

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR ELECTRONIC MEETING
OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF
RICHMOND REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD VIA GOTOMEETING
IN RICHMOND, VIRGINIA
ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2021

In Attendance via GoToMeeting:

Board of Commissioners

Veronica Blount, Chairman
Neil Kessler, Vice Chairman
Jonathan Coleman
Robley Jones
Basil Gooden
Barrett Hardiman
W. R. “Bill” Johnson, Jr.
Charlene Pitchford
Patrice Shelton

RRHA Staff

Stacey Daniels-Fayson, Interim Chief Executive Officer

Chairman Blount called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. with Cory Wolfe serving as Legal Counsel. A quorum was established.

General Counsel Comments

This meeting is an electronic meeting called and conducted in accordance with City of Richmond Ordinance No. 2020-093 (the “Ordinance”), which was ordained under the authority conferred unto the City by Va. Code § 15.2-1413. The Board is meeting by entirely remote means and a quorum of the Board is not physically assembled. The Board is conducting an electronic meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has made it unsafe for a quorum of Board members to physically assemble in a single location. This Board is a “public body” within the meaning of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Va. Code § 2.2-3700 *et seq.*), as well as Section 1(B)(5) of the Ordinance, in that the members of this Board are appointed to office by the City Council.

Notice of this electronic meeting was published on RRHA’s website on **Monday, January 11, 2021**. That Notice identified that this meeting will be an “electronic meeting” within the meaning of the Ordinance, that the meeting will be conducted through GoToMeeting, and that members of the public could observe and participate in the meeting. Specific instructions to access the meeting by Internet and by phone were disclosed in the Notice. The Notice also directed members of the public to a link at which they could register to deliver public comments in real time in accordance with the

Citizens' Comment provisions of the Board's Bylaws. All such requests to speak are delivered to Priscilla Jackson, Executive Administrative Assistant.

Members of the public must register in advance in accordance with the Board's Bylaws in order to make public comments during the meeting. To register, members of the public must access an online link by which they can provide the registration information required by the Board's Bylaws. Public comments must be made at electronic meetings of this Board in real time through the GoToMeeting application, either by Internet or by phone. Written comments will not be accepted and will not be included in the minutes of this meeting.

In accordance with the Bylaws, no member of the public may address the Board unless they have registered to speak, or have otherwise been called upon by the Chair to speak. Accordingly, all members of the public are instructed to disable any audio or video broadcasts until and unless the Board has called upon such individual to deliver comments. If a member of the public refuses to disable an audio or video broadcast after having been warned to do so by the Chair, then the individual may be permanently banned from the remainder of the meeting.

Please disable your audio and video broadcasts now.

All members of this body in attendance at this meeting are participating electronically. The members who are participating in this meeting include: (1) Ms. Veronica Blount, Chair, (2) Mr. Jonathan Coleman, (3) Dr. Basil Gooden, (4) Mr. Barrett Hardiman, (5) Mr. W.R. "Bill" Johnson, Jr., (6) Mr. Robley Jones, (7) Mr. Neil Kessler, Vice Chair, (8) Ms. Charlene Pitchford, and (9) Ms. Patrice Shelton.

Members are reminded that all voting during this electronic meeting must be conducted by roll call vote. When a motion is on the floor, I will call each member by name, in alphabetical order, to state their vote individually, until all members are polled.

I have no further comments.

Minutes

The Minutes from the *December 16, 2020 Regular Electronic Board of Commissioners Meeting* were approved.

I Motion: (Gooden/Jones) Move to adopt the Minutes from the December 16, 2020 Regular Electronic Board of Commissioners Meeting

Motion Carried

Naye: Hardiman

Note: Commissioner Hardiman stated that the minutes did not accurately reflect what transpired at the December 16, 2020 board meeting. He did not offer any recommendations to correct the minutes.

Citizen Information Period

Michael Hopkins addressed the Board of Commissioners to discuss concerns related to the termination of the Jackson Place RFP.

Discussion: Chairman Blount asked General Counsel Cory Wolfe to explain how the procurement policy works. Mr. Wolfe provided the following comments. He stated that the Procurement Policy does not require staff to seek approval from the Board before a procurement solicitation or contract negotiation is terminated. RRHA issued an RFP for a hotel and affordable housing on RRHA-owned real estate. RRHA was unable to come to terms on the amount of the compensation for the involved real estate with Michael Hopkins. RRHA was willing to sell the property to Mr. Hopkins at the appraised value, but unfortunately an agreement could not be reached on this transaction.

Commissioner Gooden stated that several allegations were made in the document that Mr. Hopkins provided. He wanted to know if a copy of the appraisal was made available to Mr. Hopkins. Mr. Wolfe said, *“The conversation about the appraisal and whether it was provided to Mr. Hopkins team occurred mostly between the CEO at that time and Mr. Hopkins directly.”* He added that the Virginia Freedom of Information Act entitles RRHA not to share information of valuations of real estate when the sale of that real estate is being contemplated. Mr. Hopkins and his team could have requested site access to conduct their own appraisal, as would have been customary in a real estate negotiation at relatively minimal cost.

Commissioner Hardiman stated that if there is a dispute between the valuation, it seems that we would want to provide some form of evidence to demonstrate that the valuation we had for the property was the correct valuation.

Commissioner Jones asked staff to describe the items that caused the negotiations to break down. Mr. Wolfe responded that there were several points that were open when

the negotiations were terminated. For RRHA, the main points were that we wanted to negotiate a share of the developers developer fee, as is customary in an agency in our position for that kind of transaction, as well as a share of the project cash flow and net project cash flow. And in the alternative, full compensation for the appraised value of the real estate. We were unable to negotiate those terms.

Commissioner Johnson stated that he is concerned with this situation. He asked that this item be referred back to the Real Estate Committee so that we can review it to see what kind of solution or resolution we can come to.

Commissioner Hardiman said *“I have concerns with our Bylaws and our Public Comment Period. I think our Governance Committee needs to get together and review that. I have problems with our Procurement Policy, and when and where the Board is involved in that process. I think the Governance Committee needs to meet and deal with that. I have concerns that our Procurement Policy was not specifically followed the way that it should have been and that the Board was not alerted to the things that it should have been alerted to. I'd like to make a motion that this procurement be sent back to the Real Estate Committee for a full evaluation to determine whether or not the Procurement Policy was followed.”*

Commissioner Kessler, Chairman of the Real Estate Committee responded that the only item that came before the Real Estate Committee was a request to give approval to issue the RFP. He said *“The Real Estate Committee is not in a position, nor should it be in a position to negotiate the terms of a particular transaction. And as far as whether the negotiations followed the Procurement Policy, I am confident, based on Counsel's representations that the staff did follow the Procurement Policy.”*

2 Motion: (Hardiman/Johnson) Move to send the Jackson Place procurement solicitation to the Real Estate Committee for a full evaluation to determine whether the RRHA Procurement Policy was followed.

Motion Carried

Naye: Blount, Coleman, Kessler

Abstain: Pitchford

Antwone Ross addressed the Board of Commissioners to discuss the collection of money owed to him by RMT. He stated that in 2018, his company worked alongside RMT to correct and fix heat related items in RRHA communities. He spent a lot of his own resources on this job but RMT never paid him for the work that his company performed.

He also talked about the opportunity to work with RRHA. He stated that in December 2019, his company teamed up with a contractor to bid on a solicitation to replace some piping in the Gilpin neighborhood. Their bid was for \$1 million, but the second-place bid was for \$1.5 million. He added that RRHA informed him that his bid was far below the budget and was rejected 60 days later. He never got the opportunity to sit down with RRHA to discuss how he arrived at this number in his bid.

Commissioner Blount thanked Mr. Ross for his comments and informed him that staff will reach out to him to see what they can do to help him collect his payment from RMT.

Breanne Armbrust, Executive Director of the Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC) of Greater Fulton, addressed the Board of Commissioners to discuss the displacement of residents, the lack of the ability to address unsafe housing conditions, the lack of timely communication with residents about changes related to their housing, and the impact this has on residents themselves and on organizations that are providing support to these residents. NRC provides support to residents living in the Greater Fulton area as well as to a number of families currently living in RRHA communities. She added that NRC is definitely willing to work with RRHA to improve conditions for RRHA residents.

Iyeshia Sessoms addressed the Board of Commissioners to discuss unfair and improper notification on waiting list procedures as well as other decisions being made in the community. She stated that she was on the waiting list for five years, but that RRHA took her name off of the waiting list because they were unable to get in contact with her.

She added that RRHA needs to better communicate with individuals before removing them from the waiting list.

Chairman Blount thanked Ms. Sessoms for her comments. She stated that there is a waiting list for public housing and Housing Choice Vouchers all over the country and that it is incumbent upon the person who is applying for housing to check back with the agency to make sure that you are still on the waiting list. She asked Kenyatta Green, Director of Housing Choice Voucher and Tenant Selection Office to provide an update on waitlist administration.

Mrs. Green stated that the waitlist for public housing is open. Regarding the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) she said *“RRHA communicated with the community via a public notice. In addition, we did a large communication effort this year with bus boards as well as a Save My Spot campaign. We did everything possible to get the word out about the opening of our HCVP waitlist. With waitlist administration, HUD requires that we purge our waitlist once a year. Because we have such a large reach for the HCVP, we do everything possible to ensure that participants who are on the waitlist are still interested in receiving assistance from the program. We will make several attempts to reach the participants and will exhaust every effort possible to ensure that we are communicating with the participants prior to them being removed from the waitlist. If they do not respond, unfortunately at that time, they are removed from the waitlist.”*

Mamie Heard addressed the Board of Commissioners to discuss credit for heating, proper explanation of billing, receiving statements in a timely fashion, retaliation by staff, fear of eviction, services to help residents fill out documentation to be put on waiting list and possible internet access to do so. She stated that for the past two years, she has been trying to get a reasonable accommodation for her medical equipment.

Chairman Blount asked Charles Williams to follow up with Ms. Heard regarding these items. Ms. Heard stated that she is not allowed to have contact with Mr. Williams.

Chairman Blount then referred Ms. Heard to contact Priscilla Jackson in the executive office so that she can put her in touch with someone who is over Mr. Williams.

Keisha Cummings addressed the Board of Commissioners to discuss equity. She wanted to know why no funding is going towards the children and residents in RRHA communities. She stated that RRHA has funding to install cameras but does not have funds to invest in the residents, the children, and the communities. She mentioned that the playgrounds in the various RRHA communities are outdated and that everything is dilapidated. She added that RRHA needs to be proactive as opposed to being reactive and encouraged the Commissioners to visit the neighborhoods to see these conditions.

Chairman Blount encouraged Ms. Cummings to work with RRHA's resident services staff to discuss ways in which she can help us to make sure that we get those items fixed for our residents. She said, *"We are happy to work with you if you want to work with resident services staff to help us to do that."*

Interim CEO Stacey Daniels-Fayson added that there are some capital funds from our 2020 grant that have been programmed for upgrading some of our playgrounds. Staff will meet to discuss this item.

Commissioner Shelton added that she is working on a project in Hillside to have the playground rebuilt. This project started before COVID, but because of the pandemic, there are some limitations with the residents providing their input back to the architects. The ideas for this project are coming from both the older and younger youth as well as from the parents and grandparents so that the area can be sufficient for everyone in the community.

Commissioner Pitchford mentioned that each year, the communities develop a wish list. She stated that residents should attend the Tenant Council meetings and suggest items that they would like to see addressed to their Tenant Council President. The President will take those suggestions to the appropriate property manager so that those items can be addressed.

Certificates of Appreciation

Chairman Blount stated that she wanted to recognize five of the former Board members for the work that they've contributed to RRHA over the years. She said, "*Some of them were here much longer than me. They definitely left an impact on us. We worked well together on some of the things that you see happening now. Positive and great things are happening in the community because of some of the things that these Commissioners have done.*" Individual Certificates of Appreciation were prepared for each of the previous board members for their service and contributions as RRHA Commissioners over the years. The certificates read as follows:

RICHMOND REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY

Certificates of Appreciation

PRESENTED TO:

Heidi Abbott, Robert Adams, Elliott Harrigan, Marilyn Olds, and Samuel Young, Jr.

FOR the performance of duties as a Board of Commissioner member of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority with integrity, wisdom, and compassion of the highest order.

FOR faithful and sincere service of his/her term.

FOR approaching his/her duties with dedication and commitment.

FOR being a tireless advocate for low income families across the Richmond VA metropolitan area.

Date January 20, 2021

After reading the Certificates of Appreciation, Chairman Blount said "*I thank you for your service, the staff thanks you for your service, the residents thanks you for your service and the City of Richmond thanks you for your service.*"

Sam Young provided the following comments. He said *“I do a lot of work in the Richmond community and definitely the Housing Authority is the most meaningful organization that I've been a part of. I appreciate every Commissioner that I've served with even though we didn't always agree with one another. The relationships and the things we were able to do together were special. I want to thank all the Commissioners that I served with. I wish the new Commissioners well. It's not an easy job and the learning curve is a little different, but it is meaningful work. I enjoyed working with the staff. So, thank you everyone for all of the work we put in together.”*

Heidi Abbott stated that Robert Adams had to leave the meeting, but that he wanted her to tell everyone that he very much appreciates this and misses everyone.

Mrs. Abbott provided the following comments. She said *“Thank you very much for this. As Commissioners and staff, you put your lives, heart, and soul into it. I am still working very closely with RRHA and am very appreciative that you all have allowed me to do so. Those of us who have served as Commissioners know what an incredible commitment that is. It's often said that that you don't know until you sit on this side of the table. We're here to be advocates for the Housing Authority, but first and foremost we are to be advocates for the residents.”*

Chairman Blount responded and said *“We are very glad that you are still available to us, and that you're still working with the community. We just appreciate you.”*

Interim CEO Report

Interim Chief Executive Officer's comments – Interim CEO Stacey Daniels-Fayson started her comments by saying that *“We take the comments from our residents, advocates and citizens very seriously, so we will be reaching out to each of the speakers tonight to make sure that we're able to address their particular issues.”* She provided the following comments and/or updates.

- Staff continues to monitor the impact that COVID has on our organization. We have seen a slight uptick in the number of employees impacted by COVID; we are

- working closely with the Health Department and staff accordingly. We will be sending out a flyer to employees about the protocols that should be followed for COVID.
- We have been working with the Health Department on an outreach campaign for our families and employees regarding the vaccines. The Health Department will be hosting town hall meetings for our staff and residents. We are excited that our residents and certain classes of our employees will have preferential treatment for the vaccine.
 - We have received approximately \$1.4 million in assistance from the Office of Community Wealth Building, Action in Community Through Service and Housing Opportunities Made Equal to assist approximately 1,100 families. We are very appreciative that we have been able to work with our partners on this initiative. She gave “kudos” to Charles William, Director of Public Housing for making sure that our residents have this assistance.
 - The Re-Imagining Committee continues to work on a variety of processes to move the agency forward virtually.
 - The Eviction Moratorium and Lease Enforcement continues. RRHA did not undertake any evictions for nonpayment this month or during any of the previous months while under the eviction moratorium.
 - Legislative Update:
 - HB 340 - extends protection to tenants affecting loss of income due to COVID-19.
 - Renters Rights consists of:
 - Expanding the right of redemption; notice of right.
 - 14 day pay-or-quits, mandatory repayment option.
 - Unlawful evictions.
 - Military tenants.
 - Enhanced COVID protections.
 - HB 1897 - forbids termination of personal actions against an individual for missing work because they appeared as a defendant in an unlawful detainer proceeding.
 - HB 1931 - consists of minor revisions to the FOIA open meeting rules.

- HB 1849 - will require public bodies to include in every construction contract valued over \$250,000.00, a provision requiring the contractor to participate in an apprentice training program for every construction trade it engages in.
- HB 1741 - for any contract awarded by a government, the contractor must include in all subcontracts a requirement to prepare monthly reports of the subcontractors' payroll records, records regarding independent contractors and the number of employees and independent contractors working on the project.
- RRHA's General Counsel will review these legislative updates and will provide a final determination on the impact that these items may have on RRHA. The determination will be communicated to the Commissioners.
- Meetings were held with Senator McClellan, Helen Hardiman, ROI, Richmond Health Department, Housing Brain Trust Group, Silver Street Development, Mayor Stoney, Brian Jackson, Better Housing Coalition, various partners, organizations and interested stakeholders throughout the month to discuss various initiatives, collaborative efforts and partnership opportunities with RRHA.
- RRHA's annual plan was approved by HUD. We are working on a timeline for the upcoming annual plan process. We will incorporate some of Commissioner Hardiman's recommendations into the plan. A meeting will be held with the Commissioners to review the annual plan prior to the public hearing.

Committee Updates

The *Real Estate and Community Development Committee* met on January 19, 2021. Commissioner Kessler, Chairman of the *Real Estate and Community Development Committee* provided the following updates:

- A retreat for the Real Estate Committee will be scheduled for February 2021 so that all the members of the Committee and Board can become familiar with our current real estate plan for redevelopment and disposition. If changes need to be made to our priorities, we can make those changes and communicate them to our partners and stakeholders.

The *Administration and Finance Committee* met on January 19, 2021. Commissioner Jones, Chairman of the *Administration and Finance Committee* provided the following updates:

- Heating Update - 24 work orders are active right now.
- The Committee discussed shifting the way the financials are reported. Going forward, staff will provide the full financial report to the committee on a quarterly basis. On a monthly basis, staff will provide a cash flow document and a snapshot on the financial status of each individual component within RRHA.

Chairman's Report

Chairman's Comments – Chairman Blount provided the following comments and/or updates. She said *“As a Board, I'm hoping that we will continue with the great work that we've been doing as an Authority and look at ways to not only make our policies better, but to do more outreach in terms of working with our stakeholders. I'm hoping that we will be able to use some of the varied experience of our new Commissioners so that we can frame things from several lenses.”*

She stated that she is glad that a real estate retreat is being planned so that the Board members will have an opportunity to discuss the various initiatives that staff is working on.

She also mentioned that she was excited that the citizens were able to speak and express their concerns during the board meeting this evening and that staff was able to respond to some of those concerns. She said, *“In the future, I'm hoping that we will have more of an opportunity to get residents engaged in what we do and work with us to make our communities better.”*

Additional Discussion:

Commissioner Hardiman asked if Commissioner Shelton could briefly discuss the process that is being used to improve the playground equipment in Hillside.

DRAFT

Commissioner Shelton stated that the funding to do the work on the playground in Hillside is coming from outside partners, city council and some architects that have done playgrounds in different cities and states. No funding is coming from RRHA for this initiative. The playground will be more modern, have more activities for the kids, have a seating area for seniors, and have space for a bigger community garden. To ensure that our residents will have access to utilize the playground and to prevent outside individuals from coming into the community and overtaking the playground, a parent or someone in the community will hold the keys to the playground equipment. She invited the Commissioners to visit the Hillside rental office on January 26, 2021 to view some of the diagrams for the playground that have been developed with input from the residents.

Commissioner Hardiman stated that he realized there is a huge backlog of maintenance issues, but wanted to know what opportunities are available for us to make funds available for some of those community amenities that can help to improve the lives of our residents. He stated that it would be great to have a Property Management meeting to discuss these items.

Commissioner Hardiman asked if RRHA staff receives any type of trauma informed training as part of their employee development.

Commissioner Blount stated that she had a conversation with the CEO about trauma informed care training; they are looking into this training for staff.

Commissioner Hardiman added that it is great that the health department is helping us with vaccines. Once we start moving folks for the RAD projects, we want to continue to work with the health department to ensure that we are keeping track of everything and keeping our residents safe while they are transitioning.

Commissioner Pitchford said *“In Gilpin, we have received one or two updates to our playgrounds within the last five years. We have received a nice new basketball court. It looks very nice. I am thrilled about some of the playgrounds that have been updated and with some of our partners that helped with this.”*

Charles Williams provided the following comments. He said *“We have worked with outside agencies to bring playgrounds to our different AMPS. In Gilpin, we have three playgrounds that were put up by Home Depot. Home Depot recently reached out to us to find a site where they could put up some additional playgrounds. If we can do something to improve the lives for the residents, we are always going to do that. Regarding our capital funds, we get input from the residents and staff to determine how those funds should be spent. Obviously, we must prioritize our capital funds, so we will look at the needs and the desires of the residents, but the health and safety of our residents is our priority.”*

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Chairman

Interim Chief Executive Officer/Secretary