

**ROCHESTER HOUSING AUTHORITY
August 19, 2020
675 WEST MAIN STREET
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14611**



MEMBERS PRESENT

Tynise Edwards, Chairperson
Rosalie Remarais, Vice-Chairperson
Florine Cummings, Resident Commissioner
Joanne Larson, Commissioner
Hershel Patterson, Resident Commissioner
Hank Rubin, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT

Melissa Berrien
Shawn Burr
Sinclair Carrington
Diana Colon
Jacquetta Harris
Cynthia Herriott
Shawanna Lawrence
Mark Plantholt
Mariam Rodriguez-Machuca
James Senger
Shelby Simpson
Linda Stango
Evhen Tupis

OTHERS PRESENT

H. Todd Bullard, RHA Legal Counsel
Josh Jensen, Tipping Point Communications

Commissioner Tynise Edwards called the August Rochester Housing Authority (RHA) Regular Board Meeting to order at 12:02 pm. It was noted for the record that notice of this meeting was posted as required by law and that there was a quorum present.

1. Open Forum – Public Comments

There were no Public Comments.

2. Approval of Minutes: July 2020 Regular Board Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Remarais moved, and Commissioner Rubin seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the July 2020 Regular Board Meeting. Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Cummings, Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Edwards, and Commissioner Rubin voted yes. The motion was passed unanimously

3. Director's Report and Board Approval Requests

a. Deputy Executive Director, Shawn Burr, presented his Director's report as follows:

Mr. Burr **CONTINUES** to recognize Staff across the Authority who continue to go above and beyond to ensure our high quality of services are maintained and that our residents and participants needs are taken care of during this Pandemic. They have been doing a remarkable job! As we are “re-opening,” great efforts are being made in the planning and execution. Procurement and Maintenance have been extremely helpful.

Mr. Burr shared that we are moving forward with the NYS POP grant we were awarded and have selected a consultant to work with. A scope of work has been created and submitted to Enterprise for approval, and we are still waiting on the go-ahead.

Mr. Burr shared that Trillium’s COVID testing for our residents continues and has been very successful. We had our debriefing to discuss process, next steps and are working on a schedule and plan for mobile primary care services, which we hope to begin by September.

Mr. Burr reported our “Reopening Committee” has been very busy developing plans for RHA to “reopen” in phases, and PHASE II is underway. We are evaluating the processes on a weekly basis with the current phase. The next phase will implement temperature checks as part of our daily screening process, and some “doors” will be open to the public. Continued kudos to Shawanna for taking the lead on this and the countless hours she has put in.

Mr. Burr reported that discussions continue on the PIH Notices that HUD has issued and eligible expenses we are focusing monies on. The next meeting was scheduled for 8/18/20. This is a great opportunity to get creative with this funding in providing much-needed resources for our residents and participants. Many other groups are also discussing ways to meet the needs of our residents, participants, and community. A lot of positive ideas are being worked on.

Mr. Burr reported that we met with RTS on 7/23 to continue our discussion on transportation issues and opportunities for our residents. It was a very productive meeting and the start of a continued partnership between our organizations. We have some good information to get out to our residents and will post at our sites on services currently available with RTS and what we learned of other resources that we are looking into.

Mr. Burr reported that our Federal St/Scattered Site RAD project is moving along with the urgency now on getting our NYS HCR Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) application in by 8/26/20. Lin Stango is our lead on this. We presented the project to the City Planning Commission to change the zoning for the project on 8/10/20. This is a very important step. The Commission had very good questions that we answered, and we received their recommendation for approval to City Council.

Mr. Burr reported that HUD has issued the Final Rule on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) in July; HUD published on its website a final rule titled “Preserving Community and Neighborhood Choice.” This rule implements the Fair Housing Act’s duty to affirmatively further fair housing (AFFH). Although the rule has not yet been published in the Federal Register, it will go into effect 30 days after its official publication.

Mr. Burr reported that on Monday, 7/27, Senate Republicans unveiled their COVID-19 emergency legislation, proposing an additional \$3.2 billion in funding for HUD programs and liability protection for public housing agencies (PHAs) as they resume business operations. The Senate legislation prioritizes relief for programs administered by PHAs. This is a direct result of the work NAHRO and its members have done to tell Congress the conditions they face because of COVID-19. The Senate introduced the “Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protections, and Schools” Act over two months after the passage of the House’s “Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act” (H.R. 6800, HEROES) bill. The HEALS Act combines several different pieces of legislation into a single, \$1 trillion package to address the country’s needs in response to COVID-19. There are stark disparities between HEALS and HEROES. The Senate HEALS proposal drops the weekly unemployment bonuses to \$200 per week through the end of September, does not include any additional funding for state or local governments, and includes broad liability protection for employers as they reopen. Both plans include an additional \$1,200 direct stimulus payment to Americans. HEALS also does not include the \$100 billion in rental assistance to Americans who currently do not receive assistance and does not extend the federal eviction moratorium. It also funds HUD programs administered by PHAs at approximately \$1.5 billion less than HEROES. It’s unclear whether HEALS can even pass in the Senate. It’s also unlikely to be considered at all in the House. While Senate Republicans were introducing HEALS on the Senate floor on Monday evening, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Ca li.) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) met with White House representatives in the Capitol to begin the process of hammering out their differences and begin the work of drafting a third proposal that will be agreeable to all parties.

b. Board Action Requests

- i. 58-66 Merrimac street Roof Replacement – Authorized the Deputy Executive Director to award a contract to Gatti Remodeling for \$107,600.00 – Capital Projects

Commissioner Larson moved, and Commissioner Remarais seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed unanimously

- ii. Scattered Site Roof Replacement R-18– Authorized the Deputy Executive Director to award a contract to Gatti Remodeling for \$84,400.00 – Capital Projects

Commissioner Rubin moved, and Commissioner Remarais seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed unanimously

- iii. Federal St. – Scattered Sites Development Resolution – Authorize the Deputy Executive Director to submit an application to New York State Housing Community Renewal for competitive federal and state tax credits and other Federal, State, and Local financing applications (City HOME, CPC, etc.), for the development of the project. – Capital Projects

Commissioner Rubin moved, and Commissioner Remarais seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed unanimously

- iv. Thermal Temperature Imaging Camera Kiosk – Authorize the Deputy Executive Director to award a 1- year contract to AgileForce for \$35,200.00 – Human Recourses (is Agile Force one word or two?)

Commissioner Rubin moved, and Commissioner Remarais seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed unanimously

4. Executive Personnel Administrator's Report

Shawn Burr

The Human Resource Department continues to implement Strategic Plan Goal III of “Supporting RHA’s Employees to Enhance an Organizational Culture of Excellence” by continuing to provide training and continuing to create organizational culture excellence.

Recent Trainings - August 2020:

ADP Time & Attendance Management Training – Human Resource

Recruitment Update:

The position of Clerk I – Inspections Department started on August 10, 2020.

Open Enrollment Plans:

Human Resources is in the planning stages of researching, offering a virtual benefits fair to associates via Zoom or other platforms in October/November 2020. In times of social distancing and reduced in-person meetings, this will be a self-paced, interactive Virtual Benefits Fair experience that will centralize important resources via technology. Associates can attend the presentations and webinars that pertain to their needs and download specific resources about the benefits that matter most to them.

5. Compliance, Inclusion, and Diversity Officer's Report Cynthia Herriott

Inclusion

- Senior Strategy – We have advised seniors on the availability of the City's new meals delivery initiative where they can have three meals a day delivered to their homes.
- Student Homework Academy – This committee has met several times. The Pandemic impact on schools makes our work even more critical. Rochester Housing Authority is a key partner in addressing this need by assisting our young residents. Commissioner Larson serves as a member of this committee.
- COVID Strategy – We have been working with community partners to facilitate addressing resident needs around testing and education. The testing has taken place at most of RHA's Westside properties. We held a debrief meeting to address minor concerns and tweak the process. We are currently in discussion to increase accessibility to regular healthcare.
- Resident Needs – Working with our Resident Services Committee to address food shortages, healthy meals, and academic support. Our strategy involves 1. Nutritional resources, 2. Nutritional education, 3. Access to food. We recently met to approve the informational flyers that will be distributed. Tipping Point will attend the next meeting to assist with communicating this information in the best light. Some of our ideas involve:
 - A Flat screen monitor to utilize as an electronic informational notice for residents
 - Utilizing Greek organizations to deliver groceries to seniors
 - Utilizing the Jurisdiction Wide Residential Council
 - Utilizing RHA's YouTube TV Channel as a mechanism to get the message out. This would be a great tool for residents utilizing smartphones.

Compliance

- Fraud Investigations

****The current total amount of debt owed to the Authority since inception:
\$1,713,332.00****

(This is the new total, after reconciling the initial TenMast amount with the Finance Director.)

Mrs. Herriott is currently working with Finance to add a staff person that will focus on Public Housing. This is a critical area that this person will address. You may recall, this is a Compliance goal mentioned in our annual report.

- Leasing Operations Repayment agreement payment totals YTD as of July 2020, \$40,915.32 collected. (\$369,797.00 has been collected to-date)
 - Public Housing Repayment agreement totals YTD for Vacated Arrears and Collection Loss as of July 2020: \$10,066.30 collected. A total of \$37,248.97 collected to-date (since 2017)
- Termination Hearings
 - Hearings are on hold due to the Pandemic at the direction of state and federal officials. They have directed that no evictions take place.

Operations

○ **Case Management**

- Program Violation Referrals Outstanding – 1,043 – We have recently filled this position and have a staff member working on addressing violations and getting them up to date.

○ **Rochester Housing Charities – Commissioner Cummings and I serve as RHA’s ex-officio representative on the RHC Board of Directors**

- Mrs. Herriott is currently working with RHC to confirm what current debts RHC owes to RHA and ensure they are recorded in the RHC budget. We continue to manage this process.

○ **Audit and Review** – CDI continues to work closely with Legal to address areas in need of assessment within RHA. (Executive Session for any requested reporting)

- Compliance is planning the 2020 Audit Schedule – this has been delayed by the Pandemic.

○ **Public Safety** – Please see the Activity Chart for Public Safety. The targeted problem strategy appears to be having an impact.

• **Current Actions:**

- Public Housing Applications – A recommendation was presented to the board to approve making two offers for housing as opposed to 3. Per our Waiver Process, this will go into effect and be presented to the board to approve. The goal is to expedite getting people housed.
- Security Coverage - We have increased security coverage in towers buildings during peak hours to discourage residents from violating social distancing restrictions in lobby areas.
- Conduct Violations - Violation letters have been mailed to tenants that do not comply with the restricted visitation protocol. I sign letters personally as a special Covid-19 strategy response. One tenant has received several notices and has subsequently received an eviction notice. This is still a good outcome when measured against the entire Public Housing community. **Security is seeing a slight increase. This is likely due to pandemic fatigue.
- Security Camera Project – This project is on hold while another vendor is selected. With the New York Pandemic Pause, it will be a little while before businesses are in full operation. Mrs. Herriott is currently working with Procurement to restart the vendor process.
- Resident Commissioner Election – In view of the COVID-19 Pandemic, I’ve directed the F.S.S. Supervisor, Melissa Berrien, to develop a strategy to delay the election for one year to September 2021.

6. Finance

Sinclair Carrington

Mr. Carrington reported that the actual vs. budget figures and variances for year-to-date through June 2020 for the COCC, Public Housing, and Section 8 income and expenses. The COCC and Public Housing recorded a surplus, while Section 8 recorded a deficit. The Finance Reports show that RHA is in a better financial position than they were last year at this time. This report was discussed at the Finance Committee Meeting, and the Board was satisfied with the report.

Mr. Carrington also reported on the COVID-19 CARES Funding income and expenses for year-to-date through July 2020.

7. Public Housing Report

Cynthia Herriott

Management Structure:

- Long time Property Manager, George Getman, left the authority on 7/10/20. Until a suitable replacement is hired, management of his territories is being handled by the remaining property managers. They have been doing a great job.
- We have offered George's vacant position internally at this time prior to posting it publicly.

Public Housing Matters:

COVID Matters:

- We entered Phase 2 of our COVID safety plan on August 10. Restricted visitation continues and daily sanitizing of all common areas, elevators, and doorknobs, continues as well.
- To date, over 250 residents have been tested for COVID by Trillium with no positive resident cases to report.
- There was a positive case of COVID-19 in an employee of one of the Public Housing authority contractors. Notice went out to all residents, and sanitizing protocols are all being followed and enforced.
- There were 5,400 surgical masks were mailed to Public Housing residents across all sites. We have also distributed disposable and washable masks to all PH staff.

Public Housing Budget:

- We are working on our 2021 Public Housing budget. We should have it ready shortly.

Capital Projects:

- The capital project at Kennedy tower, replacing floors, is well underway. Contractors are working hard to get back on schedule and following health and safety precautions due to COVID-19.
- Window replacement at Harriet Tubman is complete

Vacancies, Evictions, and Waitlist:

- During the month of July, Public Housing has had:
 - Eight households moved out
 - Three households moved in
 - Net loss of 5 households
 - Seven move-ins are scheduled for 8/1/20.
- Courts are still closed, so there is no eviction activity to report. It now appears that the moratorium on evictions will be extended into September. It was originally supposed to expire on 8/20/20. We continue to work with residents who have lost income due to COVID-19.
- We are closing the waitlist for 1 and 2 bedrooms as the current wait is over three years. We are also purging the list to make sure that all the names on it are still interested or still qualify for public housing. When we reach a 24-month wait, the list will open again.

Virtual Tours:

- We are well on our way to developing a virtual tour plan. We have begun the process of adding unit photos and floor plans to our website. Conceptually, and technically, the project is a go. We are reaching out to vendors now and obtaining quotes to create content
- The goal here will be twofold:
 - To function more like a real estate sales company from the inventory end. We want potential residents to see Public Housing from the outside in the same light that they would if they were looking for market rent housing.
 - To make showings safer and more efficient for our staff

8. Maintenance Report

Mark Plantholt

Chief of Maintenance, Mark Plantholt, he provided a department update for the following items:

- Laundry rooms across RHA
- Scattered Sites and Lexington Court HVAC Equipment Replacement
- Kennedy Tower Emergency Generator Project
- Open Work Orders
- Maintenance Open Positions
- COVID Sanitizing
- Landscaping Upgrades
- Building and Grounds Cleaning Equipment Initiative
- HVAC Issues at 675 West Main

He reported on the status of regular and emergency work orders.

9. Leasing Operations Report (Section 8)

Jacquetta Harris

Director Harris, Leasing Operations Department, shared utilization and funding information with the Board of Commissioners.

Four thousand applications have been selected to be added to the Housing Choice Voucher Wait List. To date, RHA has reviewed 362 applications from the list to determine if the applicants are eligible for a voucher.

The Leasing Operations' utilization of the voucher's goal is between 95% to 98%; RHA is currently at 94.62%.

The monthly inspection average is 780 - 960. During July 2020, the total number of inspections was 265. In Mid-March, RHA stopped performing annual inspections to reduce the person to person contact for the inspectors due to the COVID-19 virus.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) projects are being monitored monthly with financials and project participation. All projects that are projecting a deficit by the end of the grant period RHA has an action plan that will demonstrate correction within the next 60 days.

10. Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Report

Melissa Berrien

Monthly Services Highlights

We have 241 participants currently enrolled in our FSS program. Some of the achievements our participants demonstrated are:

- Ms. McClary entered the FSS program on September 1, 2017, with employment, credit restoration, and homeownership goals. Ms. McClary successfully paid off debtors and obtained full-time employment with the Presbyterian Church. Ms. McClary closed on her home at 139 Burlington avenue on May 11, 2020. Ms. McClary is a successful graduate of the FSS Program and entitled to receive \$240.00 in escrow savings.
- Ms. Dixon entered the FSS program on October 1, 2017, with employment, credit restoration, and education goals. Ms. Dixon obtained full-time employment with Charter Communication LLC. and increased her income by 380% and is no longer receiving Section 8 assistance. Ms. Dixon is a successful graduate of the FSS Program.
- Ms. Hall entered the FSS program on October 1, 2017, with employment, credit restoration, and homeownership goals. Ms. Hall obtained full-time employment with Reliant Staffing and increased her income by 171% and is no longer receiving Section 8 assistance. Ms. Hall is a successful graduate of the FSS Program and entitled to receive \$136.00 in escrow savings.

RHA currently has 21 businesses on the RHA Section 3 Registry.

RHA has three families with anticipated closings and 17 families who have been approved for financing and searching for homes.

11. Planning Committee Report

Shawn Burr

The Planning Committee meeting was held on 8/5/2020. The meeting began with the follow-up items from the previous meeting, of which three have been completed, and one is pending.

Mr. Burr thanked the Board for Action Item approvals and their continued attendance and input at the Committee meetings.

The following projects' statuses were discussed, and pictures shared:

1. Seneca Manor Weatherization Project – getting ready to resume work
2. Harriet Tubman Window Replacement – installation is 100% complete.
3. Scattered Sites Roof Replacement R-17- 35% of the work has been completed.
4. Kennedy Tower Hallway and unit Rehab – work has resumed, 10% completed, with a COVID-19 safety plan in place.
5. Lena Gantt Estates- sidewalk and paving project has started with a COVID-19 safety plan in place.

Mr. Burr reported that the current status of the CFP Budgets as of June 30, 2020 are: 501.17 budget is 100% obligated and 100% expended, and the 501.18 budget is 100% obligated and 51% expended and 501.19 is 39% obligated, and 1% expended. RHF Funds grants as of June 30, 2020 are: 502.13 is 21% obligated and 21% expended, and 502.14 is 0% obligated and 0% expended.

Mr. Burr reported that RHA met with Mary Lupien, City Council representative for the East District, and discussed RHA's mission. Melissa Berrien presented information on our FSS and Home Ownership programs, and Linda Stango provided information regarding our development projects. It was a great conversation, and she asked a lot of good questions.

Mr. Burr reported that our seven Section 32 homeownership homes have had their PNA's completed. We continue to work on the application to HUD and will submit that to the Special Applications Center as soon as it's complete. We will develop a timeline for this process. Melissa Berrien's staff continues to work with other residents who have expressed interest to meet eligibility requirements, and we'll be determining whether or not to send out another survey to PH residents.

Mr. Burr discussed Change the Face of Public Housing project at Edinburgh Street. The testing is done for Regulated Building Materials; if found, it will be abated prior to demolition. The trees on the property are being addressed. The project at Bond/Hamilton, an onsite kickoff meeting is being scheduled. The Holland Townhouse Site Improvement Project, the project coordinator from the City, has retired. We are in the process of determining who will be the new lead.

Mr. Burr gave a status update for the two RAD projects at Federal St and Parkside. The closing for Parkside has been completed, and thanked everyone that help facilitate the process. The Federal St. project is moving forward with the architect and developer partner; they are performing their assigned tasks. Property inspections on the scattered sites that will be included in the Federal St. conversion have been completed. We are in the process of submitting the NYS HCR application for LIHTC funding; the deadline is August 26.

12. Commissioner Comments

Board Chair Edwards requested a motion to go into Executive Session for a legal and personnel matter. Commissioner Remarais moved, and Commissioner Rubin seconded a motion to go into Executive Session at 1:50 pm. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

Board Chair Edwards requested a motion to end Executive Session; Commissioner Rubin moved, and Commissioner Larson seconded the motion to end the Executive Session at 3:11 pm. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

13. September Regular Board Meeting-

The September Regular Board Meeting of the Rochester Housing Authority Board is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 23, 2020**, at 12:00 pm via Skype and the RHA tv on YouTube.

There being no further Regular Meeting Business to come before the Board, Commissioner Larson moved, and Commissioner Remarais seconded a motion to end the Board Meeting at 3:12 pm. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Burr,
Secretary to the RHA Board
Deputy Executive Director