

REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
Elkhart Housing Authority  
June 20, 2024

The Board of Commissioners for the Housing Authority, City of Elkhart met in regular attendance at 4:30 p.m.; on Thursday, June 20, 2024.

**Board Members present:** Willie Brown, Loria Mayes, Helenia Robinson, Kristen Smole, Dan Boecher, and Cynthia Billings

**Board Members present via dial-in:** None.

**Staff members present:** Angelia Washington, Todd Fielder, Erik Mathavan, Amy Gonzalez, Alicia Kimble, Nekisha Roberson, Danielle Gilbert, Cordell Price, Teri Ivory, and Morgan Gibson-Day

**Harris Law Firm Attorney present:** Nick Snow

**Audience members present:** None.

❖ **Audience Concerns:** None

❖ **Approval of Minutes**

**Exhibit A — Approval of Meeting Minutes — May 16, 2024, Regular Meeting**

All commissioners present voted to approve the May 16, 2024, meeting minutes.

❖ **Approval of Vouchers**

**Exhibit B — Approval of Vouchers — May 16, 2024**

All commissioners present voted to approve the May 16, 2024, vouchers.

❖ **Executive Director's Report**

**Exhibit C — Executive Director's Report**

- **Human Resources:** Angelia reported no new hires, and three ended employment, Philip Schrock, Jessica Brittain, and Ramon Gilbert.
  
- **Comprehensive Improvements:**
  - Scattered Sites:** No work during this time.

**Riverside Terrace:** Edward J. White completed the installation and optimization of the second HVAC unit on the first-floor rooftop. Koorsen commenced the sprinkler head replacement project and was able to install new heads throughout all of the common areas as well as inside the resident units on floors 4 through 7. Hantz Striping added two additional ADA parking spots on the west side of the building by the rotunda.

**Washington Gardens:** ServPro continued work on the 334A Chapman Ave burn unit. Specifically, they removed all of the vinyl tiles in the unit and completed 95% of the replacement installation. ServPro also installed both the interior and exterior doors and commenced the baseboard and trim work. Erik stated that they are making progress.

**Waterfall High-Rise:** EJ White finished three enhancements to the original boiler replacement project which included, the addition of a Magnetic Filter to remove heavy metals from the boiler

water supply line, the replacement of a degraded heat exchanger on the old boiler with a new nickel version, and the addition of a Tekmar control system that will help properly regulate the different stages on the boiler for maximum energy efficiency.

**Rosedale High-Rise:** No work during this time. Angelia informed the board that there was an issue with the air conditioning in the community room, so the air is running continuously until the part comes in so it will not shut down during the heat wave this week.

**COCC:** No work during this time.

- **Housing Choice Voucher Program:** Angelia reported for the month of May, 49 Annual Certifications were completed, 73 Interim Certifications Completed, 0 Unit transfers, 3 New Admissions and Absorbed Incoming Portabilities, 6 End of Participations, 66 Applications Remaining in Process, 684 Lease Ups on the last day of April and 93% Lease-Up Percentage.
- **Family Self Sufficiency Programs:** Angelia reported the Family Self Sufficiency program is currently serving 53 participants of which 32 participants are currently employed, 4 participants are attending college, 4 participants are disabled or unable to work, 17 participants are currently earning escrow, \$5,185 earned in escrow funds in May, and \$154,512.62 total current escrow balance. Commissioner Mayes pointed out that the numbers in the report do not match. HCV program Director, Amy was not in the room. Angelia asked the board for an opportunity to provide them with the correct numbers.
- **Public Housing:** Angelia reported Rosedale's Occupancy rate for the month of May is 94%, Washington Gardens Occupancy rate for the month of May is 85%, Waterfall Occupancy rate for the month of May is 85%, Scattered-Sites Occupancy rate for the month of May is 90% and Riverside's Occupancy rate for the month of May is 95%. Angelia went on to say Public Housing's overall Occupancy rate for the month of May is 89%. She also stated that public housing received 135 applications, mailed zero orientation letters, processed 139 applications, approved 20 applications, denied 4 applications and 53 applications were withdrawn. We received six homeless applications, and 17 application(s) were approved and waiting for an available unit. Angelia reported there were 20 new admissions and 11 move-outs in May.

Angelia informed the board that she and the public housing team met with the Indianapolis HUD field office, and they discussed some of the barriers to leasing the units. Alicia added that they have continued to call applicants but there are a lot of disconnected numbers. She said that they have been sending out letters to the last known address just to allow applicants to respond. Alicia further stated that the numbers have increased since the last report was published. Commissioner Brown asked how many times an applicant is called, emailed, or sent a letter before the manager moves on to the next applicant. Alicia stated that the files have a sheet in the back, and they document when they have called each applicant at least three times and send it back to intake with a note attached with the date and if the phone was disconnected or a message was left. Alicia stated that it starts with a letter and the applicant has 10 days to reach out to a manager. Angelia informed the board that she requires the managers to have at least three files for every vacancy and then contact those applicants to let them know it's first come, first served. She said that HUD can impact our funds on any unit that has been vacant for more than 90 days, so she tries to keep them at 60. She further stated that the occupancy rate is broken down by AMP so when HUD looks at our occupancy rate, they don't look at the overall total, they look at each AMP to see how it is performing and if that AMP continues to fall below 96%, they will be concerned that this is a failed AMP and they will provide recommendations on what to do about it. Commissioner Smole asked Angelia what her plan was because she looked at the reports from this past year, and the numbers were trending down. She said she thinks this is an emergency because none of the AMPs are compliant.

Angelia said that it may be a good idea to start doubling up on the number of files given to managers and have managers move on to the next approved applicant in shorter timeframes. She also said that there was some mismanagement of the previous intake office but our current staff are paying closer attention to detail and moving to house applicants who were approved before our current Intake Specialist was employed. Commissioner Boecher stated that he sent Angelia an email questioning the occupancy numbers because the numbers do not add up. Angelia informed the board that she will forward a corrected report. Commissioner Smole asked Angelia to develop a plan for improving the occupancy numbers and present it at the July board meeting.

- **Maintenance:** Angelia reported that 11 move-outs were received and eight were completed, two emergency requests were received and completed, 478 tenant requests were received and 458 were completed; and there were 41 annual inspections received and 20 completed, totaling 488 completed work orders.
- **Financials and Write-Offs:** May's financial report will be included in the July board packet in addition to the June financial report.

Commissioner Boecher asked if the rehired fee accountant would process the financials until we hire a new finance director. Angelia said she met with the fee accountant and his team on Monday, and they have started pulling the files that they need to compile our board reports and reconcile them to the general ledger. She stated that she just received a batch of finance director resumes and will start the interviewing process as soon as possible. Commissioner Boecher asked Angelia if the fee accountants would be able to get us caught up. Angelia said yes, they have already sent a list of the things that they need from the previous finance director for them to reconcile our monthly financials monthly. Commissioner Mayes asked about the write-offs and if there is a way to collect the balances or if we just lose that money. Angelia said yes, we use a system called Treks which is an agency that intercepts tax refunds and we have been successful with collecting some of the balances. She said if a participant leaves the program with an outstanding balance, it gets reported to EIV and if they apply for subsidized housing someplace else, their past due balances will show up and they will not be approved until they pay the housing authority.

❖ **Old Business:**

• **Security Update**

Angelia stated that she and her team met with the Elkhart Police Department on May 13 to discuss our mission to provide a safe living community and they have had ongoing talks about how to best partner to do so. Angelia further informed the board that she has hired a new security company, Signal Security, who she believes they will work better for us. She said that they park their security vehicle at the main office until the start of their evening shifts and once they retrieve their vehicle, they patrol all of the properties. She said that she had given the police department Signal's direct contact information. She said that if Signal has any concerns, or they encounter any criminal behavior they know to contact the police department. Commissioner Billings stated that the residents learn the hours and act accordingly when they know security is gone. She asked if the hours would change sometimes, particularly on the weekends. Angelia said with the new company, the hours have changed. She said that they were not on the premises for the entire period, they were out patrolling the different properties. Commissioner Billings asked if they could stay later on some weekends. Angelia said that she thinks that the security company is having the same problem with staffing and work hours as everyone else. She said that they had to hire someone just to come work for us. She said that she will continue to strive for fluctuating hours. Commissioner Smole suggested that security start later then they would not have to hire anyone else. She further suggested a staggered schedule. Erik stated that they did push the shift out, so they will work later. Cordell said that we currently have one security

officer at Rosedale and the roaming vehicle covers the other two high rises. Commissioner Brown asked if the police substation was working out. Angelia stated that we will have more discussion about that because right now the police department is using it as a community center and they are duplicating some of the services that we have already taken units offline for. She said that she asked them if they could work closer with the Minority Health Coalition. She said that Chief Milanese agreed that should use the unit to provide safety and security measures. Angelia stated that she asked the public housing team to plan a block party and invite the police department and the residents so that they would have an opportunity to meet the officers who will be housed in that unit. She said that it would be planned for sometime in the summer.

- **Riverside WI-FI Update**

Cordell stated that Comcast gave them a product called WI-FI Pro and it gives them five access points in this building. He said that the access point at Riverside is located in the main lobby but because of the concrete and steel, access is very limited. He said that they are going to add another access point. He said he ran an ethernet wire to the TV so that residents would not have to worry about WI-FI connectivity. He said that the signal in the dining area in the back by the sliding glass doors is very limited. Angelia asked Cordell if he knew when the new access point would be installed. Cordell said he would reach out to the Comcast representative that Erik spoke with. Commissioner Smole suggested an access point that you can use temporarily. She said it is not the greatest, but it will get you up and running temporarily until an access point from Comcast is installed. Angelia stated that she would like to see WI-FI connected so that residents have access to webinars that are facilitated by outside agencies like the Health Department, Heart City Healthcare, and HUD.

- **Non-Harassment Policy**

Angelia stated that an updated non-harassment policy has been issued to all staff and all acknowledgment of receipts had been signed. She said that we did not put the link on the website because Cordell said that there would be no way to keep the general public from accessing it and sending emails to the attorney. She said that the policy contains contact information. Commissioner Smole asked where the new policy would be posted. Angelia stated that we have an HR bulletin board in our breakroom and all employees received a copy of the contact information. Attorney Snow stated that there would be more updates coming through once they start going over the personnel policy. He said that he is about 75% through the draft right now. Angelia asked Attorney Snow if that was the shared document. He said that he is editing in Word and then he will share it. He said that he will have questions for the board so there will need to be some further discussion. He further stated that the EEOC has released some guidance in the last couple of months that adds distinct categories and characteristics to what they cover in terms of harassment and there were a few specifics that the board mentioned. Angelia stated that she wanted to discuss the ability to monitor leave time more closely. Attorney Snow said that attendance is another vast area that he has yet to get to.

- ❖ **New Business:**

- **Closing the Public Housing Waiting List**

Angelia stated that some concerns were discovered in the public housing intake office, some of which were applicants who should have been housed by now. She said that our policy states that we will close the public housing waiting list if it takes applicants two years to be housed. She said that we have many applicants who have surpassed two years. She said she would like to close the public housing waitlist to allow the intake specialist to get her office in order and contact some of those applicants who had been on the list for several years to see if they are still interested so we can reduce the waiting list size and if they are still interested going ahead with getting them housed as soon as possible. She said she would like to close the waiting list

until January 1. She informed the commissioners that the intake specialist has come across several duplicates, and she would like to get the waiting list cleaned up. Commissioner Boecher agreed that we need to get applicants housed as quickly as possible. Angelia said she was concerned that if she closed the waiting list, it could hurt our flow of applicants and the intake specialist assured her it would not. She said that we would not necessarily need to keep it closed until January, if we see that it is creating a problem with our flow of files, we can reopen it. Commissioner Smole stated that she does not like the look of closing the waiting list. She said if the occupancy numbers were in the 90's she would feel more comfortable. Commissioner Brown asked Commissioner Smole if she would feel better once they received the accurate occupancy numbers. Commissioner Smole stated that if some of the percentages wind up being in the 90s, she would feel much better than she does with 89% amid a housing crisis. Commissioner Smole further stated that she would be comfortable with contracting with someone to help clean up intake while our staff is still housing applicants. Commissioner Mayes asked if an applicant goes to the bottom of the list when they apply. Angelia said no, it would depend on their preferences which include, homeless, employed, and Elkhart residents. She said these preferences would change how their application ranks. She said the system is designed to generate the number on the list, we do not assign numbers and the list can change from day to day. Angelia and the board agreed to table this agenda item until next month after a current occupancy report has been submitted. Commissioner Smole stated that she cannot imagine staff trying to deal with getting the files cleaned up, having six files instead of three for the vacancies, plus trying to clean up the list. She asked if there was a way to support staff to get it cleaned up so that we are setting our staff up for success. Commissioner Boecher informed Angelia that if she would like to seek out additional opportunities to augment staff, he would be supportive. Commissioner Robinson asked Angelia for a comprehensive plan that may include closing the list and hiring someone to help and present it to the board next month. Angelia stated that she will send the corrected occupancy report to everyone tomorrow and present the comprehensive leasing plan to the board at the July board meeting.

- **Audit**

Angelia informed the board that the audit has been scheduled and will be conducted on August 5-6.

- **Resolution 24:10 – A Resolution to Add Policy to the Administrative Plan for Debts Owed to Public Housing Tenant Transitioning to the HCV Program**

Angelia stated that this resolution came about after one of our program participants was receiving dual subsidies from public housing and HCV. She stated that HCV entered into a payment agreement with the program participant to repay HCV for a subsidy that they should have not been paying. She said that once they moved out of public housing, they owed a debt for maintenance charges, and they put their payments in the drop box and our finance manager received the payments and applied them to their public housing balance. Angelia further stated that the HCV participant became very upset so this policy will implement how charges would be applied if a program participant moves out of the public housing program and onto the HCV program, they are required to pay their balance to public housing, or their voucher will be rescinded after 60 days. She stated that HUD prevents anyone from receiving dual subsidies. Commissioner Boecher asked if this would only be triggered if we entered into a voucher agreement with someone who resides in public housing. Angelia said yes, Indiana state law requires all landlords to settle accounts within 45 days, so we settle all of our former tenant's accounts within 45 days, but we designate 60 days to be sure we close out the prior account that way we can communicate their outstanding balance interdepartmentally. Commissioner Smole asked how often this happens. Amy stated that it does not happen very often, she said this is the first time it has happened since she has been here. All commissioners present voted to approve resolution 24:10.

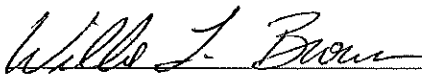
- **Resolution 24:11 – A Resolution to Award the Contract for the Fire Sprinkler System Installation for Waterfall High Rise**

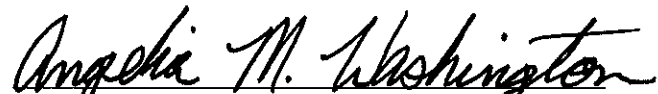
Erik stated that at the end of last year, we were awarded approximately \$1.5 million for the fire suppression system at Waterfall High Rise. He said that this is the second portion of the fire panel upgrade. He said that there was only one bidder, but it was not from a lack of trying. He said that they had three bidders but one asked for an additional two weeks but in the end, this bidder did not submit anything. He said that Viking dropped out because they did not want to do a residential high-rise. Erik said that the \$1.5 million will come in roughly \$40,000 over budget so he reduced the scope by \$60,000 so it will consume the entire amount. He said that it is 100% paid for by the housing-related-hazards grant. All commissioners present voted to approve resolution 24:11.

Angelia informed the board that we had two water heaters at Rosedale, and one went down. She said that maintenance tried to get it back up, the other water heater went out, but they were able to get that one back up. She said that they have been monitoring it closely. Todd stated that one of the water heaters failed so they called a contractor to come out and replace the parts to keep it running. He said that he submitted a PO for a brand-new one. Commissioner Brown asked how old the water heaters were. Todd said about 16 years old. He said that we currently have one going but it will not last, that is why we usually have two alternating. He said that the new water heater is supposed to be delivered on August 1<sup>st</sup>. Commissioner Smole asked if we should add the other water heater to next year's budget since they are the same age. Angelia said yes, we will do that. Angelia stated that she informed the board in case they received calls from residents about the lack of hot water.

❖ **Adjournment**

Commissioner Willie Brown without any objections declared the June 20, 2024, Board of Commissioners' meeting adjourned at 5:31 P.M.

  
Willie Brown, Commissioner  
July 18, 2024

  
Angelia Washington, Executive Director  
July 18, 2024