

# RICHMOND REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY

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September 14, 2022, Minutes of the Electronic Property Management and Assisted Housing Board Committee Meeting

## Attendance

**Commissioners:** Patrice Shelton, Chairperson; Eddie L. Jackson, Jr.; Barrett Hardiman

**Committee Members:** Stephanie Carrington; Joy Robinson

**Staff:** Steven Nesmith, Incoming Chief Operating Officer; Sheila Hill-Christian, Interim Chief Operating Officer (CEO); Kenyatta Green, Senior Vice President (SVP) of Affordable Housing Operations; Angela Fountain, Vice President (VP) of Communications and Public Relations; Fatimah Smothers-Hargrove, Vice President (VP) of Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) and Tenant Selection Office (TSO); Ben Titter, Executive Vice President (EVP) and General Counsel; Shannon Sterling, Interim Controller; Marty Harrison, Vice President (VP) of Public Safety; Ralph Stuckey, Vice President of Resident Services; Wanda Daniel, Program Manager; Brett Brooks, Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) Supervisor; Calandra Trotter, Housing Compliance Officer; Monte Gayles, Executive Team Assistant; Leondra Brown Turner, Executive Team Assistant

The “electronic” meeting of Property Management and Assisted Housing Board Committee began at 9:30 a.m. with use of a video conferencing platform in Richmond, Virginia.

## **A. Opening Comments**

Commissioner Shelton opened the meeting with formal greetings to all Board members and staff.

## **B. General Council Comments**

RRHA’s EVP and General Counsel Titter confirmed that a quorum was established.

EVP and General Counsel Titter offered an opening statement about the legal basis for the electronic meeting.

## **C. Approval of Minutes**

Committee Member Robinson motioned for the approval of the minutes and was seconded by Committee Member Carrington. Hearing no comments or questions, the motion was unanimously carried.

## **D. Updates**

### **1. Lease Enforcement**

SVP Green informed the aged receivables balance decreased by approximately \$87,000.00 as well as 28 families for the month of August. Hoping this trend will continue to decrease in the balance and families who are subject to enforcement activities or who have a balance of \$51.00 or more. In the last 30 days RRHA has received approximately \$382,000.00 in rent relief funds for 191 households. Since the restart of lease enforcement RRHA has issued 166 late notices, filed 19 unlawful detainers and filed lease enforcement proceedings for 3 households. One has already taken place and the other two are scheduled to take place on September 13, 2022 and September 20, 2022. RRHA currently has 39 families that are on repayment agreements. Failure to respond or to go into a repayment agreement or make the account current will result in additional unlawful detainers being filed next month. However, no new 30-day lease termination notices will be issued for this month pending further communication and balance updates regarding access utilities which will be further discussed during this meeting.

### **2. Excess Utilities**

SVP Green provided an overview of excess utilities that is defined as the amount by which utilities in a particular month exceed the established utility allowance for that particular month. The amount of the utility allowance shall be equal to the estimate of the

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monthly cost of the reasonable consumption of utilities for the unit by an energy-conservative household of modes circumstances sufficient to maintain the requirements of a safe, sanitary and healthful living environment. Tenant ledgers are the official record of all rents and other charges and payments in relation to a property that a tenant is renting. The Admission and Continued Occupancy Policies (ACOP) governs the public housing program. Chapter 9, page 106-107, states that units where RRHA pays the utilities will be charged for excess electricity utilities and that the charge shall be applied as specified in the lease.

SVP Green informed Code of Federal Regulations [24C.F.R. CHAPTER § 966.4(b) (2)] states that residents that are paying flat rent and in units that are individually metered will be charged for the excess utilities used above the allowable level. Each RRHA building has an individual meter with check meters for each unit that allows for the determination of electricity usage in each unit. A utility allowance was set based on a third-party study for each unit. A family is billed dollar for dollar only when more than the utility allowance is exceeded. The current payment sequence posts rent payments to rent, repayment agreements and other charges prior to post to excess utilities. This voluntary decision was a temporary solution while billing and ledger errors were being corrected to residents accounts. Though the process is now completed, many RRHA families have accrued access utility charges during this time that remain unpaid. There is an unpaid excess utilities balance of \$134,267.36 as of September 7, 2022. In an effort to assist the impacted families and to ensure the charges no not remain on their ledgers, RRHA will clear unpaid balances through the end of this calendar year. This if for any family currently living in public housing. Families will resume utility payments beginning with October charges that will be due in January 2023. Staff will work with families to ensure they understand that payments will restart at that time based on excess utility charges listed on their rent statement.

Commissioner Hardiman commended staff for the assistance provided to impacted residents.

Committee Member Carrington inquired about assistance for Creighton families using baseboard heat.

EVP General Counsel Titter informed that an appropriate credit has been calculated and credited to impacted families' accounts annually.

Commissioner Shelton inquired if rent relief payments have been used towards outstanding excess utility charges and if so, will the assistance now stop.

EVP Green informed any family receiving rent relief their excess utility costs will be forgiven as a bonus.

Committee Member Carrington inquired if this applies to families who have already paid their excess utility costs.

EVP Green informed the bonus only applies to families with outstanding balances and families that paid are commended for their efforts.

## **E. New Business**

### **3. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

SVP Green informed the quarterly updates regarding RRHA's key performance indicators will reflect how each one is individually performing. KPIs for Low Income Public Housing (LIPH) has a current collection status of 94% which is in large part due to rent relief efforts. Rent collections are continuing to increase and this is positive news because at one point it was down to 89%. KPIs for reexaminations is at 99%, excellent rating, because the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) standard is 98% which is the rating being recognized.

VP Smothers-Hargrove provided indicators for the Call Center, Tenant Selection and Housing Choice Voucher Program that included actual call volume, average wait and talk times, average abandonment as well as transferred calls. KPIs for Tenant Selection included

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wait list totals, wait pool totals, referrals (received and sent) for special programs and Project-Based Vouchers and wait list selection totals. KPIs for HCVP included the number of recertifications, Public and Indian Housing Information Center (PIC) reporting rate, voucher utilization and the number of leased voucher holders; update on special programs (budget authority and number leased); update on Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) that included authority number, number leased, number searching and utilization; update on Mainstream Authority included number leased, number searching and utilization; update on Emergency Housing Vouchers included authority number, number leased, number searching and utilization number; update on leasing indicates 355 voucher holders are currently searching for housing.

Mr. Nesmith inquired about the 54% utilization rate for Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV).

VP Smothers-Hargrove informed the EHV's are referral based and do not require a wait list. The referrals come from Continuum of Care (COC) which is the umbrella for all shelters throughout the City and a certain criteria has to be met. Currently 30 searches are underway, but many of those families have a hard time because some are sleeping on the streets. It takes additional time to get in touch with them as well as having all needed documents in place. Though these families are paired with housing navigators to assist them with their search, the inability to consistently reach them impacts the process.

Compliance Officer Trotter informed that a quality control sample of files are audited monthly, in accordance with Section Eight Management System (SEMAP) criteria, based on 14 program indicators; 77 hearings have been conducted this calendar year (53% of the agency's decision to deny, withdraw or cancel an application is upheld, while 47% of these decisions are overturned and applications reinstated). Reasonable Accommodation training is coordinated agency-wide; trainings have been offered by Virginia Fair Housing Office and US Consultants for this calendar year. Resident Councils are recognized in 5 of the 6 family communities; 2 of the senior communities have reinstated their councils and are now recognized; continuing to work with the Richmond Tenant Organization (RTO) to get the remaining councils recognized.

Mr. Nesmith inquired if RRHA is in total compliance with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regarding regulatory matters.

Compliance Officer Trotter informed RRHA is in compliance with all requirements of HUD regulations as it pertains to fair housing.

Mr. Nesmith inquired if RRHA is responsible for ensuring vendors that are performing work on the agency's behalf for public housing or HUD related matters are in compliance

Compliance Officer Trotter informed that RRHA is responsible for any vendors doing revitalization, rehabilitation and things of that nature must be compliant. RRHA has no violations of compliance in those areas. Language is in place for vendors as well to ensure that they are adhering to Fair Housing Americans with Disabilities Act in their work that they carry out as well as Section 504.

Commissioner Shelton inquired about the turnaround time for handling reasonable accommodation work orders.

Compliance Officer Trotter informed such work orders are handled as priority one and that there is a 24-hour turnaround time. If there is an issue with equipment and or supplies the turnaround time is 72 hours tops. The reasonable timeframe for emergency Section 504 related work orders would be a 24-hour timeframe. Unit modifications, ramp installations, walk-in shower rehab does take longer because a contractor is involved. HUD does not define a reasonable time for unit transfers though the effort is made to complete within a 30–45-day timeframe based on availability.

Commissioner Shelton inquired if contractors are readily available or does the bid process have to occur.

SVP Green informed it is not always necessary to put out a bid to provide services because contractors are already under contract that can be used. It depends on the request. If it is something outside of what a contracted contractor can do and depending on the cost,

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would determine if it is necessary to put out a bid. Every effort is made to use contractors in place in to adhere to the established timeframes.

Committee Member Carrington inquired who should be contacted if an accommodation is not being performed within a reasonable timeframe.

SVP Green informed the Management Office should be contacted first and then elevated to Charles Williams if necessary.

VP Stuckey informed Resident Services' goal is to lead families to self-sufficiency. The four major areas to achieve this are education, job training, employment and quality of life. RRHA has invested in developing a software management system in which case management can be done. The primary mission is to conduct assessments on all families and elderly residents. Leading Individual Families to Self-Sufficiency (LIFTS) assessments have been conducted and there is a tracking plan to conclude the assessments within in 2 years. Another part of the assessment includes referrals that are made to partners and other organizations which indicate most residents are seeking more training and employment opportunities. KPIs for completed to date LIFTS/elderly assessments is 1,519; 613 referrals for education/employment/jobs training-careers for residents. KPIs for Family Self-Sufficiency 76 families are currently participating in the program.

VP Harrison informed KPIs for Public Safety include creating or reinvigorating community care events similar to what the Richmond Police Department (RPD) is doing with their popup events less the heavy law enforcement. Rebuilding relationships within all RRHA communities that will include walks in an effort to ensure each resident is aware of available services within the City. These community walks will include representation from RRHA's various partners. A goal has been set to attend 24 community meetings in an effort to reestablish communication with the residents, address their concerns and facilitate safe living environment. Public Safety staff will attend at least one Resident Council meeting, per community, per quarter. Increasing resident and employee safety perception in a more positive light is also a priority. This is obtainable by ensuring more visible police patrolling, having both RRHA and RPD representation at community meetings as well as hosting and participating in community events. Yet another priority is reducing violent crimes, particularly homicides, which can be accomplished by way of citizen awareness, the crime tipline and safety visibility. Banning nuisances from RRHA properties is another goal while RPD will focus on deal with criminal acts.

Mr. Nesmith informed that he would follow up to discuss the issue around public safety and his desire to bring back community policing.

## **F. Next Meeting**

October 12, 2022, 9:30 a.m.

## **G. Closing Remarks**

Commissioner Shelton recognized Steven Nesmith, RRHA's incoming Chief Executive Officer, officially onboarding October 3, 2022.

Mr. Nesmith informed that he is looking forward to working with everyone and will be front and center in working on specific issues.

Commissioner Shelton thanked Interim CEO Hill-Christian for her wealth of knowledge regarding the residents and the agency.

Interim CEO Hill-Christian conveyed her appreciation and that it has been her pleasure.

Mr. Nesmith informed that Interim CEO Hill-Christian has been working extraordinarily hard during this transition.

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Commissioner Shelton commended Mr. Nesmith for working diligently and unofficially since the announcement of his hiring.

Commissioner Pitchford commended the work effort of staff, Interim CEO Hill-Christian and Mr. Nesmith and the leadership of Commissioner Shelton.