

MINUTES
BROWN COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY
Monday, March 16, 2015, 3:00 p.m.
City Hall, 100 N. Jefferson Street, Room 604
Green Bay, WI 54301

MEMBERS: Tom Diedrick—Chair, Ann Hartman—Vice Chair, Corday Goddard, and Adam DeKeyser

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Sup. Andy Nicholson

OTHERS PRESENT: Robyn Hallet, Kim Flom, Stephanie Schmutzer, Matt Roberts, Patrick Leifker, Nicole Tiedt, Sadie DiNatale, Wendy Townsend, Courtney Ayala, Adam Groskrevtz, Robert McCormick, Victoria Parmentier, Patrick Faulds, and Mike Beal

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Approval of the minutes from the February 16, 2015 meeting of the Brown County Housing Authority.

A. DeKeyser made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 16, 2015, meeting of the Brown County Housing Authority. C. Goddard seconded. Motion carried.

COMMUNICATIONS:

None

REPORTS:

2. Report on Housing Choice Voucher Rental Assistance Program:

A. Preliminary Applicants

P. Leifker reported that ICS collected 81 preliminary applications for the month of February 2015.

Due to a change in staff at ICS, a report out on unit counts, housing assistance payments, and program activity was not conducted for the month of March. These reports will be reviewed per usual at the April 2015 meeting.

B. Housing Quality Standard Inspection Compliance

P. Leifker reported that 217 units passed the first evaluation, 56 passed re-evaluation, 84 failed, and there were 29 no-shows.

C. Goddard commented that these numbers look positive and asked if there have been trends that can be tracked that contributed to these improved numbers. M. Roberts responded that ICS has been unable to identify what has contributed to these improved numbers. He explained that ICS recently held a landlord meeting, but that was too recently to have affected these numbers. They will continue to monitor this for any trends.

R. Hallet expressed that it's good to see a lowered no-show rate.

C. Family Self-Sufficiency Program (client count, escrow accounts, graduates, participation levels, new contracts, homeownership)

N. Tiedt reported that there were 75 active participants for February of 2015. Regarding participation levels there were 48 participants in level one, 15 participants in level two, eight participants in level three and four participants in level four. There were three new contracts

signed in February of 2015. There were no graduations in February of 2015. For escrow accounts, there are 37 open accounts. There are 59 homeowners on the program.

D. VASH Reports (active VASH, new VASH)

N. Tiedt reported that there were three new VASH Voucher recipients in February of 2015, and there were a total of 25 active VASH voucher holders.

E. Langan Investigations Criminal Background Screening and Fraud Investigations

P. Leifker reported that in February of 2015, there were five new investigations assigned, three previous investigations closed, and five investigations remain active. There were 73 new applications sent over to Langan for background checks in which 72 were approved and one was denied.

The charts of fraud investigations by municipality and the initial applications by municipality were displayed.

OLD BUSINESS:

3. Discussion and approval of revision to Chapter 17 (Project Based Vouchers) of Administrative Plan

R. Hallet explained that this agenda item was brought to the Authority's attention last month and was approved. However since that time, there arose a new opportunity to incorporate the BCHA's preference for Brown County residents into the waiting list for veterans applying to live at Veteran's Manor.

R. Hallet stated the proposed preference order for veterans would be 1) Brown County resident veterans referred by Center for Veteran Issues (CVI), 2) Brown County resident veterans not referred by CVI, 3) Veterans of other counties referred by CVI, and 4) Veterans of other counties not referred by CVI. R. Hallet then introduced some additional individuals from Center for Veterans Issues (CVI), Cardinal Capital, and RE Management who had attended the meeting to answer any questions that may arise before action is made.

C. Goddard asked if CVI was a Brown County organization. M. Beal introduced himself as the Director of Veteran Services at CVI and stated that CVI is based out of Milwaukee but covers over 30 counties in Wisconsin, including Brown County. The organization has worked specifically with Brown County veterans for about three years.

C. Goddard asked if there are any concerns in which the board should be made aware of. M. Beal stated that all the parties involved had a meeting recently in which these tiers were established and everyone was in agreement with them. He added that there has been a lot of interest expressed in the property and everyone is excited about it.

T. Diedrick expressed that he felt it was appropriate that the second preference be given to Brown County residents not referred by CVI.

C. Goddard made a motion to approve the revision made to Chapter 17 of the Administrative Plan which was seconded by A. DeKeyser. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

4. Discussion and approval of revisions to Chapter 4 (Waiting List and Tenant Selection) of Administrative Plan.

T. Diedrick introduced the next order of business which was a revision made to Chapter 4 (Waiting List and Tenant Selection) of the Administrative Plan.

A. DeKeyser stated that the proposed revision appears to be exactly the same as the original language except that “families or homeless resident with children in household” is removed. R. Hallet confirmed this and stated that it was realized that this issue is broader than solely families with children; there are also individuals and couples who are homeless that do not have children in their household. These homeless individuals or couples have just as much of a need to be housed urgently. Accordingly, this is the root reason why this change has been proposed for the Authority’s approval.

A. DeKeyser asked if the proposed wording of “or is homeless” covers the broader bucket of homelessness which was confirmed by R. Hallet.

C. Goddard asked, with all things being considered equal, that if there was somebody in an urgent situation without children and there was somebody in the same situation with children, if there would be no priority in place for the family with children. R. Hallet confirmed that this was accurate. M. Roberts explained that with the current preferences, for a single person who is homeless it may be years before they can receive a voucher. Further, based on ICS’s statistics changing this preference would not inhibit any person with a child from being housed in a timely manner. To explain further, this preference would assist homeless individuals or couples without disadvantaging homeless families with children.

K. Flom stated that the BCHA does have the capacity to serve these people and there would probably not be a situation in which the Authority would have to decide between a homeless individual and a homeless family with child/children. Instead, it would just move all homeless cases up the preference ladder.

T. Diedrick stated that this clarification was important and expressed whether the revised statement was clear. R. Hallet stated the confusion from the client’s perspective existed in the way the preference was previously written. For instance, the preference only gave priority to families (with children) who were homeless leaving a homeless individual or couple to question why they did not receive a preference.

A. DeKeyser asked what happens if or when the Authority has to decide between housing a homeless individual or a homeless family with children. P. Leifker stated that at this point, the proposed preference would not benefit either case over the other and in fact this category also includes individuals who are elderly, disabled, or are veterans. To explain, if there were a homeless family with children and a homeless individual both seeking a voucher, the determining factor would be when each application was submitted.

R. Hallet additionally stated that as new issues arise, the language of this preference is in the Authority’s discretion to change or modify. C. Goddard asked why we would change this rule knowing that there may come a day where we would change it back. M. Roberts explained that the purpose of the proposed language is to ensure that homeless individuals are receiving a preference. Without the revision homeless individuals are being put on the singles list where it takes years for them to be served. Thus, there is a population of homeless individuals in Brown County who are not able to get served unless they have children. M. Roberts went on to state that R. Hallet didn’t mean to convey we would change this rule and then change in back, on the contrary she expressed that the Authority always has the luxury to change or adjust the Administrative Plan.

K. Flom stated that her interpretation of this is not that we would change the rule back but that there could be some added language that would establish extended priorities. Perhaps this would be a third preference, for example.

A. DeKeyser commented on the language asking if it would be possible to just add to the already existing language as opposed to rewriting the language. M. Roberts stated that the purpose is just

to address each preference on an even playing field so either way the language accomplishes the same thing.

N. Tiedt asked for confirmation if A. DeKeyser would just like to see homeless families with children recognized in the language alongside homelessness (which was intended as a blanket for anyone who is homeless). A. DeKeyser confirmed this. P. Leifker stated that he had no qualms about this as the language would still read appropriately and accomplish the same thing.

P. Leifker reread a possible revision of the proposed language to state, "Brown County resident elderly, disabled, veteran, families, homeless residents with children in the household, or any other homeless residents." The original proposed revision of "Brown County resident who is Elderly, Disabled, a Veteran or is Homeless" would be removed.

C. Goddard made a motion to approve the rewritten revision which was seconded by A. DeKeyser. Motion carried.

5. Discussion and possible action regarding request from Gorman & Company to use Project Based Vouchers at their proposed development.

R. Hallet explained that Gorman & Company is proposing a very exciting project in which the BCHA has the opportunity to be a part of. Currently Gorman & Company are requesting the use of ten Project Based Vouchers at their proposed development at 201 W. Walnut, Green Bay, WI; the former ICS building.

R. Hallet summarized that Gorman & Company's proposal is to redevelop this property into 39 units, which would have a mix of one, two and three bedrooms and it would also have mixed income of residents. They are requesting to project base the ten one-bedroom 30% of County Median Income units.

As this point in the process, Gorman & Company is waiting to hear from WEDA about their application requesting Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) in which they expect to find out if their proposal is approved in mid-April. If they are approved, the ability to project base ten vouchers would be essential to their project. Definitive approval by the Authority for project basing the units is not needed at this time; however, Gorman & Company would need to know relatively quickly if the Authority is not interested in putting project based vouchers here as they would need to find alternatives to fill this gap.

K. Flom asked if project based vouchers for this particular project would need to go out for RFP. R. Hallet stated that an RFP would not be required. She reiterated that the regulations allow for two ways for units to be accepted for project basing. One way is by going out for RFP, which the Authority has traditionally done; the other avenue is that if units were competitively bid under another process for federal, state or local funding, which is the case with WHEDA's LIHTC program, then an RFP is not necessary.

T. Diedrick asked if this project was strictly for Veterans, as referenced on the summary sheet. K. Flom stated that it was not but Veterans would receive a preference. W. Townsend, from the Economic Development Department, stated that there will be some services on the first floor specifically targeted to Veterans which explains the preference for Veterans. She explained that the developer is partnering with Lutheran Social Services to provide these services. She further explained that this project addresses various scenarios of what needs could be, including larger units, smaller units, various income ranges, veterans or non-veterans, etc.

R. Hallet offered to share other information which the Authority may find useful: She stated that the census tract in which this property is located is currently at a 20.7 percent poverty rate. The Administrative Plan states that generally the Authority would not provide project based vouchers in a

census tract with a poverty rate of over 20 percent unless there are other opportunities that exist for economic or housing development. This is the case here. The property is within the On Broadway District which is undergoing extensive development and revitalization. Additionally, the regulations allow for an exception if the poverty rate in the census tract has been decreasing, which it has been here: In 2000, the poverty rate of this census tract was 21.8 and now it is slightly better at 20.7 percent. Further, there are other market rate units that have recently been developed in this census tract, specifically Platten Place apartments, of which 80% are market rate. There was a waiting list for those units before the rehab was finished, demonstrating that there is interest in downtown housing. Furthermore, the Mayor had set a goal of adding 250 units of downtown housing, so this would help achieve that goal. R. Hallet stated she also considered the voucher concentration in this census tract. Currently, there are 55 units or 1.92 percent of the Authority's vouchers used in this census tract. By comparison the average for the City of Green Bay is 2.52 percent so this census tract is already lower than the average for Green Bay.

C. Goddard asked what the next step was. K. Flom stated that this was brought to the table at this time for the Authority to discuss it and ask questions. Staff wanted to make sure to bring this to the Authority's attention early enough that they could get all the information they needed to make an informed decision. It's the Authority's decision if they would like to take action today or not.

R. Hallet commented that A. Nicholson was unable to make it to today's meeting but was interested in this agenda item as well. It was conveyed to him that depending on today's action, this item may come back next month.

T. Diedrick requested that we may place this item on next month's agenda to give A. Nicholson an opportunity to comment.

C. Goddard expressed his opinion that this project looks like a good thing, so he didn't know why the Authority wouldn't support it.

A. DeKeyser expressed that although this project would be an improvement to the current condition of the property, the Authority's focus has been on deconcentration, but this wouldn't help accomplish that.

C. Goddard asked how these additional vouchers would change the voucher percentage. R. Hallet responded that an additional ten vouchers may bump the percentage up closer to what the City average is.

A. Hartman asked if there is enough demand for this type of housing. R. Hallet stated that it was conveyed to her by the president of Gorman & Company that they had no concerns over whether there would be demand. Additionally, when speaking with Cardinal Capital in regards to Veteran's Manor, they also did not have any concern with being able to fill up their building. Nevertheless, even if there are not enough Veterans conveying interest in living downtown at this new development, Gorman & Company would still accept other demographics of low-income means.

The Authority made the decision to table action until the April 2015 meeting.

INFORMATIONAL:

6. Status of Audit by Office of Inspector General

R. Hallet updated the Authority that the Survey Phase of the Audit has been concluded. The official report has not been received but a verbal report had been given which was very positive. There were two areas with some level of concern but they are unsure if this concern is important enough to move on to the Audit phase. These two areas were File Reviews and use of Administrative Fees. Nevertheless, it was conveyed to R. Hallet by the auditor that BCHA is one of the best run programs that the Auditor had seen in a long time.

R. Hallet stated that she will convey the final report to the Authority once it's received.

BILLS:

S. Schmutzer reported that there were only five checks going out for the month of February of 2015. These were to the City of Green Bay (for general expenses—postage, printing, etc.), to the Green Bay Housing Authority (for TRIP administration and WAHA Conference costs), to Nikki Gerhard (for mileage), to Stephanie Schmutzer (for mileage), and to VandeCastle (for legal fraud case costs).

S. Schmutzer stated that she would email the Authority a full report.

A motion was made to approve the bills of February, 2015, by A. Hartman which was seconded by A. DeKeyser. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

7. Report on unaudited financial from Fiscal Year End December 31, 2014

S. Schmutzer reported that the Unaudited Financial Statement was submitted to HUD. There were no changes to any sections but there were some adjustments made to Section 52 which did not change the total outcome.

As for the regular financial statements, S. Schmutzer reported that there was nothing of concern or out of the ordinary. One thing to point out was that in two months, quite a bit of fraud money has already been collected which is great news.

STAFF REPORT:

T. Diedrick added an item under staff report regarding Request for Proposals for administering the Housing Choice Voucher Program specifically if it relates to setting up a timeline.

C. Goddard asked how much time is typically needed. R. Hallet stated that it is hard to estimate how much time would be required because this is the first time the BCHA has administered an RFP of this kind.

A discussion took place of possible timelines. R. Hallet conveyed what was discussed stating that a completed RFP draft would be brought to the June's BCHA meeting for comments and possible revisions. After revisions have been made the RFP would be publically posted in July with a response deadline 30 days after it was published (August). An RFP selection committee would score the responses. Scores would be sent to commissioners for a decision to be made at the September BCHA meeting. If ICS is not chosen, the new organization would transition into their new role in October through December.

A. DeKeyser asked ICS if this is an adequate amount of time to reply to an RFP of this kind. M. Roberts stated that ICS would be able to respond within the 30 days without question. Whether or not another organization would be able to is not their place to say.

K. Flom stated that there is also nothing stopping the committee from holding a special meeting if there are extensive changes needed.

T. Diedrick also stated that a preliminary notice of intent could be sent out ahead of time.

S. Schmutzer stated that if this is an organization's business, 30 days should be ample time to complete this RFP.

R. Hallet stated that she was in favor of the idea of a preliminary notice of the RFP.

K. Flom stated that we would type up the process as a memo and bring it back for the next month's meeting under informational.

R. Hallet added another item under staff report regarding a proposed rule for several streamlining administrative changes to the program, which includes not just HCV but the FSS program and Public Housing as well. Within the proposed rule there is a section that could allow for re-inspection fees. We will wait to see if this proposed rule becomes final.

T. Diedrick asked if it is open for comments. R. Hallet stated that the comment phase has already passed.

Commissioners expressed happiness at seeing this become a possibility.

A. DeKeyser asked another question regarding the RFP, questioning if it is a regulation or policy that we go out for RFP every so often. T. Diedrick responded that this is something this Authority decided to do.

T. Diedrick asked what the timeframe for contract would be and suggested five years. R. Hallet's thoughts were that five years may be too short. M. Roberts stated that a new contract with ICS was established in 2006, which was for six years, taking us to 2012, at which time the one year renewal was approved, followed by the two year renewal with the stipulation that the Authority go to RFP upon the expiration of that contract. He stated that while reading through the materials, he found nothing indicating there was anything set regarding what the duration would be going forward. T. Diedrick stated that this is not something we want to be doing every couple of years: we want to develop or maintain a relationship with the provider. R. Hallet stated it could be set up in the same way in which the BCHA and ICS have been managing it, with an initial period followed by renewal options.

8. Date of next meeting: April 20, 2015

A. Hartman stated that she will probably be unable to attend the April 2015 BCHA Meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:03 pm.

sd:rah:jd