

FAYETTEVILLE HOUSING AUTHORITY

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 28, 2021, 5:00 pm

Via Zoom

I. Call to Order

Commissioner Bensingler called to order the regular meeting of the Fayetteville Housing Authority Board of Directors at 5:00 pm on Thursday, January 28, 2021 via Zoom.

II. Roll Call

Commissioner Bensingler conducted a roll call. In attendance were: Commissioner Breashears, Commissioner Terry, Commissioner McMahon, Commissioner Bensingler, Commissioner Jones.

Additionally, in attendance: Executive Director Belford, Director of Housing Butler, various community members including Clint Schnekloth and Albious Latior.

III. Public Comment

During discussion of Resolution #1251, Jen Cole commented on the importance of the Hillcrest Resident Council to establishing a PHA-wide Resident Council, and that the current offer of using Mary's desk has not been able to meet the Hillcrest Resident Council needs. She also brought up a complaint that the minutes from the Resident Council were being censored when sent to Property Manager West.

Director of Housing Butler clarified that it is current procedure to remove any potentially identifying information regarding specific residents from the Resident Council minutes. Commissioner Terry noted that Resident Council leadership is not subject to approval by Fayetteville Housing Authority staff. Commissioner Breashears suggested leadership training for both groups.

During discussion of Resolution #1254, Clint Schnekloth made recommendations regarding language and translation services, whether that is having a special translation staff or hiring from within the affected communities. He also wanted clarification regarding partnering with non-profit providers and what that would look like, as well as the benefits of sub-granting out versus internal staffing.

Former City Council Member Kyle Smith made a comment about engaging faith-based agencies, and a suggestion regarding prioritizing applicants based on if they have received any previous help or not.

During the Staff Report, Jen Cole commented that Property Manager West has been able to attend several Resident Council Meetings and that there is good communication on that front. She touched base how Resident Council elections are being held during COVID, and the engagement with Resident Council. She discussed how trash used to be the purview of a Custodian which was a position a while ago.

IV. Old Business

A. Amendment to Resolution #1250 – Authorization for Executive Director to negotiate and sign Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement with Washington County

Executive Director Belford presented updates of the negotiation process with Excellerate Foundation & Washington County. Amendment would remove Excellerate Foundation from the agreement. Commissioner Bensingler discussed the importance of transparency and engagement with marginalized populations. Executive Director Belford summarized processes and negotiations discussed during previous meetings. Commissioner Breashears touched upon equal opportunity.

Commissioner Breashears made a motion to adopt Resolution #1250. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Jones and all in favor.

B. Resolution #1251 – Approval of PHA-Wide Resident Council

Executive Director Belford advocated for a jurisdiction-wide Resident Council, recommending the MTW Manager to act as the Staff Sponsor. Combining the roles of MTW Manager and Resident Council Sponsor was discussed in further detail.

Commissioner Breashears made remarks regarding the HUD definition for a Resident Council. He also initiated a discussion regarding a dedicated office space for the Hillcrest Resident Council. A recommendation was made to add this topic to next month's agenda.

Commissioner Breashears motioned to adopt resolution #1251. Commissioner Jones seconded, and motion passed unanimously.

C. Follow-up on Willow Heights preschool lease

Commissioner Bensingler initiated the conversation on what actions have been taken thus far regarding the Teeny Tiny Preschool lease. Director of Housing Butler reviewed the process of updating the lease and addressing issues in the previous lease.

Commissioner Breashears wanted to know how long their lease term is, and if there was the option of putting some of the lease income back towards major repairs. Executive Director Belford discussed prioritizing the residents' comfort at Willow Heights. Director of Housing Butler confirmed that the preschool is included in the annual HUD inspection process. Commissioner Terry recommended inviting the Teeny Tiny Preschool back next month, and Commissioner Bensingler scheduled that discussion for next week.

D. Follow-up on Willow Heights legal situation

Added per request of Commissioner Terry. Executive Director Belford updated the board with information about a conversation with the insurance company and attorneys. The lawsuit was formally filed in March 16th 2020, but they have not been served. Commissioner Terry sought a more defined timeline of resolution as part of a commitment to transparency for residents.

V. New Business

A. Resolution #1252 – Update Admin Plan for new vouchers & criminal justice background involvement

Executive Director Belford discussed the recent specialty vouchers awarded by Mainstream and Foster Youth Initiative, and as part of that the Admin plan has to be updated in regard to criminal justice lookback period.

The resolution would update policy to only look at 3 years old and related to violence or manufacture/distribution of drugs. Current policy states a period of 5 years.

Commissioner Jones wanted to clarify age for Mainstream vouchers.

Commissioner Breashears motioned to adopt resolution #1252. Motioned was seconded by Commissioner Jones and passed unanimously.

B. Resolution #1253 – Approval of new MTW Manager

Executive Director Belford reviewed the role of the MTW Manager in terms of self-sufficiency and resident engagement and having this be a new role rather than overloading current staff.

Commissioner Jones recommended having someone who can engage with the entire community, with special emphasis on BIPOC and/or bilingualism. Executive Director Belford emphasized having someone with experience with HUD housing.

Commissioner Breashears initiated a conversation on the first six months versus the rest of the time as a MTW manager. The first six months would be focused almost solely on research and program design. He also asked if this would be an internal hire or a new hire.

A motion to adopt Resolution #1253 was made by Commissioner Breashears. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McMahan, and passed unanimously.

C. Resolution #1254 – Approve up to 7 positions related to Emergency Rental Assistance

Executive Director Belford commented that this resolution depends on the agreement with Washington County before reviewing the potential positions. Initial staff would consist of Housing Specialist, a Supervisor from an existing staff member, Case Manager, Outreach Coordinator, and Accounts Payable Clerk. Positions will be posted for 2 weeks to allow for public circulation.

Commissioner Breashears initiated a conversation regarding employee payment for the new staff and clarification regarding permanent staff. This discussion included a call for data regarding time and work, as well as technology needed for new staff.

Commissioner Terry suggested extra compensation for a bilingual Housing Specialist given that they reach out to the entire community. A discussion arose on current bilingual services in the office and how many Housing Specialists to hire.

Commissioner Terry recommended coverage for seven days a week. Commissioner McMahon suggested liaising with Springdale Housing Authority.

Commissioner Jones commented on having specific community partners that can help share the load with translating. She later asked for clarification on what non-profit covers as a defining term for partnering with organizations.

Commissioner Breashears recommended the first hire being the Outreach Coordinator. He later initiated a discussion regarding how applications would be taken into consideration, accessibility for the community, and timing of the money.

Commissioner Terry made a motion to adopt Resolution #1254, with Commissioner Jones seconding. The motion passes unanimously.

Commissioner Breashears made a final point about priorities regarding processing.

Commissioner Jones requested a timeline on the grant program.

D. Resolution #1255 – Budget Adjustment

Executive Director Belford recommended reducing percentage of salary for the Executive Director, Deputy Director, and Finance Manager in order to alleviate the lack of payment from FHA Development.

Commissioner Breashears wanted to know if the funds would be readjusted back once rent was 100%.

Motion by Commissioner Breashears to approve resolution #1255 and #1259. Seconded by Commissioner McMahon, passed unanimously.

E. Resolution #1256 – Amendment to Procurement Policy

Executive Director Belford reviewed the Procurement Policy relating to partnering with nonprofit organizations for the Emergency Rental Assistance.

Commissioner Breashears is not in favor in increasing the current budget limit.

Commissioner Terry recommended cleaning up the language to differentiate between procurement and subgrants and proposing it as sub-award procedures at a special meeting. Commissioner McMahon provided a link to a document clarifying the language and definitions between the two of them.

Commissioner Jones established that she had not been in favor of the contract between Bentonville and Hark.

Commissioner Jones motioned to decline Resolution #1256, seconded by Commissioner Breashears. Motion passes unanimously.

F. Resolution #1257 – Authorization to set up Checking account for Emergency Rental Assistance

Commissioner Jones asked if there would be 2 signatures required for checks. Executive Director Belford discussed the current policy in place regarding separation of duties.

Commissioner Breashears motioned to adopt Resolution #1257. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

G. Resolution #1258 – Board Approval of ACC Amendment for MTW

Executive Director Belford stated that an amendment to follow MTW agency rules versus Public Housing/Voucher rules is required to move onto next steps.

Commissioner Breashears asked if the amendment would be placed in the ACC wording or just as an attachment.

Commissioner Breashears motioned to adopt Resolution #1258, seconded by Commissioner Breashears. The motion passed unanimously.

H. Resolution #1259 – Approval of new Operations Coordinator

Added today in response to potentially receiving the new grant and incorporated into the budget.

Executive Director Belford reviewed the need for the role and what the position would accomplish.

Commissioner Breashears asked about salary for Operations Coordinator, and reviewed what taking minutes would entail. He and the Executive Director Belford discussed the separation between FHA and FHA Development.

Motion by Commissioner Breashears to approve resolution #1255 and #1259. Seconded by Commissioner McMahon, passed unanimously.

I. Officer Elections

Commissioner Bensinger went over the open positions and who is currently in those positions. The office of Chair and Vice-Chair are both open for election.

Commissioner Terry initiated a discussion about parliamentary protocol that rotates opportunity for leadership of the Board based on seniority. Commissioner Breashears respectfully declined and nominated Commissioner Bensinger to continue as Chair. Commissioner Jones seconded the nomination and Commissioner Bensinger accepted the nomination.

Commissioner Breashears nominated Commissioner Jones as Vice-Chair. Commissioner Jones accepted the nomination.

Commissioner Terry wanted on record that she does not agree with having one Board Chair for both Fayetteville Housing Authority and Fayetteville Housing Authority Development, Inc. Executive Director Belford noted that this discussion would be best suited for an FHA Development meeting. Commissioner Bensinger wanted clarification on the attorney's recommendation regarding combining the two Board Chair positions.

Commissioner Breashears motioned to vote, with both nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair passed unanimously.

J. Financial Dashboard – Previous 3 years

Executive Director Belford reviewed the Financial Dashboard, beginning with September. Specific questions can be submitted for later answers. The Public Housing revenue dip reflects the pandemic and overall, it was underbudget. Morgan Manor reflected overbudgeting. The Voucher Program appeared to be on track. No budget was provided for FHA Development. An Expense Analysis graph was included for each.

K. Discussion: Day of week for Agenda Session

Commissioner Bensinger initiated the discussion, with Commissioner Terry suggesting the Thursday before for the Agenda Session. Commissioner Breashears invited Executive Director Angela's opinions and she recommended less time between the Agenda and Board Meeting but that it was the Board's decision in the end.

Commissioner Bensinger recommended moving meetings from 5:00 pm to 5:30.

VI. Consent Agenda

No items have been removed or changed from the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Breashears has motioned to approve the Consent Agenda, second by Commissioner Jones.

Commissioner Terry requested viewing of the Thursday November 30th, 2020 minutes.

The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Staff Report

Director of Housing Butler presented the collaboration with City of Fayetteville Compassion Tree, which was headed by Deputy Director Berry. She reviewed the purpose of the tree planting at each property.

She went over the Deputy Director Report, highlighting the Christmas Party. She touched briefly on the trees that were planted, as well as current community engagement.

January Housing Report reviewed the number of families housed and number of vacancies available. Maintenance and Public Housing teams have been working together to ensure COVID safety compliance, and she introduced the members of both teams. She touched on the current waitlist lengths as well as current preventative maintenance.

Commissioner Breashears asked if the Maintenance team was fully staffed and clarification of the role of a Project Lead.

The Voucher Program Manager Report covered current voucher numbers, the waitlist, and new property owners. She reviewed the status of the ESG-Project 25 and Foster Youth to Independence referrals, and the change in Housing Navigator.

Commissioner Breashears asked where the FYI referrals would be housed.

She reviewed the Supportive Services Report, which covered Resident Engagement, Case Management, and Resident Story about the four residents working the front desk for COVID screening.

Commissioner Breashears asked how they are paid and wanted to know where Mary was situated on the teams.

Commissioner Terry wanted to know who was responsible for trash pickup on the Hillcrest floors, and what happens when that procedure fails. Commissioner Breashears asked if the Groundskeeper/Night Tech is scheduled off every Monday. He also mentioned a rodent issue at the end of the corridors. He brought up the need for better communication between the office and the residents.

Executive Director Belford has made the Organization Flowchart available to the Board Members.

Commissioner Breashears has concerns with Maintenance Team turnover. Commissioner Jones recommended sending flyers to physical offices and has contacts she can offer as well. Commissioner Terry offered the floor to Jen Cole regarding Hillcrest custodial issues. Commissioner Brashear has heard complaints about the part-time custodians and stressed the need for a full-time Custodian.

Executive Director Belford went over her report, focusing on Emergency Rental Assistance and the Hillcrest Tower Expansion. She also touched on work at Golden Elm Meadows, and how she has been working with FHA staff in terms of delegation and training. She discussed her work with the National Committee for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, as well as a future engagement with the IDEALS institute.

Commissioner Jones asked to see the Org and Diversity Charts, and asked if the City of Fayetteville was doing the marketing for the rental assistance grant. She initiated discussion on technology access for the Resident Council.

Commissioner Breashears noted that the Hillcrest Towers printer had a sign saying copies were 25 cents.

Commissioner Breashears motioned to go to Executive Session, and Commissioner Jones seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Executive Session: Employee Complaint

Commissioner Bensinger motioned to come back into regular session, seconded by Commissioner Breashears. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Jones motioned a recommendation for Executive Director Belford to work with HR consultants to review the 2020 year employees eligible for COLA, ensure they have received it, and provide written feedback to the Board. Commissioner Breashears seconded the motion. Commissioner Bensinger made a friendly amendment to say 'Fiscal year' instead of 'Calendar year'.

The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Final Comments & Announcements

Commissioner Bensinger clarified that meetings are now Tuesdays at 5:30, with the upcoming Tuesday meeting for the special meeting regarding subgrantees.

Executive Director Belford announced that this is the 50th year anniversary of the Fayetteville Housing Authority, and revealed the commemorative logo donated by the Belford Group.

Commissioner Breashears noted how long the current Board meetings were (6-8 hours).

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Bensinger adjourned the meeting at 9:27 pm.