



HOUSING CONNECT

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 2021 ELECTRONIC MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

September 15, 2021

PRESENT:

Jennifer Johnston – Chair
Spencer Moffat – Vice Chair
Phil Bernal – Commissioner
Wendy Leonelli – (new) Commissioner
Erin Litvack – Commissioner
Christine Nguyen – Commissioner
Gwen White – Commissioner

EXCUSED:

Mark Johnston – Commissioner

GUESTS:

Kirk Moorhead – (new) Real Estate Development Director, Housing Connect
Tracy Carmen-Jones – Partner, ChoicePoints Learning

STAFF PRESENT:

Janice Kimball – Chief Executive Officer
Andre Bartlome – Chief Financial Officer
Zach Bale – Chief Program Officer
Ilez Brady – Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Director
Mike Kienast – Chief Operating Officer
Jarín Blackham – Information Technology Director
Paul Rooker – Human Resources Director
Troy Hart – Real Estate Development Consultant
Dan Pincock – Executive Administrator

COMMENCE

On Wednesday, September 15, at 11:34 a.m., Board Chair Jennifer Johnston commenced the meeting and welcomed all who were participating. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

1. GUESTS/PUBLIC COMMENT

Wendy Leonelli – Commercial Real Estate Loan Officer/(new) Housing Connect Board Commissioner: Chair Jennifer Johnston highlighted the presence of Wendy Leonelli, who has been appointed by Mayor Wilson and confirmed by the County Council as a new member of the Housing Connect Board of Commissioners.

Kirk Moorhead – (new) Real Estate Development Director, Housing Connect: Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball described to the Board the process which the organization went through in selecting him. Kirk Moorhead then provided an introduction to the Board, summarizing his background and experience.

2. NEW CITY PLAZA STATUS REPORT

Chair Jennifer Johnston pointed out the written report (by Eric Novak). Troy Hart, Housing Connect Real Estate Development Consultant, said that the agency is still working with the FHA, finishing up some of the documents. In addition, he said that the agency is making some light changes to the building design which will align with historical requirements and that things are moving forward. He said the project is in great shape at the moment.

Chair Jennifer Johnston encouraged Board members to ask for a review or clarification of things such as acronyms which may not be understood.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda consisted of the minutes from the August 2021 Housing Connect Board meeting, the CEO's report, the Hunter Hollow activity report, and some staff changes. Chair Jennifer Johnston remarked that the minutes were the only item in the Consent Agenda which needed approval. Vice Chair Moffat motioned to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Nguyen seconded the motion with all Board members present (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Moffat, and Commissioners Nguyen and White) voting to approve the motion. The minutes were approved.

4. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no items that were needed to be discussed at an Executive Session. The Board then moved to the Action Items.

5. ACTION ITEMS

Approval of new Board member (Wendy Leonelli) – Ms. Wendy Leonelli briefly introduced herself and her professional background. She mentioned that she had been in affordable housing since 2016. Vice Chair Moffat motioned to approve Ms. Leonelli's election to the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner White seconded the motion, which passed with all Board members present (Chair Jennifer Johnston, Vice Chair Moffat, and Commissioners Nguyen and White) voting affirmatively, and Wendy Leonelli became a Housing Connect Board member.

Because of this action, the term of Housing Connect Board Chair Jennifer Johnston came to an end. She recollected some of the accomplishments of the agency during her time as Chair and remarked that she most enjoyed the opportunities she had to be involved with the new member orientations and what she had learned through trainings and to realize what a fantastic, high-functioning board Housing Connect has, with everyone really dedicated to the mission and collaborating so well with so many different agencies and projects, and she thanked the Board for their expertise and all that she has learned from the other Board members.

Board Chair election – Commissioner Nguyen motioned for Vice Chair Moffat to become the new Housing Connect Board Chair. Commissioner White seconded the motion. All Board members present (Vice Chair Moffat and Commissioners Leonelli, Nguyen and White) voted in favor of the motion, and Spencer Moffat was elected as the Housing Connect Board Chair. Chair Moffat then thanked Jennifer Johnston for all the great work she had done. Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball also thanked her for the great support she had been to the agency and to her, personally, as she has grown in the CEO role.

It was decided that the election for a new Vice Chair would be held at the October Board meeting.

Resolution #1044: Approval of the Housing Choice Voucher Section 8 Payment Standards – Housing Connect Chief Financial Officer Andre Bartlome explained that this is an annual exercise which is triggered by HUD's new Fair Market Rent (FMR), and then the Board approves setting payment standards for each bedroom size for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program.

He showed the current household payment standards. The majority of the households participating in the program are 1-bedroom units, and the majority of the rest are 2- an 3-bedroom units. These make up 90% of the HCV program.

He explained HUD's rule that payment standards can be set between 90% and 110% of FMR. He showed current FMR and new FRM and explained that the increase, based on bedroom size, was between 9% and 11.5%. He then presented and reviewed various scenarios.

Housing Connect recommends raising 1- and 2-bedroom units to 110% and raising the studios and 3-bedroom and higher units to 97%. This recommendation is being made because it would give families the ability to find units more easily. It would also reduce the number of families being served by 39 families. The trade-off is more buying power for families that are participating, but less families are served versus more families being served but less buying power and with a lower payment standard. Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball added that it is common for housing authorities not to have the budget authority to serve all of their vouchers.

Chair Moffat said that it looked like Housing Connect was able to put a dent in the number of people who turned in vouchers unused (i.e., unable to find housing).

CFO Bartlome showed the rent plot chart and how the new payment standards would impact voucher holders.

CEO Janice Kimball thanked Andre Batlome, Mike Kienast, and Ileez Brady for their work on the payment standards.

Commissioner Bernal motioned to approve the recommended payment standards, and Commissioner Nguyen seconded the motion, with all Board members present (Chair Moffat and Commissioners Bernal, Leonelli, Litvack, Nguyen, and White) voting to support the motion, and the new payment standards were approved.

Refugee Emergency Resettlement – Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball summarized the emergency resettlement situation for Afghanistan refugees who will be arriving in Utah. These households will not have the status of refugees, but instead will have a humanitarian parole status, which means that they will have less resources available to them. Housing Connect is looking at how it can support these families (estimated at 500 – 600 individuals or 200 – 250 families).

Housing Connect would like to get approval from the Board to write down the rent for up to 10 units for refugee families, targeted at properties where the agency does not have federal funding and where there is adequate cash flow so as to not put the property at risk in terms of maintenance, management, and care. Housing Connect anticipates that this would cost anywhere from \$600 to \$1,100 per month per household (or a maximum of \$132,000 per year). The cost would be considered as less income towards the property (the agency would self-subsidize the tenants), and Housing Connect would regularly touch base with the families and make adjustments where appropriate and would also work with resettlement agencies and the families to get on waiting lists now so that when they obtain refugee status they could qualify for affordable housing.

Spencer Moffat summarized that this is an emergency measure to get the refugees housed and that the long-term objective would be to get them on some other program where housing could be provided. CEO Janice Kimball said that the agency would work with the Refugee Advisory Board and resettlement agency partners at Bud Bailey Apartments to support these households. The refugees would be given a preference they first arrive, but they would be put in the normal queue after that, as each housing program has its own waiting lists and preferences.

Ten units would be the high end of units which Housing Connect could provide, given the properties which the agency thinks are going to be available. CEO Janice Kimball said that this would give the State an example to use with other landlords.

Commissioner Litvack motioned to approve the agency resettlement plan, and Commissioner Nguyen seconded with all Board members present (Chair Moffat and Commissioners Bernal, Leonelli, Litvack, Nguyen, and White) voting in favor of the motion.

6. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) PRESENTATION

Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball introduced Tracy Carmen-Jones from ChoicePoints Learning Solutions. Housing Connect contracted with ChoicePoints Learning for an assessment and real in-depth training for staff and some help with forming goals and area to move forward in regards to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Tracy Carmen-Jones gave a brief introduction, and then gave a presentation to the Board.

Among her slides, she explained that the Inclusion Edge Approach was designed to provide connection, discovery, and belonging to Housing Connect – from Connect (Phase I) to Discovery (Phase II) to Belonging (Phase III) to Traction (Phase IV) to Desired Outcomes. This has culminated in the creation of a 3-year Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategy. ChoicePoints Learning conducted several interviews with staff. They held eight “New Normal” training sessions with all of Housing Connect staff. They also did IDI (DEI assessment tool), as well as WOKE training with management. The strategic planning resulted in the strategy.

Workforce, Culture, Economic Impact, Community, and Workplace were the key diversity and inclusion focus areas. The three areas that Housing Connect will work on are 1) Workforce; 2) Culture; and 3) Workplace.

Housing Connect Developed a 3-year DEI strategy, based on input provided by management, people managers, and employees. The strategic thrust areas and outcomes centered around Workforce Diversity, Recognition Culture, and Engaged Workplace. Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball added that she had included this as part of her goals to the Board and will be reporting back to the Board on progress towards these goals. Tracy Carmen-Jones also mentioned that CEO Janice Kimball also wanted to develop around client outcomes.

Commissioner Nguyen praised the presentation on a subject that was difficult to land on an actual plan and turned it into something that is understandable and possible. Chair Moffat remarked that he appreciated that this is actionable and that there are metrics and things the agency can use. As a Board, Tracy Carmen-Jones has given some good tools to track (along with CEO Kimball’s goals) and that having these tools at the Board’s disposal will help the Board.

Tracy Carmen-Jones said she would get the presentation to the Housing Connect leadership, and she excused herself from the meeting.

CEO Janice Kimball said that the presentation would be shared with the Board and that it was shared with the supervisor and management teams and that it would be rolled out at an All-Staff meeting. The first work will be started around some training and to get a DEI council established. Commissioner Litvack expressed that focusing on the internal organization and the improvements to it (setting the stage in-house and something that is embraced entirely through the culture of the organization) is critical to the success of translating to this community impact.

CEO Janice Kimball thanks the team and HR Director Paul Rooker for identifying the vendor.

7. THE HUB WARRANTY ISSUES

Housing Connect CEO Janice Kimball explained that the agency is in the warranty period in regards to The Hub of Opportunity, and there is a significant issue: There is a water leak coming from the common area on the second floor, and water is leaking into the garage and into some of the commercial space. It was pointed out to R&O Construction during the walk-thru in June. It's under concrete and will be pretty substantial to fix.

Housing Connect wants to look at making sure it has the right legal counsel, should it be needed, and look at considering hiring an engineering firm to review and make sure that the repairs being proposed under the warranty are the ones that Housing Connect feels are in the best interest of the property and the agencies (Housing Connect and Columbus).

Housing Connect Real Estate Development Consultant Troy Hart said that M&H Engineering (the contractor's forensic engineer) suggests removing the topping within the courtyard (the landscaping and the concrete – about 3 to 4 feet in depth) and then do the local integrity test and see what that looks like before moving forward with the architect, and, if needed, to engage an engineer to look at the submittal and what is being recommended.

CEO Janice Kimball reminded the Board about the partnership arrangement for The Hub: While Housing Connect provided the guarantees, the Columbus Foundation is the majority owner. Housing Connect, however, will work with Columbus to navigate the best course.

COO Mike Kienast went over some photos of the damage.

8. COMMISSIONERS INPUT

Commissioner Litvack highlighted two grants which the County is applying for centered around homelessness and housing. The County is submitting a grant application on behalf of the Continuum of Care and the Salt Lake Valley Coalition to End Homelessness for a long-term solution to a number of issues such as temporary housing, a medical respite, and quarantine and isolation facilities. In addition, the County is also applying for funding for a Jail Release Program for those being released from jail who need help and a warm hand-off to housing and other services, which will serve as a wrap-around service model to help connect those released in a very supportive and strategic way to their next phase where they can receive the assistance they need.

Commissioner Nguyen said that they are working very hard on a smoother connection for those who are served by both the Department of Health and Human Services.

Commissioner White informed the Board that the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) met the previous week. The RAB was given the revamp of the administrative plan, which consumed most of the meeting, and a vote was held, and the plan was approved. She also invited Commissioner Leonelli to attend an upcoming meeting. In addition, she expressed that she felt the RAB should be invited to participate in the DEI initiative. CEO Janice Kimball offered to give a presentation to the RAB at an upcoming meeting.

Commissioner Leonelli mentioned that she had seen a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) come out from Salt Lake Redevelopment Agency (RDA) (deadline was October).

Commissioner Bernal informed the Board that NAHRO will be holding a diversity and inclusion workshop on September 21 (2p to 4p MT). October 7 – 8 will be the virtual national NAHRO conference (sessions and speakers will be an hour long).

9. OTHER

There were no items in the Other section.

ADJOURN

At 1:11 p.m., Commissioner Litvack motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Commissioner Bernal seconded the motion with all Board members present (Chair Moffat and Commissioners Bernal, Leonelli, Litvack, Nguyen, and White) voting in favor, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Pincock
Executive Administrator