



HOUSING CONNECT

MINUTES OF THE ELECTRONIC MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 17, 2021

PRESENT (video):

Jennifer Johnston – Chair
Spencer Moffat – Vice Chair
Mark Johnston – Commissioner
Erin Litvack – Commissioner
Gwen White – Commissioner

EXCUSED:

Phil Bernal – Commissioner
Christine Nguyen – Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT (video):

Janice Kimball – Chief Executive Officer
Andre Bartlome – Chief Finance Officer
Mike Kienast – Chief Operating Officer
Zach Bale – Chief Programs Officer
Jarín Blackham – Information Technology Director
Ilez Brady – Housing Choice Voucher Section 8 Director
Dan Pincock – Executive Administrator

COMMENCE

The Housing Connect March 2021 Board Meeting was held virtually on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, and commenced at 11:36 a.m. with Chair Jennifer Johnston chairing the meeting.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one from the public in attendance.

2. CONSENT AGENDA

There were no questions, edits, or concerns for the February 2020 Housing Connect Board Meeting minutes which were approved by all Board members present (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Moffat, and Commissioners Mark Johnston, Litvack, and White), following a motion by Commissioner Litvack and a seconding by Vice Chair Moffat. The rest of the Consent Agenda included a Hunter Hollow update and recent staff changes.

3. RESOLUTION #1031: CONSTRUCTION PARTNER AWARD – SUNSET GARDENS

Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball explained that the agency decided to hire a development partner to oversee the construction of Sunset Gardens, noting that documents were sent to the Board electronically just prior to the meeting. She said that there were 4 strong bids: EJP, National Development Council, Chelsea, and Blueline.

She said that Resolution #1031 is similar to what Housing Connect did recently with Hunter Hollow, giving the CEO the authority to enter into contracts on behalf of Housing Connect, as they relate to construction and to the development partner, activities around the Section 8 disposition (and finalizing the close), and any other documents that would be required. All contracts would be reviewed by legal counsel in order to protect the interests of the agency.

Commissioner Litvack motioned to approve Resolution #1031, and Vice Chair Moffat seconded the motion. All Board members present (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Moffat, and Commissioners Mark Johnston, Litvack, and White) voted affirmatively, and the motion passed. Resolution #1031 was approved.

4. RESOLUTION #1029 – APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCY (PHA) PLAN

Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball informed the Board that there have been no substantive changes to the agency's PHA Plan, which was provided to the Board members in draft form as part of the February 2021 Board Meeting book. There were no questions or comments. Commissioner Mark Johnston motioned to approve Resolution #1029, and Commissioner White seconded the motion, with all Board members present (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Moffat, and Commissioners Mark Johnston, Litvack, and White) voting in favor. The motion passed, and Resolution #1029 (approval of the agency PHA Plan) was approved. CEO Janice Kimball thanked staff members Marni Timmerman, Krysta Niemczyk, and Dan Pincock for their work on the Plan.

5. RESOLUTION #1030: SECTION 8 ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN UPDATE

Housing Connect Housing Choice Voucher Section 8 Director Ilez Brady informed the Board that there were over 30 pages of changes to the Administrative Plan, the majority of which were HUD required changes, with just a few proposed changes at the end which Housing Connect would like to make as an agency. She also informed the Board that the changes were presented to the Resident Advisory Board (RAB), and the RAB approved the changes. The agency-proposed changes include: a) allowing electronic signatures; b) fixing some of the wording on Reasonable Accommodation requests regarding voucher extension requests; c) allowing for internal and external transfers within VAWA (Violence Against Women Act); and d) correcting verbiage on FUP time limits (from 18 months to 36 months). She added that the agency followed Nan McKay guidelines to make the changes.

Commissioner Litvack motioned to approve the update, and Commissioner White seconded the motion. All Board members present (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Moffat, and Commissioners Mark Johnston, Litvack, and White) supported the motion, which passed, and Resolution #1030 was approved.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 11:47 a.m., Vice Chair Moffat motioned for the Board to enter Executive Session to discuss real estate and staff issues, and Commissioner Litvack seconded the motion, with all Board members present (Chair Jennifer Johnston, and Commissioners Johnston, Litvack, Nguyen, and White) voting in favor. Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball excused all staff except herself and CFO Andre Bartlome.

At 12:10 p.m., Commissioner Litvack motioned to return to regular (open) session, and Commissioner White seconded the motion, with all Board members present (Chair Jennifer Johnston, and Commissioners Johnston, Litvack, Nguyen, and White) voting affirmatively. The Board then returned to regular session.

7. CEO's REPORT

Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball reported that legislatively the American Rescue Plan was passed by Congress (this is the \$1.9 trillion package which includes about \$30 billion for housing emergency rent assistance). \$5 billion will be for emergency vouchers for housing authorities which will sunset on September 30, 2022. Money has also been set aside for homeless assistance. Commissioner Mark Johnston added that the new funding is coming from the HOME program, which is very unique, and includes funding for services. CEO Janice Kimball also said that the agency is watching the infrastructure bill and will watch to make sure that housing is included (particularly in supporting public housing).

\$50 million in State funding has been proposed for affordable housing.

Recently, Housing Connect received a GRAMA request regarding the bid for tenant relocation services. Overland, Pacific, and Cutler (OPC), who was not the winning bidder, made a request for the winning bidder's proposal, and Housing Connect has complied.

Chair Jennifer Johnston's term has ended. Housing Connect has submitted two names to the Mayor's office for consideration and will keep the Board apprised.

COVID update: Staff were informed that effective April 5 Housing Connect would no longer continue with the pandemic pay differential for staff who are public-facing or entering into units. Housing Connect intends to maintain the operational controls that are in place. Management feels they are good, and there has been no spread of the virus in the office.

CEO Janice Kimball informed the Public Housing Property Management team that their schedules would be changing. The industry standard is five 8-hour work days, and with Public Housing Director Lori Pacheco's retirement at the end of June and the consolidation of Public Housing under Affordable Housing Director Jeanette Hernandez' supervision, it was felt that the change should be made effective July 1. Housing Connect is allowing for flexibilities for staff in order to meet specific needs.

For the Section 8 program, CEO Janice Kimball informed the Board that the agency is overleased and overspent, which she felt was due to

several factors, including an increase in cost per unit (rent prices increased). Because of COVID and staff issues, the agency struggled with leasing up units and may have overcompensated a little bit. Housing Connect has been in similar situations before and is taking the necessary actions, and the agency anticipates meeting with the HUD shortfall team in the near future. Housing Connect has ceased leasing all new vouchers that are not obligated under contracts (such as the Medina Place) or are not under specialty vouchers (such as VASH, FUP, Mainstream, etc.) that are not obligated under HUD requirements to continue to fill. Housing Connect is also waiting for the final budget numbers for a better idea of where the agency is at. Housing Connect is 268 units overleased out of roughly 3,000 vouchers (about \$600,000). There are some things which Housing Connect has done and others that it is currently doing to minimize the overleasing, and the agency also anticipates that it will be eligible for some funding for assistance with payments. Housing Connect is monitoring this closely and will keep the Board aware of the situation. COVID Section 8 money may help the agency.

Chair Jennifer Johnston asked about the immunization/vaccination rate for tenants and staff. CEO Janice Kimball responded that the health department had been out to the High Rise, The Hub, Kelly Benson, and Grace Mary Manor. To encourage staff to get vaccinated, she said that the agency has offered an hour of paid time to schedule or get the vaccination, but Housing Connect is not tracking whether staff have been vaccinated or not. There are some staff who are coordinating with the health department regarding client vaccinations and will continue to coordinate this effort. She said she would ask management to assess where each department is at and whether there is something else the agency can do to encourage staff to get vaccinated. Commissioner Mark Johnston volunteered to forward the texts he receives for Utah County vaccination openings.

Housing Connect needs to recruit a new finance committee chair, since Kerry Steadman (the committee chair) is retiring. CFO Andre Bartlome said that the time commitment is quite minimal. Chair Jennifer Johnston volunteered to do it this year. CEO Janice Kimball also offered that Housing Connect may want to consider someone on the Housing Connect Fund Board with the right skillset who may be interested in participating with Chair Jennifer Johnston. CPO Zach Bale agreed to explore this further.

8. PAYGRADE SCHEDULE UPDATE/DISCUSSION

CFO Andre Bartlome said that Housing Connect is looking to propose new pay grades that would be implemented July 1. The agency, which has had the current pay grade system for the last 15 years, is going to propose moving from 11 grades to a 20-grade system. Reasons for the new grading system include a) an approximate doubling of staff from the start of the current grade system with a condensing of staff in the grade 6 – 10 range who in some instances share the same grade but should be in different grades; and b) a better pathway for each employee for advancement. Commissioner Litvack suggested doing an analysis of the impact of the potential increase to the minimum wage. Chair Jennifer Johnston questioned the competitiveness of the lower grades, and CFO Bartlome said that this would be taken into consideration (to see about changing the lower grades), as what is being presented is just a draft. Commissioner Litvack said that Housing Connect should look seriously at what its minimum salaries are, given that the agency's mission is to provide affordable housing. If there is a full-time employee who can't afford his/her own housing, that's problematic.

9. COMMISSIONERS' INPUT

Commissioner Litvack mentioned that the County is waiting for more vaccines, as there is a high demand here. She was pleased to hear about the on-site (vaccination) opportunities for the housing programs, as well as the homeless community and mental health service providers. She urged that any requests should be sent to the health department. On the legislation side, she said affordable housing is a priority for the County and for the Mayor, and she said they would look strategically at what opportunities they may have to effectuate an inventory increase in the lowest affordable housing inventory in the community.

Commissioner White informed the rest of the Board that the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) met and that Housing Connect Family Services Development Coordinator Braidee Kolendrianos presented the RAB website to the RAB members and that the feedback was that they want to do the RAB picture as a group (not individually). They also suggested an e-mail address for tenants to send issues and questions to the RAB. She pointed out that the RAB has a budget of \$3,025. She said that most of the RAB wanted to attend the (regional) NAHRO conference in June but that some don't have computers and have asked if there is a way to help with that. CEO Janice Kimball committed to work on that.

Commissioner Mark Johnston told the group that HUD has issued several waivers with the COVID money (FMRs, for example), which would otherwise be ending at the end of the month (March), with the assurance that they will be extended for a while.

10. OTHER

Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball shared a VASH voucher awards chart across the state of Utah, which indicated that the largest concentration have been awarded to the Salt Lake City Housing Authority and to Housing Connect, although recently the smaller housing authorities have been awarded more vouchers.

ADJOURN

Chair Jennifer Johnston thanked everyone for their service, and the meeting adjourned at 12:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Pincock
Executive Administrator