

HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF CLAY COUNTY
Regular Meeting of May 18, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Les Bakke and Cecil Johnson attended in person. Mike Martin attended via Zoom.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Tia Braseth

STAFF PRESENT:

Dara Lee and Sheila Laney.

9:30 A.M. REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

AGENDA:

A motion was made by Commissioner Bakke to approve the agenda. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

MINUTES FROM APRIL 20, 2021 REGULAR MEETING:

A motion was made by Commissioner Martin to approve the April 20, 2021 regular meeting minutes. Commissioner Bakke seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:

None

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Treasurer Martin stated that he had reviewed the paid bills and the March Budget Reviews that were available.

PROJECT UPDATES:

Director Lee provided project updates.

Houge Estates

As of May 1, there are eight vacant units, one move-out for the end of May, and one court-ordered eviction took place on May 12. Two units are re-rented for the beginning of June. Four applications are being processed and letters have been sent to 10 of the 74 households on the waiting list for the remaining openings. The waiting list is currently open.

A Housing Success Specialist and a Service Coordinator each do portions of the Houge Estates Service Coordinator role. Two Housing Success Specialists, a Homeless Programs Assistant, and the Service Coordinator are officed at this location.

Agassiz Apartments

As of May 1, there are no vacant units and no known upcoming move-outs. There are 22 applicants on the waiting list.

Clay County Affordable Housing, LLC

As of May 1, we have one vacant unit in Hawley which is re-rented for June 15. There will be an opening at the end of June and at the end of July. There are applicants for the openings.

Residents of these units receive a preference for a Housing Choice Voucher if they are eligible for a 3 or 4-bedroom voucher.

Boyer Apartments

As of May 1, there are two vacant units. One is in the process of being rehabilitated and should be ready by June 1. An application is being processed for the opening. Letters are being sent out for the other opening.

There are 9 households on the waiting list. The waiting list is only open for 2-bedroom units. Residents of Boyer Apartments receive a preference for a Housing Choice Voucher if their family size fits the available unit.

Fieldcrest Townhomes

As of May 1, there are 6 vacant units (three 2-bedrooms and three 3-bedrooms). A tenant will move out of another 3-bedroom unit at the end of May. We will keep 4 two-bedroom and 4 three-bedroom units vacant. There are 109 households on the waiting list which is now closed.

Fieldcrest has been approved for \$1M in funding through the FHLB of Des Moines and over \$7M from Minnesota Housing. Our goal is to have all closing documents submitted to Minnesota Housing by June with an anticipated September closing. The architectural documents are more than 75% complete. The Phase I environmental assessment, soil borings, asbestos testing, and survey are complete.

Update: The architect is behind because the surveyor is behind so our June goal will not happen. Now we anticipate a July date for submitting closing documents to Minnesota Housing.

The City of Moorhead previously recommended \$110,000 in funding for sidewalk repairs and Wi-Fi installation at the development using CDBG funding. However, there is not sufficient cash revenue for the city to start these projects now. Improvements will occur as funding allows.

Gateway Gardens

As of May 1, there are no vacant units and no known upcoming move-outs. Two staff are officed at Gateway Gardens. CCRI and GSSC, a private security company, each provide 12 hours of staffing per day. CCRI case management staff is in the process of transitioning to Housing Stabilization Services through Medical Assistance.

Housing Choice Vouchers

As of May 1, 2021, there are a total of 610 households of a possible 700 leased from the HRA Housing Choice Voucher program; and 4 households leased from other housing authorities that we are administering. We are working with 10 additional households from other housing authorities. We have 523 vouchers under our main HCV HUD contract and 177 under our Mainstream HCV contract.

Effective July 1, 2021, we have been awarded an additional 45 HCVs: 30 new tenant protection vouchers due to the Moorhead PHA disposition of its scattered sit units; and 15 new Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) from funding in the American Rescue Plan Act. The EHV's come with higher administrative fees and service funding. They are targeted at those fleeing domestic violence, homeless, at risk of homeless, and recently homeless households. The EHV participants will be referred through Coordinated Entry or from our current programs serving the formerly homeless.

Commissioner Bakke made a motion to accept the 15 Emergency Housing Vouchers. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martin and carried unanimously.

There are 80 households remaining on our waiting list that have not been contacted to issue a voucher. Director Lee mentioned that the waiting list may have to be reopened in the future.

Of the current 523 vouchers under our main contract, 473 vouchers are currently leased: 435 out of 455 regular vouchers; 24 out of 24 Tenant Protection Vouchers; 2 out of 3 FYI vouchers; and 12 out of 40 VASH vouchers. We have issued 7 regular and 3 VASH vouchers. We are working with 9 more households to issue a regular voucher; working with one more to issue an FYI; and are working with 2 more VASH referrals. We were awarded 25 new VASH vouchers effective 1/1/2021, but the majority are intended to be used in the Bemidji area since we lack demand. The VA has informed us that they have now hired staff for Bemidji.

137 out of 177 Mainstream vouchers are under lease. We have issued 27 Mainstream vouchers and are working with 19 additional households. 149 of these vouchers have been made available to us by HUD in the past year.

We have 38 individuals enrolled in our Family Self-Sufficiency program. We have had 46 FSS participants in the past 12 months. Staff is working with additional households to enroll them in the program. We can serve up to 50 households on the FSS program under our current Action Plan.

Prairie Horizons Townhomes

As of May 1, there are no vacant units and no known upcoming move-outs. Both an HRA and a CCRI staff person are officed at the site and provide supports to both Prairie Horizons Townhomes developments and other HRA Cares scattered-site participants. Both have been providing DHS Housing Stabilization Services to the participants.

HRA Cares

We are authorized to serve 64 households with these funds. We are currently serving 58 households. Of the 58, 15 are at Prairie Horizons Townhomes; 2 are at Bright Sky Apartments; and 41 are in scattered-site units in Clay, Otter Tail, Wilkin, and Douglas Counties, and in Fargo. There are 28 singles and 30 families being served. Two households are searching for units.

We only are accepting applications through the Coordinated Access, Referral, Entry and Stabilization System (CARES). Those with the highest priority who meet the eligibility criteria will be accepted.

Homeless to Housed Rental Assistance

We are serving 71 of our authorized 70 households. Two more have located housing and are waiting to move into their unit. Four more households are searching for units. We are over leased due to being under leased during the first portion of the grant term. There are 25 singles and 46 families currently being served. The grant targets families and youth-headed households. Leased households are from Clay, Wilkin, Traverse and Douglas Counties.

The coordinated entry system shifted its priority during the Covid-19 emergency to households residing outside or in shelters.

Homework Starts with Home

We continue to operate 2 MHFA Homework Starts with Home programs, one which includes philanthropic funding. After May payments were made, we have expended all HSWH Round 1 rental assistance and remaining participants are being transferred to Round 2 funding.

As of May 1, 59 are leased; 13 households are searching for units; and 4 applications are being processed. Households are from Clay, Douglas, Becker, Wilkin, Wadena, and Otter Tail Counties.

Housing Supports (formerly GRH) in Scattered-Site Units

As of May 1, a total of 133 households are being served by the Housing Supports program. There are 113 households leased in the scattered-site Housing Supports program – 9 with the HRA; 29 with CAPLP; 7 with the Presentation Partners in Housing; 11 with LMHC; 10 with Dorothy Day/Churches United; 8 with Metro Behavioral Health; 2 with the Lotus Center; and 35 with Summit Guidance. In addition, CCRI serves 20 Housing Supports clients at Gateway Gardens and 2 in scattered-site locations.

17 additional households are searching for units. DHS continues to change how the implementation of Housing Stabilization Services will impact Housing Supports.

Minnesota DHS Community Infrastructure Grant

The HRA now has a 0.5 HRS and a 0.03 project manager. There are 2.5 FTE outreach workers through the CAP agencies. CAPLP and WCMCA have hired dedicated outreach workers. Mahube-Otwa is spreading the duties across several staff.

The grant ends on 6/30/2021. The renewal application was submitted by Clay County on April 9, 2021. We are applying for funding for 1.1 FTEs. Both the Supportive Services Manager and a Housing Success Specialist would spend half their time working as Housing Resource Specialists. CAPLP is proposing to expand to 2.15 FTEs and WCMCA to 0.9. Mahube-Otwa requested to withdraw from the application but remain a partner. Due to staff turnover and other commitments, they prefer to focus on other activities for the next two years. They will still be a partner but will not be funded through the grant. Clay County applied for a full-time position to administer the Housing Supports program.

All agencies are preparing to enroll in the new Medicaid-billable Housing Stabilization Services. CAPLP and the HRA are the only entities that have been approved. WCMCA has submitted its application. One of the areas Mahube-Otwa will focus on is becoming an approved provider.

Minnesota DHS Housing Stabilization Services

The HRA was approved to provide Housing Stabilization Services – both Housing Consultation and Transition & Sustaining Services effective July 2020. Six staff are currently trained on one or more Housing Stabilization Services roles.

Staff began Housing Consultations in 2020. To date, we have 30 approved consults. We have 2 staff members providing consultations. We have begun billing for transition and sustaining services. We have 15 approved clients. We have four staff members who will provide billable Transition & Sustaining Services under the HSS program as a part of their job. The participant eligibility/billing approval has been an extremely slow process state-wide. Challenges continue to be worked on with the state.

DHS has now changed its interpretation regarding how Housing Stabilization Services will impact Housing Supports. Due to the on-going complexities with Housing Stabilization Services, DHS has determined that not as many people as previously anticipated will be eligible for the new benefit. Only those eligible for the new benefit will receive a cut to their Housing Supports Supplemental Services rate.

Owner-Occupied Rehab Program

Sabin

DEED awarded the City of Sabin SCDP funds to rehabilitate 10 homes. Seven projects are complete; and one is in construction. Three new applications have been received. There is funding available for two remaining homes. Bids on two homes should be returned by the end of May and are anticipated to use all of the remaining funds.

Other DEED- CDBG

The HRA staff applied for funding on behalf of the City of Dilworth for 2021 CDBG funding to DEED through the Small Cities Development Program. We received letters of interest from 67 homeowners and 9 commercial properties. We applied for \$922,000 on behalf of Dilworth to rehabilitate 21 owner-occupied homes and 7 businesses. Funding announcements should be made in June.

The HRA is administering some repaid DEED funds for Barnesville and are billing them for all costs incurred in administering those funds. We are currently working with one commercial property owner on a roofing project. Bids have been returned and a loan closing is being scheduled.

RLP

Two projects are under construction and should be complete by the end of May.

HPG

The HRA received a Rural Development grant through the Housing Preservation Grant program. All funds are committed at this time. We received a one-year extension so funds must be spent by 9/28/2021.

Rental Rehab Program

Only one project (Rothsay) is outstanding. It has an exterior stairway remaining that should be complete in May. MN Housing has granted the extension. We will close out the program once this project is complete. All 2021 expenses are being paid by the General account.

CHANGES TO HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER ADMINISTRATIVE

PLAN:

Chapter 19 of the Clay County HRA Administrative Plan for the Housing Choice Voucher Program was available for review. It is a new chapter that has been informally adopted as a revision to the Plan pursuant to Housing Choice Voucher Waiver HCV-1 which allows informal adoption of changes to the Plan. Board approval is required by 12/31/2021.

The new chapter addresses administration of Special Purpose Vouchers. It is applicable to FYI, VASH, and Mainstream Vouchers currently administered by the HRA. It also outlines how Family Unification Program or Non-Elderly Disabled vouchers would be administered by the HRA if they are awarded to the HRA in the future.

The waiting list for the preference for youth meeting FYI criteria is open under waiver PH and HCV-7 which does not require public notice via publication.

A motion was made by Commissioner Martin to approve the changes to the Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Plan. Commissioner Bakke seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER – WAIVERS DUE TO COVID-19:

At the May, August, and December 2020 board meetings, several Housing Choice Voucher waivers were formally approved by the board. HUD has given us the opportunity to extend most waivers through 12/31/2021 and has added waivers regarding verification of income when determining eligibility and family size for project-based units.

Attached is a form with the proposed waivers. It reflects the original date of enactment. The April waivers were formally approved at the May meeting, the July waivers were formally approved at the August meeting, the December 15 waivers were formally approved at the December meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Martin to approve the additional Housing Choice Voucher waivers. Commissioner Bakke seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPOINTMENTS TO THE CLAY COUNTY HRA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

Due to the death of Commissioner John Wilkie, the HRA Board of Commissioners no longer has a tenant representative or a formerly homeless representative. Federal law requires that we contact our Housing Choice Voucher program participants to see if any are interested in serving on the board, and that at least one commissioner has experienced homelessness. The same person may fill both roles. Commissioner Wilkie's term expires 1/31/2022.

We mailed information to all Clay County residents participating in our Housing Choice Voucher program (approximately 600 households) and requested that interested individuals complete a brief application to serve on our Resident Advisory Board (RAB) or Board of Commissioners. We also advertised the openings in local newspapers and posted the information and application on our website. We received applications from four interested people. Three responded to the request to be interviewed for the positions.

Commissioners Bakke and Martin interviewed three candidates on April 26. They asked that the Board recommend two new people to the Clay County Commission to both be appointed to the HRA board. One is a current participant in the HCV program, has experienced homelessness, and is a current Clay County HRA Resident Advisory Board member. He also identifies as BIPOC. The other is a realtor in Moorhead who is interested in public service.

Commissioner Bakke made a motion to recommend Anthony Dillard and Kim Schlotfeldt to the Clay County Commission for appointment to the HRA Board. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martin and carried unanimously.

Director Lee discussed the possibility of making a request to Clay County for any Covid relief monies available through the award that was allocated to local governments. The Board had no objection to this.

Director Lee stated that the auditor's annual presentation will be part of the June meeting.

OTHER:

Operating Line of Credit:

Bell Bank noted that the HRA By-Laws required the Chair and the Secretary to execute these documents. Chair Johnson and Secretary Braseth have executed the required documents with Bell Bank for a \$350,000 line of credit for the agency.

Staff Updates:

A new Homeless Programs Assistant, Liz Pelton, began work on May 5. A new Rental Assistance Specialist, Mandi Stagl, is scheduled to begin work on May 21. One of the interns, Noah Kensok, is not working at the HRA the month of May but plans to return and work temporary part-time from June – December and will be learning the Rental Assistance Specialist duties for a property management rental assistance position.

One part-time staff who was out on medical leave due to surgery has tendered her resignation. The other part-time cleaner will become full-time. Doug Malzahn, our previous contract cleaner, has agreed to do some cleaning work for us as well.

Office Re-opening:

Since most staff have been vaccinated, Director Lee proposes beginning to partially re-open the main office beginning July 6, 2021. The office would initially be open on Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Staff will assess whether this time is adequate to meet the needs of the community or if “open” hours will need to be gradually increased. The priority will be the health and safety of participants, staff, and community members.


The Board discussed and had no objection to the plan outlined above.

The Preparedness Plan was distributed with updates based on new CDC guidelines for fully vaccinated and unvaccinated workers.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bakke to approve the updates to the Preparedness Plan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martin and carried unanimously.

10:30 A.M. MEETING ADJOURNED:

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 a.m. by Commissioner Martin. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bakke and carried unanimously.



Tia Braseth, Secretary

6.15.21

Date