

HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF CLAY COUNTY
Regular Meeting of December 19, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tia Braseth, Anthony Dillard, and Cecil Johnson

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

STAFF PRESENT:

Dara Lee and Jill Cossette.

9:32 A.M. REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

AGENDA:

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

MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 17, 2023 REGULAR MEETING:

A motion was made by Commissioner Dillard to approve the October 17, 2023, regular minutes. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:

None

REPLACEMENT OF COMMISSIONERS:

At its December 12 meeting, the Clay County Commission appointed Bethany Peterson to a new 5-year term, and Greg Lemke to complete the term of resigning Commissioner Kim Schlotfeldt. Neither new board member was able to attend the December meeting, but both have indicated they will be able to attend future meetings.

2024 HRA TAX LEVY & SAHA DISCUSSION

On June 20, 2023, this board approved a Special Benefit Tax for 2024 in the amount of \$500,000. The statute requires the consent of the Board of Commissioners of Clay County, the City of Moorhead, and the City of Barnesville. Local Governments must certify their tax levies to the County Auditor by September 30.

Chair Braseth, Director Lee, Deputy Director Bacon presented to the Clay County Commission on August 1. Commissioner Johnson was in attendance. The request was tabled for possible consent at the time of the overall budget approval. The Barnesville City Council consented to the \$500,000 levy on Monday, August 14; and the Moorhead City Council on Monday, August 28. In September, the Clay County Commission did consent to the \$500,000 levy as part of the preliminary levy **only**.

The Commissioners also discussed the new State Affordable Housing Aid (SAHA), and that Clay County is receiving approximately \$160,000 per year for both 2023 and 2024; and that the City of Moorhead would receive approximately \$260,000 per year. Commissioners encouraged the HRA to apply for these funds and reduce the overall levy request.

In November, Moorhead awarded the HRA \$85,000 in SAHA funding. On December 12, the Clay County Commission awarded all 2023 and 2024 SAHA funding to the Clay County HRA. It also consented to the amended resolution that this board passed at its October meeting reducing the HRA Special Tax Levy to \$250,000.

Total funding allocated exceeds \$655,800 for 2024. All but the \$250,000 in levy funds are for specific rehabilitation activities.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

A complete set of the budgets financials to date for October 2023 were reviewed. As discussed in the past, we have been plagued by low vacancy rates due to excessive tenant damage leading to evictions. Bad debts also continue to be challenging.

Overall, budgets are running much as anticipated. However, leasing has increased significantly, evictions are decreasing, and we should be entering 2024 in a good position.

With the resignation, and the addition of new commissioners and a deputy director, new signature cards must be executed.

2023 GENERAL BUDGET REVISION:

A proposed budget with the revised budget for the General account for 2023 was reviewed. Management of Moorhead Public Housing Agency Operations was not included in the original budget approved by the HRA Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Johnson to approve the revised 2023 General Budget. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

PROJECT UPDATES

Houge Estates

As of December 1, there are 4 vacant units and one additional eviction. There is one additional move-out notice for December 31 and one lease termination for December 31. Staff are working with 5 households to determine eligibility. There are 67 households on the waiting list which re-opened after the software conversion.

Clay County SAHA funds were awarded to update the security cameras at the property. The Houge Estates Service Coordinator is housed at this location.

Agassiz Apartments

As of December 1, there are no vacancies and 10 applicants on the waiting list.

Agassiz needs a new roof. Funding for the replacement was approved in the award of the SAHA funding. We also received SAHA funding to install security cameras and secured access in the building.

Clay County Affordable Housing LLC/Boyer Apartments

As of December 1, there are 6 vacant units. There is one move-out on December 31 and one lease termination for non-payment of rent. Staff are finalizing eligibility for 4 applicants and working with an additional 15 households for the remaining units.

There is no specific subsidy tied to these units. Residents of these units receive a preference for a Housing Choice Voucher if their family size fits the available unit.

Fieldcrest Townhomes

As of December, there are 11 vacant units (five 2-bedrooms and six 3-bedrooms). There is one move-out notice for December 31 and one lease termination. The units were kept vacant during construction and are now being filled. Additional applications are being processed for the openings. There are 2 more units for households with a disabled family member and 2 more for households experiencing homelessness. The other seven units will be filled from the waiting list. Staff are currently working with 9 applicants. There are 50 households on the waiting list.

The Certificate of Occupancy was issued November 1, 2023.

Board members took a short tour after the December board meeting.

Gateway Gardens

As of December 1, there are 4 openings. One of these units is ready to rent. There is a pending eviction action as well a move-out notice for December 31. Staff are working with 2 households to determine eligibility. Tenants are selected from the community Coordinated Entry list. Staff are contacting potential residents to fill the units.

The Housing Supports supplies are located at Gateway Gardens. Two supportive services staff and an assistant property manager are officed at this location. The CCRI case manager continues to have an office at the location. The HRA staffs the front desk from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day. From 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. A security company staffs the office. The security company will now be monitoring the cameras for the High Rise as well as for Gateway Gardens.

Prairie Horizons Townhomes

As of December 1, there are 4 open units. None of these units are ready for occupancy, primarily due to extensive damage to the units. Staff are working with one applicant to determine eligibility. Tenants are selected from the community Coordinated Entry list.

A supportive services office is available on-site. CCRI continues to have a full-time employee providing support to both Prairie Horizons Townhomes developments and other HRA Cares scattered-site participants. She is officed at that location. CCRI also provides DHS Housing Stabilization Services to eligible participants. An HRA employee provides support to tenants participating in this program in scattered-site settings.

As of January 1, 2024, the HRA has requested that CCRI staff vacate the office due to the change in the service delivery model that will be used for supportive services which is funded through the HRA Cares grant.

Housing Choice Vouchers

As of December 1, 2023, there were a total of 762 out of 762 units leased in the HRA Housing Choice Voucher program. This is the first time in over a decade that all units have been fully leased.

We are working with 4 additional households from other housing authorities. We have 555 vouchers under our main HCV HUD contract; 187 under our Mainstream HCV contract; and 15 under our HCV Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) contract. We have requested that HUD reallocate 10 of our 40 VASH units to the Bemidji HRA. We were notified that HUD intends to transfer the vouchers on January 1, 2024.

Of the 555 vouchers under our main contract, 557 vouchers are leased: 499 of 481 regular vouchers; 33 out of 33 Tenant Protection Vouchers; 1 of 1 FYI vouchers; and 24 of 40 VASH vouchers. We have 5 existing regular HCV participants who are between units; we have issued 19 regular vouchers and 1 VASH voucher to new participants; and we are working with 13 additional households to issue a regular voucher.

191 out of 187 Mainstream vouchers are under lease. We have 6 existing Mainstream participants who are between units; we have issued 17 Mainstream vouchers to new participants.

Fourteen of 15 EHV vouchers are under lease and 2 vouchers have been issued to new participants who are searching for a unit. The program is ending and does not allow any additional vouchers to be issued. All current participants can remain on the program for as long as needed.

We have 48 individuals enrolled in our Family Self-Sufficiency program. We have had 59 FSS participants in the past 12 months. Two participants graduated in November and received a total of \$45,113.

We have 4 applicants on our waiting list which remains closed until our numbers decrease.

Becker-Clay-Otter Tail-Wilkin (BCOW) Adult Mental Health Initiative (AMHI) Rental Assistance

The contract with the BCOW AMHI provides funding for rental assistance and administrative fees to assist households who contain a member who has a serious mental illness and is leaving an institution or is currently homeless. BCOW AMHI authorized \$6000 in additional administrative funding to cover some of the excess costs to date.

The 2024 grant has been changed to allow for Housing Navigation services to be provided through the grant as well as rental assistance and administrative fees. A staff person will work approximately 10-15 hours per week on this activity.

As of December 1, there are 23 participants; and 10 new participants who are searching for units.

HRA Cares

The grant, which begins January 1, 2024, was cut significantly during the past funding around. HUD agreed to amend the grant to transfer all funds into the supportive services and administrative categories. All households receiving rental assistance through this program will need to transfer to a different rental assistance program prior to January 1.

On December 1, 2023, 17 households received rental assistance through this program. Fargo HRA has agreed to take the 5 HRA Cares households currently residing in Fargo and Douglas County HRA will take the 3 in Douglas County. The remaining 9 households still need to be transferred and staff are working diligently to do so. Seven of the 9 are close to completing the transfer.

Homeless to Housed Rental Assistance

Our grant was increased to 85 households for October 1. We are serving 56 households now. Seven households are currently searching for units. There are 16 singles and 40 families being served. The grant targets families and youth-headed households. Leased households are from Clay (47) and Douglas (9) Counties.

Openings are filled through the coordinated entry process.

Homework Starts with Home

The grant was renewed for October 1 through September 30, 2024. We are funded to serve 32 households.

As of December 1, 10 households are leased. Households are from Clay (6), Douglas (2), Pope (1), and Otter Tail (1) Counties. Twelve households are searching for a unit. We are taking referrals again due to the grant renewal and the start of a new school year.

Housing Supports (formerly GRH) in Scattered-Site Units

As of December 1, a total of 104 households were being served by the Housing Supports program in Clay County. There are 89 households leased in the scattered-site Housing Supports program – 8 with the HRA; 18 with CAPLP; 7 with the Presentation Partners in Housing; 7 with LMHC; 6 with Metro Behavioral Health; 9 with the Lotus Center; and 31 with Greater Minnesota Community Services. In addition, CCRI serves 3 in scattered sites and 15 Housing Supports clients at Gateway Gardens.

Two households are searching for units. We will start accepting new clients once we hear from Clay County Social Services that they have the capacity to manage more.

Minnesota DHS Community Living Infrastructure Grant

Funding of the current grant was extended until 6/30/25. The new FTE for the HRA is about 0.82 FTE. No changes in the past month.

Minnesota DHS Housing Stabilization Services

No changes in the past month.

Owner-Occupied Rehab Program

Dilworth

The HRA staff is administering a \$922,000 DEED grant for the City of Dilworth. For the owner-occupied home rehabilitations, of the 20 active applicants, 5 projects are complete; 3 projects are under construction; and 3 projects are finalizing bids and preparing to close. The nine other applicants have been contacted and will be processed in the order they respond. Four applicants were ineligible or have withdrawn.

Physical property inspections have been completed on all seven commercial buildings. Two projects have been completed in 2023; 2 projects are under construction; 1 project is finalizing contracts; and 1 project has not started bidding. Two projects have withdrawn.

RLP (Minnesota Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program)

The Minnesota Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program is funded by the state. Three projects are complete; and one will close in December. Sixteen applications are being processed.

River View Heights (Moorhead Public Housing Agency)

As of December 1, there are 14 vacancies but 9 of these are not being filled due to upcoming rehabilitation work. One of the vacancies is re-rented for January 1. Six applicants are being processed for the four available units.

There are currently 140 people on the public housing waiting list.

Sharp View (MPHA)

As of December 1, Sharp View has one vacancy with an applicant being processed for the opening. The waiting list is shared with the River View Heights waiting list.

Moorhead Affordable Housing LLC (MPHA)

As of December, there is one vacancy. An applicant is being processed for the opening. While there is no specific subsidy tied to these units, accepted applicants do have a preference for an HCV voucher.

Maple Court Town Homes (MPHA and City of Moorhead)

Maple Court Townhomes is owned by the City of Moorhead and the MPHA. MPHA/ Clay HRA manage all the units. This property utilizes on-site caretakers. As of December 1, there are two vacancies. An applicant is being processed at this time.

UPDATED CODE OF CONDUCT

HUD deleted all Codes of Conduct that were on file prior to 2017. Ours was submitted to HUD in 2006. A copy of the updated Code of Conduct was provided. All HRA Commissioners and staff must agree to it on an annual basis.

Commissioner Dillard made a motion to approve the updated Code of Conduct. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

UPDATES TO PERSONNEL POLICIES

Staff requested permission to enact the following updates to its Personnel Policies effective January 1, 2024. Specific language will be presented at the January 2024 board meeting, but some of these new policies must be in effect on January 1. None of these updates change the practices of the agency.

- Integrate the Earned Sick and Safe Leave Policy into the existing PTO policy that exceeds requirements.
- Specifically include Crown Act and gender identity protections.
- Specifically include Pregnancy Accommodation and Breaks to Express Milk.
- Update Parental Leave policy to clarify the ability to take 12 weeks of unpaid leave regardless of length of employment or hours worked.
- Include requirement that employees notify the HRA within 5 days of any drug-related conviction, loss of drivers' license; or crime listed in the Kari Kostenen Act.

Commissioner Johnson made a motion to approve enacting changes to Personnel Policies effective January 1, 2024. Commissioner Dillard seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

HRA/PHA UPDATE

The joining of the two agencies continues to slowly progress.

- March 1, 2023 – HRA assumes general operational responsibilities of the Moorhead Public Housing Agency (MPHA).
- March 1, 2023 – all MPHA employees except the Executive Director, became HRA employees. The MPHA Executive Director is a shared employee of the agencies who also works for the HRA in the capacity of Deputy Director.
- April 1, 2023 – BCOW AMHI grant transferred from MPHA to the HRA.
- May 2023– the MPHA and HRA boards mutually agree to decline the new award from Minnesota Housing for the Bridges Program.
- Spring/Summer 2023 – financial integration of the two agencies slowly began.
- Summer 2023- Employees physically move to new locations; telephone systems and computer systems are integrated. Staff determined the best software system to transition all programs.
- October 2023 –software conversion for both MPHA and HRA programs. Conversion was successful with some on-going areas of refinement.
- November 2023 –additional integration of financial systems; and
- January 2024- begin use of contracted payroll services.

MPHA continues to own Public Housing (River View Height & Sharp View), Moorhead Affordable Housing units, and Maple Court Townhomes. The next anticipated transfer is the Moorhead Affordable Housing units. These are 30 scattered-site units.

Director Lee and Deputy Director Bacon will continue to analyze and make recommendations to each board on how and when these transfers should occur.

It is anticipated that for the next 1-2 years, the agencies will exam and determine the best mechanisms to meet their missions and deliver high quality housing and services.


OTHER

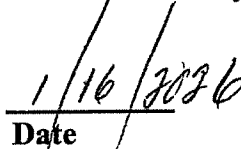
Director Lee, Rental Assistance Manager Bobbi Jo Stanfill, and FSS Coordinator Brandi Wilkie attended the National NAHRO conference. Director Lee has been appointed to the national Member Services Committee as well as elected Vice President of Member Services for the NAHRO North Central Regional Conference.

Stanfill, Wilkie, and Lee attended numerous sessions on the FSS program as well as pending operational changes for federal programs. HUD has delayed major reforms to the federal programs for at least an additional year, primarily due to software issues.

10:33 A.M. MEETING ADJOURNED:

Commissioner Braseth moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:33 a.m. The motion to adjourn was seconded by Commissioner Johnson and carried unanimously.


Anthony Dillard, Secretary


Date