



## HOUSING CONNECT

### MINUTES OF THE ELECTRONIC MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 18, 2020

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**PRESENT (audio):**

Jennifer Johnston – Chair  
Mark Johnston – Vice Chair  
Phil Bernal – Commissioner  
Christine Nguyen - Commissioner

**EXCUSED:**

Erin Litvack – Commissioner  
Spencer Moffat – Commissioner  
Gwen White – Commissioner

**STAFF PRESENT (audio):**

Janice Kimball – Chief Executive Officer  
Zach Bale – Programs Officer  
Andre Bartlome – Chief Financial Officer  
Jarin Blackham – IT Director  
Mike Kienast – Chief Operations Officer  
Jodi Parker – Housing Choice Voucher Director  
Paul Rooker – Human Resources Director  
Jeremy Runia – Real Estate Development Director  
Dan Pincock – Executive Administrator

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**COMMENCE**

Housing Connect Board Chair Jennifer Johnston welcomed everyone to the electronic version of the March 18, 2020 Housing Connect Board Meeting at 11:30 a.m. A roll call was taken with the following Board members present: Jennifer Johnston, Mark Johnston, Phil Bernal, Christine Nguyen.

**1. EARTHQUAKE/DISASTER RECOVERY UPDATE**

Chair Jennifer Johnston asked Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball to give a quick update on the agency after the morning's 5.7 Richter scale earthquake. Janice Kimball informed the Board that non-essential staff had been sent home. There was damage to the High Rise (leaking water pipes). No injuries were reported. Maintenance had formed a command center in case of significant aftershocks. There was a staff presence at the High Rise, Grace Mary Manor, and Bud Bailey following the earthquake. At Frontier, it was reported that the building was fine and that the residents were safe.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No one from the public was in attendance at the Board meeting.

**3. CONSENT AGENDA**

Vice Chair Mark Johnston motioned to approve all documents in the Consent Agenda (including the minutes from the Housing Connect February 2020 Board Meeting, The Hub activity report, Westlake update, Covewood remodel update, 426 South 500 East project update, and recent staff changes). Commissioner Bernal seconded the motion, and all commissioners present (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Mark Johnston, Commissioner Bernal, and Commissioner Nguyen) voted in favor of approving the Consent Agenda. It was agreed that the Housing Placement item would be voted on separately.

The Housing Placement action followed up on the discussion at the February Board Meeting where it was proposed that the vacant units in the properties which Housing Connect has direct control over for housing designated for those who are homeless would be provided to the Continuum of Care's Coordinated Entry System for housing placement to take effect, once the current applicants on the waitlist have been either housed or moved, and that there would be a requirement to get a referral within a 30-day period; otherwise, Housing

Connect will house qualified applicants on its own. Commissioner Nguyen motioned to approve the action, and Vice Chair Mark Johnston seconded the motion, with all Board members (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Mark Johnston, Commissioner Bernal, and Commissioner Nguyen) voting in favor.

#### **4. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 11:43 a.m., Vice Chair Mark Johnston motioned for the Board to enter into Executive Session to discuss some real estate matters, with Commissioner Bernal seconding the motion. All commissioners voted in favor of entering into Executive Session (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Mark Johnston, Commissioner Bernal, and Commissioner Nguyen). Housing Connect staff were not asked to leave. At 12:00 p.m., the Board returned to regular session, with a motion by Commissioner Bernal and seconded by Vice Chair Mark Johnston and all commissioners voting in favor (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Mark Johnston, Commissioner Bernal, and Commissioner Nguyen).

#### **5. ACTION ITEMS**

##### **Resolution #992: Villa Charmant re-finance**

There were three proposals from three different lenders (Zions, Chase, Harper Capital Partners). As some of the quotes came from last year and rates have changed since then, Chair Jennifer Johnston recommended that Housing Connect Chief Operations Officer Mike Kienast contact the lenders to see if they have a better offer. This resolution was tabled until the next Board meeting (April 15) or until a special meeting is called.

##### **Coronavirus update**

Chair Jennifer Johnston asked CEO Janice Kimball to provide an update on how the agency is handling the coronavirus situation. She explained that staff have been instructed to stay home, if they're sick and that the agency is trying to minimize in-person and direct contact. As a result, all non-essential work orders have ceased and Housing Connect is postponing its preventative maintenance inspections. It has also stopped doing regular HQS inspections for Section 8, but new and move inspections and any emergency inspections in Section 8 are continuing, as are pest control and critical welfare checks. The agency is still open, and it is trying to weigh if that is the best thing to do, but she noted that it is in line with what most agencies are presently doing. She informed the Board that Housing Connect has started reducing its lobby hours (reduced hours are 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.), and it is looking at closing the office and trying to do as much as it can electronically and assessing appointments. Property managers and maintenance technicians are on site, but Housing Connect is encouraging electronic or phone communication. She noted that housing is a crucial and a basic need, but the agency wants to protect staff and their well-being, too.

She also indicated that Housing Connect is anticipating that it will see requests for rent payment adjustments, as more people are out of work. She added that the agency is only going to go forward on criminal activity in terms of evictions.

Housing Connect is closing down all common areas, and the property managers are shutting their offices and working with people electronically or over the phone. Notices about no visitors have been posted at Grace Mary Manor, Kelly Benson, Bud Bailey, the High Rise, and Valley Fair, and Human Resources Director Paul Rooker said that Affordable Housing Director Jeanette Hernandez and her team are working on translating the notices. The cleaning protocol at congregate sites in the main office has also been increased.

She inquired with the Board if the agency should remain open and leasing until further notice and was told that the Board would look for her guidance on how that could be done while keeping the operation moving with people working from home and so forth. She concluded that Housing Connect would continue to do leasing and eligibility, while continuing to find ways to minimize contact and to do what it can electronically.

In addition, she discussed the agency's biggest challenge: people not respecting the 6-foot spacing distance and leaning over the front desk. Housing Connect is thinking of having a Ring doorbell installed to talk to clients and to minimize and control the interaction.

##### **Resolution #993: Communicable disease policy**

Housing Connect's Human Resources Director Paul Rooker talked about the proposed Communicable Disease Policy, noting that Housing Connect does not have such a policy at the moment. He said the goal of the policy is to give the agency the flexibility that, when appropriate, it is able to have employees work from home or not at all, if there is a concern about transmission of a communicable disease. The Board wanted to include in the policy a statement indicating that Housing Connect will comply with all legally mandated reporting requirements.

##### **Resolution #994: Paid vacation and sick leave policies**

Housing Connect's Human Resources Director Paul Rooker then brought up the proposed changes to the paid vacation and sick leave

policies. The current policies require that no leave can be used until it is accrued. The recommended policy change would allow leave to be advanced to employees in declared emergency situations and subject to approval by Housing Connect's CEO. He explained that this policy change gives the agency some flexibility if it advances any time to an employee. He also discussed the two pieces of legislation at the Federal level which addresses some of the leave issues:

- Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act: This gives employees up to two weeks of sick leave, if they or a family member is diagnosed with or quarantined due to coronavirus. It is restricted to quarantine or illness and not for child care due to school closure.

- Family Medical Leave Act (modification): The modification is specific to COVID-19, which allows an employee to take up to 12 weeks of leave (with the first two weeks unpaid and then weeks 3 – 12 paid at 66% of regular pay). This creates a short-term disability scenario. The first two weeks could be any forwarded sick or vacation leave.

It was noted that there still remains, however, a potential gap: The legislation does not go into effect until 14 days after it is signed into law (which, after it passes both chambers of Congress, the President has indicated he will sign), which would impact those employees with less than 80 hours of available leave. The language in the policy gives the agency the ability to address the situation as per the new legislation while addressing specific situations based on need and allowing employees to borrow up to 40 or 80 hours of leave. He added that the policy gives Housing Connect some latitude but framing it so that it wasn't open ended.

There was a brief discussion on critical positions and the need to identify them specifically in case of a large-scale shutdown.

Chair Jennifer Johnston asked, given where the agency is at in the situation and understanding that updates may need to be made in the future, whether there was a motion to approve the leave and the communicable disease policies (with the suggested statement by the Board), as proposed. Commissioner Bernal motioned to approve the Communicable Disease Policy and Vice Chair Mark Johnston seconded the motion, with all members (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Mark Johnston, Commissioner Bernal, and Commissioner Nguyen) voting in favor. Vice Chair Mark Johnston then motioned to approve the sick and vacation policy changes, and Commissioner Bernal seconded the motion, with all Board members (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Mark Johnston, Commissioner Bernal, and Commissioner Nguyen) voting in favor. The resolutions passed.

#### **Section 8 Administrative Policy voucher time flexibility**

Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball explained to the Board that the organization would like to offer voucher holders with some time flexibility for some Section 8 administrative requirements in the event of an agency shutdown. The Board asked that the medical documentation phrase be removed and that the words "agency shutdown" be replaced with "agency emergency." Commissioner Bernal motioned to approve the flexibility to the requirements and Commissioner Nguyen seconded the motion, with all Board members (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Mark Johnston, Commissioner Bernal, and Commissioner Nguyen) voting in favor.

#### **Resolution #995: Homeless preference vouchers**

CEO Janice Kimball discussed the resolution for 25 homeless preference vouchers and explained that 25 Section 8 vouchers are 10 percent of the total number of projected vouchers for a given year. The vouchers give the coordinated entry system an opportunity to tell Housing Connect what they need and for Housing Connect to respond accordingly. Vice Chair Mark Johnston asked that wording be added to indicate that this decision was based in part on the fact that there is a new coordinated entry system that is yet untested and that Housing Connect will reconsider the level of vouchers after full implementation of the Coordinated Entry is in place and based on the performance of the Coordinated Entry.

As for the concern about the possible perception that the agency isn't supporting the shelters with enough vouchers and how that would look if the shelters fail, CEO Janice Kimball did some outreach to Kathryn Fife (at the County) and let her know that the agency had not made a decision yet on the preference and that she felt the agency would agree to provide a voucher preference. She also explained how Housing Connect's services are broken down and asked if Ms. Fife had any concerns with the support which the agency is providing to the Salt Lake Valley Coalition to End Homelessness. She further explained that Ms. Fife was very complimentary of Housing Connect's support.

CEO Janice Kimball then reviewed her understanding of the policy, based on this discussion – that the agency will go forward with a preference for 25 Section 8 vouchers to be used for homeless individuals and families, which will be prioritized by the Coordinated Entry and that this decision will be reviewed again based on the performance of the Coordinated Entry.

Vice Chair Mark Johnston motioned for approval of the resolution and Commissioner Bernal seconded with all Board members (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Mark Johnston, Commissioner Bernal, and Commissioner Nguyen) voting in favor.

**Resolution #996: Public Housing Agency (PHA) Annual Plan/Resolution #997: Public Housing Agency (PHA) 5-Year Plan**

CEO Janice Kimball introduced the two Public Housing Agency (PHA) Plan resolutions for approval by the Board – the annual plan and the 5-year plan. Commissioner Bernal asked whether the plan mentions not doing annual inspections (due to the coronavirus crisis). Janice Kimball explained that Housing Connect is already doing bi-annual inspections and so flexibility has been exercised there. She added that the agency plans to start asking for waivers after it better understands the coronavirus situation and that inspections are reflected in the plan under the Section 8 policy.

**ADJOURN**

At 1:11 p.m., there was a considerable earthquake aftershock which disrupted the voting on the annual and 5-year plan resolutions. Due to the severity of the aftershock and the feeling that those in the main office needed to get out of the building, no vote was held, and the Board meeting was abruptly adjourned.

As a result, under emergency situations, the Board approved the following resolutions via e-mail:

- Resolution #996: Public Housing Agency (PHA) Annual Plan
- Resolution #997: Public Housing Agency (PHA) 5-Year Plan
- Resolution #998: Public Housing Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) grievance procedure update
- Resolution #999: Section 8 Admin Plan update

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Pincock  
Executive Administrator