

FAYETTEVILLE HOUSING AUTHORITY

Special Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 16th, 2021, 11:30 am

Via Zoom

I. Call to Order

Commissioner Bensinger called to order the Special Meeting of the Fayetteville Housing Authority Board of Commissioners at 11:30 am on Tuesday, March 16th, 2021 via Zoom.

II. Roll Call

Commissioner Bensinger conducted a roll call. In attendance were: Commissioners Bensinger, Breashears, Jones, McMahan, and Terry. Additionally in attendance: Attorney Crouch, FHA staff members, and members of the public.

III. Public Comment

Jen Cole commented on the size of the agenda for an emergency meeting. Commissioner Breashears asked about the timing of the meeting- it was clarified that the meeting was selected by a poll of the Board members as well as accommodating communication with FHA staff.

Commissioner Terry made a motion to table New Business topics: Leadership Transition other than updates, State Relaxation of COVID restrictions, COVID personnel policy, and the Friendly Fridge of Fayetteville. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Breashears.

There was discussion regarding the benefits of having next steps in leadership transition during this meeting. There was a friendly amendment to the motion to keep Leadership Transition on the agenda but table the rest.

Jen Cole conveyed her disappointment in the staff's inability to come together in a time of crisis. Commissioner Bensinger clarified that the staff was seeking clear direction and guidance from the Board as leadership changes move forward.

The motion was clarified as tabling New Business items G – I on the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. New Business

A. FOIA/Arkansas Public Meeting Law Guidelines

Attorney Crouch reviewed general guidelines, delineating what constitutes Board meetings and discussions under the Public Meeting Law.

There was conversation about e-mails, texts, and the line between information only and discussion. Board members communicating with FHA employees was discussed and protocol regarding that situation was clarified.

Attorney Crouch went over what constitutes a proper FOIA request and how to handle it. There was discussion on the role of lawyers and liaisons.

B. ERA Grant Quorum Court Update

Director of Vouchers & Supportive Services Dempsey presented an overview of the Emergency Rental Assistance program thus far. She clarified the data regarding applicants versus eligible households and explained how the number of eligible households from the first pull was calculated.

There was discussion regarding the requirement of verification documents. Those originally had not been required but the Treasury department had since updated their FAQ requiring due diligence, which includes best practices such as asking for photo ID and income verification.

Commissioner McMahon asked if there was anything the Board could do to support the program at this time. Currently, the biggest issue is waiting for landlord and applicant confirmations.

Commissioner Jones requested demographic data for the next meeting as well as current admin expenses. She initiated a discussion regarding the overall contact process for applicants.

There was confusion as to whether or not the Board had approved applying for the next round of funding once 75% of the current funds were disbursed.

C. Transition of Leadership

Director of Housing Butler updated the Board on steps taken. HUD has been notified and next steps are focusing on getting access to all accounts, portals, and systems. Steps have been taken with the banks as well. FHA Development banking will be discussed during the FHA Development meeting. There was a reminder to make sure that former Executive Director Belford was no longer representing FHA on the national level. Director of Housing Butler suggested getting an overall external audit.

There was discussion among the Board regarding their next steps for hiring a new Executive Director. It was suggested that they meet with their HR consultant and draft a position description, with input from staff and/or residents.

Jessica Minton from the VA talked about the partnership with FHA and stressed the need for transparency regarding upcoming leadership changes. Commissioner Breashears brought up the Resident Council as a method of receiving input from Voucher Holders.

Commissioner Bensinger recommended that Interim Executive Director Berry meet with Sheila Posey and present a proposal regarding a next-steps analysis at the next meeting.

Jen Cole suggested having an Interim Director for a year instead of six months.

Commissioner Breashears motioned to table Leadership Transition B- next steps- need for an interim Senior Director and/or interim Deputy Director due to Interim Executive Director Berry's absence. Motion was seconded by Commissioner McMahon. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Discussion: March Meeting date, Agenda Meeting Date

There was a discussion regarding avoiding Spring Break. The Board agreed on Tuesday, March 30th for the Agenda session, and Thursday, April 1st for the Board Regular Meeting, pending Commissioner Terry's availability.

Commissioner Breashears wanted to make sure this timing did not impact any of FHA's end of month procedures.

E. Discussion: Procedure for adding items to Board Agenda

Commissioner Bensinger reviewed the protocol for adding items to the Board Agenda. Any Board member can request an item added 48 hours prior to the Board Meeting as a courtesy, with requests and clarifications going to the Interim Executive Director.

Commissioner Jones motioned to table Leadership Transition 4- continuity of operations plans, seconded by Commissioner Breashears. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Final Comments & Announcements

Director of Housing Butler was able to reach out to Interim Executive Director Berry and confirmed that those dates work for him and that he will reach out to Commissioner Terry.

VI. Adjournment

Commissioner Bensinger adjourned the meeting at 2:00 pm.