



Sarasota Housing Authority
269 South Osprey Avenue
Sarasota, Florida 34236

Board Meeting
February 15, 2023
4:30 P.M.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Jack Meredith called the meeting of the Sarasota Housing Authority Board of Commissioners to order at 4:30 pm.
- II. **INVOCATION**
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- IV. **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Chair Jack Meredith, Vice Chair Ernestine Taylor, Commissioner John Colón (via Zoom), Commissioner Deborah Sargent, Commissioner Mark Vengroff (via Zoom), Commissioner Carolyn Mason and Commissioner Duane Finger

Commissioners Not Present: N/A

Attendees: Attorney Rhonda Stringer (via Zoom), City Commissioner Jen Ahearn-Koch, Valerie Buchand and Joe Chambers

SHA Personnel: William Russell, Rick Toney, Andrea Keddell and HCV/Section 8 Staff (for Special Presentation)
- V. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - A. SHA Regular Board Meeting – January 18, 2023: Chair Meredith put up the minutes from the January 18, 2023, Regular Board Meeting for approval. Commissioner Sargent pulled the minutes for discussion.
 - Commissioner Sargent wanted it noted that City Commissioner Jen Ahearn-Koch requested it be recorded on future minutes when she’s not able to attend meetings so there’s a record of her attendance. Commissioner Sargent was informed that City Commissioner’s attendance is being recorded on the roll call sheet.
 - Commissioner Sargent also wanted to note that there was an update to the Public Presentation regarding the Resident Council MOU and that the meeting is taking place with SHA and Resident Council Board Members in March and the MOU will be brought to the next board meeting.
 - Commissioner Sargent took a moment to inquire about getting the minutes from the Board Retreat. Chair Meredith responded that he had planned on addressing this during Commissioner Comments.
 - City Commissioner Jen Ahearn-Koch had a grammar correction to X. B. of minutes. The word “imaging” should be changed to “image.” This change will be made.
 - Commissioner Mason made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Finger seconded the motion.
 - Motion was voted on and passed unanimously. (Commissioner Meredith voted Present)

VI. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

A. HCV/Section 8 Staff Introductions/Project Updates

- Mr. Russell provided some background on the HCV Program stating it is SHA's largest program and that in 2005 SHA had 726 vouchers. This has now tripled. The HCV Department administers several programs within the department (VASH Vouchers, Mainstream Vouchers, Emergency Housing Vouchers, Family Unification Program, Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Project Based Vouchers (PBV), Regular PBV and Home Ownership). Mr. Russell then introduced Jeremy White, the new HCV Department Director to introduce his staff. Mr. White previously ran Hawaii's HCV Program and Mobile Housing Authority's HCV Program. Mr. White started at SHA in October 2022.
- Jeremy White expressed pleasure in accepting the position and that the number one objective of the department is to get as many people housed off the wait list as possible. Another goal of the department is to outreach and get more landlords on the program to provide housing to our residents. A new position, Landlord Liaison, has just been added. SHA is also looking to go paperless and more efficient in its' communication. *Commissioner Sargent stated she'd like to speak to Mr. White further on the online portal and future communication from the caseworkers. She'd rather have face-to-face meetings with her case worker and has concerns that her current caseworker lacks in communication.* Mr. White continued and began introducing the rest of the HCV staff, who intern introduced themselves and provided info on their role at the agency:
 - ✓ Gennetza Hernandez Alamo, HCV Housing Specialist, handles the port process of residents moving in and out of the area. She came to SHA from the Tampa Housing Authority.
 - ✓ Ana Mejia, HCV Program Manager, was newly hired and came to SHA with 15 years of experience from the New Jersey Housing Authority. She looks forward to working with Mr. White to ensure that the program runs smoothly.
 - ✓ Susan Brunke, HCV Housing Specialist, has worked in housing since 2000 and came to SHA from Fort Meyers. She's currently covering for another HCV Specialist who's on leave and works in Home Ownership and with RAD PBVs.
 - ✓ Gail Vestrand, Sr. HCV Housing Specialist, has 22 years of experience in housing and has been at SHA for 12 years. She handles regular vouchers, port outs and the VASH program.
 - ✓ Fred Smith, HCV Inspector, started at SHA in 2015 and handles all the inspections for the agency. Mr. Russell added that he started in the maintenance department and then transferred to the HCV department when the Inspector position became available.
 - ✓ Derrick Kirce, Landlord Liaison, was hired for this new position last week and had previously worked for Janie's Garden in the Better Tomorrow's program. He's beginning his outreach to landlords and working to communicate proactively with them by responding to every call. Commissioner Mason added she thinks it will make a positive difference having a single point of contact for the landlords.

- ✓ Lamarr James, Intake Specialist, was hired for this new position this week. He served in the army for 9 years where he trained and developed soldiers. His position will work to process the vouchers for participants on the waitlist and run the briefings to help the participants understand the program.
- ✓ Natasha Gibson, HCV Housing Specialist, came from the Bradenton Housing Authority and has 3 years of experience. Natasha is assisting in training Mr. James to take over the Intake Specialist role so she can begin serving as an HCV Specialist.

VII. PUBLIC PRESENTATION

- A. Ms. Vicky Palmer addressed the board regarding a City water issue stating that the Towers residents had received water shutoff notices from the City but that there are miscommunications going on because she happened to get in touch with a Chemist who knew nothing about this water issue but that they'd come out to confirm the water was ok. Ms. Palmer believes if she hadn't called they would not have known if the water was ok and that the construction managers are lying about the water quality and the City of Sarasota takes bribes and this could potentially cause a hazard to the elderly and disabled residents at the Towers/Annex. Commissioner Meredith thanked Ms. Palmer for bringing this to their attention and it will be taken under advisement.
- B. Ms. Valerie Buchand addressed the board:
- A Round Table is being set up for Landlords and Tenants to learn about their rights and she'd like the City and Housing Authority Board to participate once it's scheduled. She states HUD will be at the table as well.
 - Ms. Buchand again is requesting that written responses be sent out when public comments come before the board.
 - Per #6 on the Registration Form to Provide Statements at Public Presentations: *Appropriate matters brought before the Board at Public Presentations shall be addressed in writing in the next regular Board meeting package by the CEO unless otherwise requested or directed by the Chairperson, or by a majority vote of the present quorum of the Board.*
 - Ms. Buchand is requesting each Board Member to visit the new space allotted to the Resident Council for their office and is inquiring why they are being denied their request to move back to their former location. They were displaced and she feels they should be allowed to have a space of equal capacity/quality. Commissioner Sargent added she does not understand why they can't have their own internet and phone separate from the Housing Authority. Commissioner Meredith reminded all that the Public Presentations are to be 3 minutes and that this is currently over the time limit. He suggested that since this topic has come up multiple times that it be discussed at an upcoming meeting so the legal responsibility of the Housing Authority and the Resident Council is understood. Ms. Buchand added she feels HUD should be invited into the conversation so they can get HUDs take on the situation and settle the matter, since they were displaced.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

- A. None

IX. OLD BUSINESS

- A. McCown Tower – Joe Chambers reported that they are approximately 3 weeks from completing the 1st phase (1st 25 Units) of the rehab. They hope to finish the project by March 2024. It was originally scheduled to be completed by December 2023 but there have been unforeseen issues that caused delays in the 1st phase that put them behind schedule. Commissioner Meredith inquired if the delays were causing issues with the budget. Mr. Chambers responded they were overbudget on some items and that at this point there are no funds for the extras they wanted to do (i.e. a Gazebo, Solar).
 - Mr. Russell inquired if the concrete was being treated to have a non-slip surface. Mr. Chambers states the concrete should exceed the code requirement for the coating needed to prevent slips and falls.
- B. Cypress Square (Courts Phase I) – Joe Chambers reported they continue having issues getting orders in for materials. Vendors are stating they're supplies are allocated to other projects and they're not taking orders.
 - Commissioner Meredith again inquired about receiving monthly construction progress reports. Mr. Chambers again stated he will get those out to the board and that they're still about a year out from completion.
- C. Commissioner Finger asked for an updated on the 22nd Street project. Mr. Russell recently met with a contractor. Discussion took place on the elevator that the Board had inquired about. Mr. Russell states the contractor suggested that to justify the added expense of an elevator the project should be at least 4 stories. However, the overlay district caps the project at 35 feet. So a meeting was held today with the City to discuss the overlay district to see if the project can be allowed to go higher (45 Feet). This may be a 6-month process if it must go through a Comp Plan Amendment. Commissioner Meredith reminded that the funds allocated for the project need to be spent within a certain timeframe. Mr. Russell stated that if it's only a 6-month delay the funds can still be spend in the allotted timeframe.
- D. Lofts on Lemon Phase II – A meeting was held with developers and architect to see how many units can be set up and the required parking. The plan is to get a mix of unit size. Mr. Russell hopes to have more concrete information on budget and design (floor plan options) by the March board meeting.

X. NEW BUSINESS

- A. None

XI. PROGRAM UPDATES – ACCEPTED BY CONSENT

- A. Monthly Financial Statements
 - B. Board Committee Reports
 - C. Housing Management Reports
 - D. Housing Voucher Report
 - E. Capital Fund Program Report
 - F. Resident Services Monthly Report
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- Commissioner Finger made a motion to accept the Program Updates Consent Agenda. Commissioner Mason seconded the motion.
 - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

XII. COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS / COMMENTS

- A. Commissioner Sargent reported that Janie's finally got the parking lot lights fixed and have new social services staff member in the office. Mr. Russell responded to inquiry regarding the Resident Council elections stating that the only location holding an election is the McCown location due to lack of candidates at the other properties.
- B. Commissioner Vengroff thanked Chair Meredith for holding a good Board Retreat.
- C. Chair Meredith reports that they had a productive retreat and will try to send them out by the end of the week. Some of the goals and objectives were discussed with Mr. Russell and they can be discussed in more detail at an upcoming meeting to get Mr. Russell's input on the objectives the board set up at the retreat. Some main objectives the board discussed were:
 - Guideline for developments at 60% or below AMI.
 - Increase HCV program.
 - Address security/safety with a plan and have regular reports.
 - Adding a Social Services Resident Report.
 - Measuring participation rates and setting goals.
 - Understanding HR Department and assessment.
 - Review Bylaws (these were sent out to all commissioners) and have them discussed in a couple months following their review.
 - Begin holding Admin and Finance Committee meetings on a bi-monthly basis.
 - Hold a Customer Service Training for staff. Mr. Russell reported that a Customer Service training has been scheduled for March 6 (*this was rescheduled following the board meeting to May 24 due to staff attendance conflicts*). Commissioner Mason inquired if this was a one-time training or if it could be done annually. Mr. Russell stated that they will see how this one goes and then see if some virtual follow-ups can be done. Chair Meredith asked to have the agenda forwarded to the board. Commissioner Finger added that focus needs to be placed on the residents being able to reach staff if they are having issues or a question that needs to be addressed in a timely and professional manner. Mr. Russell responded that the new HCV Manager should help with response to retail issues and responding to the needs of the residents and free up the HCV Director to take care of the compliance side of the department.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The Sarasota Housing Authority Board of Commissioners meeting was adjourned at 5:58 pm.