



**FRANKLIN COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING &
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

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MINUTES

Regular Meeting – September 19, 2022

The Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority Board of Commissioners conducted the regular meeting of the Authority on **September 19, 2022**, via Zoom. at 4:31p.m.

1. Call to Order

Executive Director Gina Govoni called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

Commissioners Present (via roll call): M. Slowinski M. Cucchiara S. Worgaftik L. Brown
A. Bresciano F. Williams

Absent: S. Cottrell

Staff Present: G. Govoni N. Sauber K. Kelley

2. Actions

Minutes: Commissioner Worgaftik moved, and Commissioner Slowinski seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the August 22, 2022, regular meeting of the Board as presented.

17-4324 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

AP Warrant: Commissioner Williams moved, and Commissioner Slowinski seconded a motion to approve the accounts payable warrant for August 2022.

L. Brown requested clarification regarding the \$150,000 sent back to DHCD. G. Govoni explained that these are the return of administrative dollars through ERAP that were not spent.

17-4325 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Family Self Sufficiency Plan: G. Govoni stated that this plan is specific to Section 8 undertaken with Greenfield Housing Authority. There are no substantial changes, only updates to reflect current statistics and program practices.

Commissioner Brown moved, and Commissioner Slowinski seconded a motion to approve the final version of the updated Family Self Sufficiency Plan as presented.

17-4326 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Updated Payment Standards for FY23: G. Govoni explained that the updated payment standards and utility charges for FY23 allow the agency to calculate payments made towards the units.

Commissioner Williams moved, and Commissioner Worgattik seconded a motion to approve the updated payment standards for FY23, effective 10/1/22, as presented.

17-4327 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Updated Utility Charges for FY23: Commissioner Williams moved, and Commissioner Worgattik seconded a motion to approve the updated utility charts for FY23, effective 11/1/22, as presented.

17-4328 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Language Access Plan: N. Sauber explained that DHCD requires all housing authorities to have agency-wide Language Access Plans. HRA currently has a Language Access Plan that covers most of the requirements set out by DHCD. The presented plan is updated to meet all of DHCD's requirements. This plan, and the two following plans, must be submitted to DHCD by September 30, 2022.

This updated plan does not have any changes in substance. It uses a template provided by DHCD that has been tailored with local data to be relevant to this agency. The plan outlines the steps that must be taken in all situations surrounding participants with limited English proficiency.

S. Flaccus questioned if there is any portion of the plan that would be difficult for HRA to accomplish. N. Sauber responded, stating that there would not be any undue burden. The policy is reasonable and speaks to the fact that the agency must take reasonable measures to provide equal access to all participants. It also provides a structure on how staff members can contact professionals when needed.

G. Govoni added that a version of this plan has been in place since 2016. A new training was recently presented to staff that educated them on this plan in a digestible way. Staff members appear to have a better understanding of the plan and the supports in place.

Commissioner Williams moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to accept the changes to the Language Access policy as presented.

17-4329 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Reasonable Accommodations Policy: N. Sauber stated that the agency already has reasonable accommodation procedures for specific programs. This new policy broadens the plan to be agency-wide, while still referencing specific programmatically

needed language. This policy outlines the agency's responsibilities regarding hearing and considering reasonable accommodation requests, how such requests are submitted, and an overview of the review and grievance processes.

G. Govoni added that reasonable accommodation requests were previously governed by the Leased Housing department through the Section 8 Housing Plan, and by public housing through terms in the lease. This plan is consistent with current practices and includes a plain language form that ensures accessibility for all participants.

S. Worgaftik questioned if there would be an agency-wide training on this plan. N. Sauber responded, stating that currently, there is no training for all staff members. Once the policy is approved, the admin department will work to develop an agency-wide training to ensure that all staff members understand the policy and what the expectations surrounding it are.

Commissioner Williams moved, and Commissioner Slowinski seconded a motion to adopt the Reasonable Accommodations policy as presented.

17-4330 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Fair Housing Marketing Policies: G. Govoni explained that this plan would be the most complex and costly to implement. DHCD's mandate to implement this without funding to support it is unfair and impractical.. The SHA board did not elect to approve a similar policy at their meeting last week.

DHCD is requiring all housing authorities to determine the percentage of each minority group that is below one percentage point of the percentage point for the minority group in the city/town or local metropolitan statistical area (MSA), which is the Springfield MSA for our purposes. The population of each of the Franklin County towns varies drastically from the Springfield MSA. The data per town in Franklin County has been analyzed and outlined in the plan to illustrate the true makeup compared to the Springfield MSA, which is what DHCD requires HRA to use. In some instances, HRA is compliant with the Springfield metro area's statistics, but not all of them.

This agency understands that it has a responsibility to affirmatively market. Though, the list of requirements is financially significant. To ensure that this plan does not cause an undue burden on HRA, specific language has been included to ensure that only appropriate and feasible measures are taken.

Commissioner Williams moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to adopt the Fair Housing Marketing policies as presented.

17-4331 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

S. Worgaftik questioned if any effort will be made to encourage DHCD to recognize that having the Springfield MSA at the standard does not make sense for Franklin County. G. Govoni responded, stating that using the Franklin County data in the plan as a comparison point is an attempt to do so. If DHCD declines the plan, more specific language regarding this issue will be presented directly to DHCD.

A. Bresciano requested clarification on when DHCD will fully analyze the policy. G. Govoni stated that this policy will be uploaded into CHAMP by September 30, 2022. DHCD may not analyze the plan until the PMR is completed. A. Bresciano followed up, questioning if DHCD simply wants to ensure that HRA has a plan at this time. G. Govoni responded affirmatively, stating that if there is any pushback from DHCD, the board will be informed. M. Cucchiara added that this policy likely focuses on form over function.

Public Housing Notice Constant Contact Request Form: G. Govoni stated that if board members wish, they can receive PHNs directly to their inbox. Going forward, PHNs will not be included in the board packets.

HCEC Contract for FY23: G. Govoni explained that this contract includes an additional \$117,000. Further verifications have occurred regarding how to implement the money. HCEC is now hiring for the new position of Special Service Coordinator.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Worgaftik seconded a motion to approve the HCEC Contract for FY23 as presented.

17-4332 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

FISH Project #358126: G. Govoni stated that this project is one of the FY20 Health and Safety projects. HRA has a contract with Hamshaw Lumber to deliver the windows and permission from DHCD to go beyond the September 30, 2022, deadline to install them.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to enter into a contract for FISH #358126 with Hamshaw Lumber, the low bidder, in the amount of \$17,099.52 for the purchase and delivery of 35 windows and screens to 36 Congress Street (Orange).

17-4333 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

FISH Project #358140: G. Govoni stated that the CFC and CSC for the Bernardston roof are ready for board approval. The roof is completed, and there are no reservations to approve them.

Commissioner Brown moved, and Commissioner Williams seconded a motion to allow Gina Govoni to sign the CSC and CFC for FISH #358140 South Street (Bernardston) Roof Replacement.

17-4334 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Wage Match: G. Govoni explained that this is a state system primarily used for public housing. This policy was previously altered for HCEC to gain access, though they are now using a different data base for income verification. DHCD has requested annual approval of the system, including those authorized to use it and what can be done with the data.

N. Sauber added that not all staff members are trained on this, only those who use Wage Match.

Commissioner Williams, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to approve the annual wage match certification.

17-4335 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

3. Staff Report

Website Update: N. Sauber stated that the RDI website has been comprehensively overhauled. The website is simple, providing only fundamental information. The content has been reframed to show RDI's involvement with property development over time. The website highlights information about the board members, the property developmental histories, current development projects, contact information, and the general role RDI plays in the community. G. Govoni added that the website works to delineate RDI as a developmental resource and HRA as a housing assistance resource.

HRA & SHA Merger: G. Govoni stated that there is no merger update at this time.

CSO, 60 Wells Street: G. Govoni stated that RDI is working on redeveloping 60 Wells Street. Just today we learned that the pre-app was accepted; meaning that RDI was invited to submit the full one-stop application in October.

S. Worgaftik questioned how public this project is right now. G. Govoni responded, stating that while there is a desire to go public, due process must take precedence. Depending on which planning meeting RDI attends will determine when the project is made public.

4. Other Business

No discussion.

5. Documents for Informational Purposes

No discussion.

6. Other business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance

No discussion.

7. Adjourn

M. Slowinski moved, and L. Brown seconded a motion to adjourn the regular meeting of the HRA Board of Directors as there was no further business to discuss.

The meeting convened at 5:21 p.m.