we have had the biggest concern. She said that we had found people sleeping in the stairwells. Angelia further stated that she tries to encourage residents to say something when they see something. Commissioner Billings stated that stuff happens when security is not there. She said that there is a lot more drug use and she is finding drug paraphernalia in the building and on the grounds. Angelia encouraged Commissioner Billings to call the police if she sees something because we do not have the manpower or the security to monitor the buildings 24/7. Commissioner Billings asked if we

could afford to hire more security. Angelia stated that she would have Erik go out for RFQs. She said that we are currently under contract and should be renewing it soon. Erik stated that we renewed our contract with Majestic at the end of last year. Angelia informed Commissioner Billings that if Majestic is in breach of their contract, we can end their contract and hire another security company. She stated that she did receive a letter from the HUD secretary along with all housing authorities instructing them not to over-police their residents. She further stated that unless we have factual evidence of a crime committed, we cannot arbitrarily accuse people of committing a crime. She asked that all residents do not sit on any security concerns and that they should report it as soon as possible. Commissioner Boecher stated that he would like to know if the EHA had additional resources available for additional security. Commissioner Smole agreed that there has to be a balance because we don't want our residents to live in a locked-down area, but she believes this can be discussed with security. She said that she thinks just having their presence in a building might make all of the difference. Commissioner Smole further stated that we should be looking at references and not just the company that has the lowest bid because if you are not what you say you are then you are not the most responsible choice.


❖ **Handouts:** None

❖ **Adjournment**

Commissioner Willie Brown without any objections declared the February 15, 2024, Board of Commissioners' meeting adjourned at 5:35 P.M.



Willie Brown, Commissioner
March 28, 2024



Angelia Washington, Executive Director
04-02-2024