

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF THE MOLINE HOUSING AUTHORITY**

May 17, 2021

The regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Moline Housing Authority was held at 5:30 PM via teleconferencing due to COVID-19.

Board members present were Chairperson David Parker, Jr., Jay McCowan, Chuck Capan, and Leslie Stange-Crotty. Staff members present were Executive Director John Afoun and Recording Secretary Maria Nino. Board Counsel, Kat Williams and Trevor Grogg were in attendance.

1. **Call to Order:** Chairperson David Parker, Jr. called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
2. **Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 19, 2021:** Minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 19, 2021 were reviewed. Motion was made, and seconded, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 19, 2021, as presented. All voting members present voting "aye", none against; the Chairperson declared the motion carried.
3. **Executive Director's Report:** Verbal report provided by Mr. John Afoun.

Mr. Afoun stated he had collected information and did an investigation on our debt recovery. We use Sunrise as the collection agency and last year the board approved us to register with the Illinois Debt Recovery program. He talked about how much has been collected since 2011 with Sunrise as well as went over how much has been collected during the past year. Commissioner Stange-Crotty asked a question on if the accounts are the same ones between Sunrise and the Illinois Debt Recovery and Mr. Afoun responded some are the same. Vice-Chairperson McCowan mentioned that the state has a better recovery rate than Sunrise. Mr. Afoun said it is because they are using their statutory power.

a. Resolution #978:

Resolution #978 was to approve/authorize the SEMAP Certification. All voting members present voting "aye", none against, the Chairperson declared the motion carried unanimously.

Resolution #979:

Resolution #979 was to approve/authorize the Bad Debt Write Offs. All voting members present voting "aye", none against, the Chairperson declared the motion carried unanimously.

- b. Approval of Financial Report:** Mr. Afoun stated that the auditor was not able to send the information to the fee accountant on time and subsequently they have not been able to present the April finances. Mr. Afoun said she has been working with us for a while and provides an independent assessment of our finances. Vice-Chairperson McCowan suggested we reach out to NAHRO, PHADA, or someone else out there to find other debt collection agencies. He wants us to do another RFP and send directly to other debt collection agencies.
- c. Section 8 Report:** The Board reviewed the Section 8 Report as presented. Mr. Afoun said that we have 579 applicants at the moment and 207 people all together in the program. We have a bit of money in the HAP balance subject to

the information from the fee accountant. We are planning to issue more vouchers. Chairperson Parker, Jr. asked how many more vouchers and Mr. Afoun responded 10 more. Vice-Chairperson McCowan asked do we have landlords. Mr. Afoun responded since the pandemic we have not had people moving and not run into a situation where there has been a shortage of landlords. We feel people should be able to have enough landlords to handle the new vouchers we plan to issue. Commissioner Stange-Crotty said when you have houses that are being purchased that doesn't necessarily mean they are going to be owner occupied.

- d. **Public Housing Report:** The Board reviewed the Public Housing Report as presented. There was a report for each AMP as well as one showing the information for both AMPs combined. This report gives a data analysis to track and report the statistics to the Board.

The biggest challenge we are facing are the number of vacant units as well as the rent arrears situation. As of April we are at 91% occupied and we are supposed to be at 95%. We are confident that at the end of next month we will be closer to that figure. We have created a new spreadsheet as to why people are moving out, which will be included in your board packet in the future. Most of the reasons are due to purchasing homes. Vice-Chairperson McCowan asked the ones that were leased during the month are those new people coming in. Mr. Afoun responded that three were transfers and five were new people. Some people have been on the transfer list for a long time and we are required by law to transfer them. Vice-Chairperson McCowan said his pet peeve is a consistent problem which is people don't show up for appointments and things of that nature. We have been treading water on this, he understands COVID. What is our plan to get out of this and who's responsibility is it? Mr. Afoun said that we have a painting contractor and general contractor as well as four temp workers to help with unit turnaround. The other issue is people accepting the units. We have purged the waiting list and we are accepting new people who are ready and wanting to accept housing. We are confident that the people who will be calling in now are ready to move in and we are hoping that will change the dynamics. Vice-Chairperson McCowan asked whose responsibility is it to call these people. Mr. Afoun responded the property manager and assistant property manager. Commissioner Stange-Crotty said Mr. Afoun has had people call and plan for meetings and then they don't come. Mr. Afoun stated when you call them they don't show up, you send letter and they don't respond. We took the view the strategy forward is to purge the waiting list, remove all that did not respond and now all waiting lists are open for all sites. We are confident these applicants have the need and will respond. Vice-Chairperson McCowan asked how we created the waiting list. Mr. Afoun said we open the waiting list and people apply online and they respond. Vice-Chairperson McCowan asked did we not do this last year? Mr. Afoun responded we did not. Vice-Chairperson McCowan said he has a hard time believing that nobody shows up and there has to be another reason. Mr. Afoun said the ones that show up are not accepting the units. Commissioner Stange-Crotty asked if the issue has to do with the down payment. Mr. Afoun said that is not the issue, it is having people show up and not accepting the units. Vice-Chairperson McCowan said he is not happy with Mr. Afoun's response and is not satisfied. He said he will be calling Mr. Afoun to discuss further issues he has with this process.

Pest control was discussed. Mr. Afoun stated that we have made tremendous progress. As of today there are zero bedbugs and only five roach units. We are on top of it. He wants to commend the maintenance department and the pest control person, Mr. Rick Lovett. We are confident that the roaches too will be

zero. As you know roaches are even found in palaces, but our goal is to eliminate them. Mr. Lovett is doing a phenomenal job. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said be sure to thank Mr. Lovett and whoever else on the team is involved for doing a great job.

- e. **Development/Maintenance Reports:** The Board reviewed the Capital Funds & Maintenance Progress Report, which showed current and future projects. The report also addressed work orders which had all been completed for the month.

Mr. Afoun stated that we have no current projects, we are proposing the contract that has the items listed here. We met with architect and discussed it and the directive that the board gave. Mr. Afoun signed the order to proceed today. The architect's lead period is 30 to 45 days by the time it is for the bid package to be ready. Vice-Chairperson McCowan asked when the next REAC inspection is anticipated. Mr. Afoun said they will be concentrating on low performers and we are above that. He said our motto is "be REAC Ready at all times." He feels it is unlikely we will receive an inspection this year. Vice-Chairperson McCowan said maybe three or four of the items listed would affect our REAC score. Mr. Afoun said HUD put it out that they would focus on those with scores of 60 or less. Vice-Chairperson McCowan said let's not back off. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said he is looking at the peach sheet and talks about projects showing spring valley streets. Mr. Afoun said it shouldn't be here on the list as the City of Moline engineering office said it belongs to them. He said he is still working on getting something in writing from the City on this.

Work orders were discussed as well as the capital funds. Vice-Chairperson McCowan asked Mr. Afoun to provide him with the documentation of what exactly was paid out with that \$10,000 that was paid out of Capital Funds.

- f. **FSS Report:** Mr. Afoun gave an update on the program including the number of people who have signed up to date. Mr. Afoun said we should be going out shortly to issue the press release for the successful FSS participant. She has agreed to come talk to other participants to let them know how good the program is.

Mr. Afoun said that some senior staff participated in HUD's program for cyber security training, which was provided by HUD and was free. Vice-Chairperson McCowan asked who takes care of our cyber security here. Mr. Afoun said Platinum does. Chairperson Parker, Jr. asked if we have insurance for cyber security. Mr. Afoun responded he is not sure but we do have standard insurance. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said that the City does have that and we should since we handle a lot of money here. Vice-Chairperson McCowan asked do we have any non-MHA computers connected to our internet that are used for other purposes. Mr. Afoun responded said absolutely not, there are no non-MHA computers connected to our servers.

Mr. Afoun stated that most of the staff and he believes majority of tenants have been vaccinated as well. We hope to open the office fully next month.

Vice-Chairperson McCowan asked what our plans are to use the rest of the CARES Act funds. Mr. Afoun said most housing authorities are using it for resident initiatives. He said we gave gift certificates for Section 8 and a lot of people did not show up. Our goal is to spend everything by the end of the year. Vice-Chairperson McCowan wants something sent to the board as far as how much money is left for CARES Act and what our plans are to spend this money on.

Mr. Afoun said that he meets with HUD to review our operations every month and for the past 12 months there have been no major concerns from them.

4. Resident Advisory Board (RAB) Report: Verbal report provided by Ms. Kat Williams.

Mr. Afoun introduced the newest RAB board member, Kat Williams. As the board directed him last time to actively pursue new RAB members he did. Kat Williams is a resident of Spring Valley. He invited her to attend this meeting.

Ms. Williams stated she goes by Kat or Katherine. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said we are really excited to have you on board. If you could tell us a little about yourself and what your thoughts are and how you feel you could be of service and impact of your new position. Ms. Williams stated she is currently a student at WIU, a communications major and she graduated from Black Hawk College with an associate in December of last year with a focus on public policy and advocacy. She is all about working low income housing. Her big focus is sexual education in public schools. She has a 25-year-old child, who is getting married soon. Her sister and nephew live on the edge of Spring Brook. She was formally NIT and worked as a freelance writer for many years. That is part of what she brings to us. She knows a fair amount of IT and bringing IT to nonprofit associations. She has worked for several nonprofits and arranged their annual conferences and handled events. She is good at administration, organizing, looking for ways for people to come up with things to do, and fairly smooth transitions. She hopes to lend her skillset to that. Chairperson Parker, Jr. looks forward to working with her and appreciates the energy she brings to this. Ms. Williams has taken notes and ideas on how to get broad feedback from tenants. Everyone introduced themselves to Ms. Williams. Commissioner Stange-Crotty said she is happy Ms. Williams is joining us and likes the background she has. Commissioner Capan is very impressed with the new RAB member and feels she is infinitely qualified for the position. Vice-Chairperson McCowan welcomed Ms. Williams to the board and said he is looking forward to her expertise and background. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said he also has a son who will be starting at WIU for his masters in the fall. He asked her to please get with Mr. Afoun to get our personal contact information. Everyone on the board has a tremendous history of working on the board and would be happy to help you.

Chairperson Parker, Jr. said he mentioned he was going to contact the Mayor regarding reappointments. She is swamped with a thousand things and would reach out in a couple weeks. He will be reaching out again soon. He still wants to get Mr. Afoun introduced to the new Mayor and City Administrator once one is appointed. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said that Commissioner Fox was not going to be able to be here today. Commissioner Fox based on activities that took place a couple weeks ago would like to see a police presence at the housing authority. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said it is not in our budget at this time but that he would bring this up on her behalf.

Commissioner Stange-Crotty said the thing is that she was on the commission when we did have a police presence. It ended up being two individuals that were on two different shifts. She doesn't believe that there was very much impact compared to now. She said we have a relatively safe environment. She is not for spending money on a police presence because we have a good relationship with them and have drive throughs all the time. Vice-Chairperson McCowan said it is cost prohibitive. As long as we follow our policies and stay on top of things as they occur we will be good. Everyone needs to do their job and start holding people accountable on things. Commissioner Capan said he was on the board when we had the police. As we transitioned them out it was budgetary more than anything. While they were here he made it a point to drive through the housing authority multiple times a day different times of the day and he never once saw the police on our property. We never knew when they were on duty or what they were doing. We had an office for them and they were not there. Vice-Chairperson McCowan asked were they being paid to be here or was it a

substation. Mr. Afoun stated that initially we had a drug regulation grant for the police and after that we kept paying for that and paid for it out of operations until we could no longer sustain the cost.

Mr. Afoun said that in terms of police presence, the issues are more neighbor fights, disputes, etc. than anything else. Our admissions policy has us do landlord reference, credit reference, and criminal reference. Mr. Afoun is the one who gives them final approval. When they come in they get in fights, etc., but it is relatively low crime here. What we can do is continue to develop our relationship with the police department so we work closer. If we can have a liaison where we meet with them once a week or once every other week so we are on the same page so we can let them know trouble spots and they can let us know what is going on that would be helpful.

Ms. Williams asked if this is concerning spring brook or spring valley. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said Commissioner Fox just mentioned she felt we needed to have a police presence. Ms. Williams said she has been in QC entire life and until moving in here she lived across from Alleman. She agrees this is a remarkably safe community compared to when she was growing up. Mr. Trevor Grogg said as to the thing that happened with all that fighting that MHA needs to tighten up the admissions to get in here as much as you legally can. I've seen some people come in here that I wouldn't let live in my dog's house. We do need a stronger police presence and we can accomplish that if they would drive through once in a while. He only sees police cars drive through an average 1 or 2 times per week and he is up all hours of the day and night. We need them to patrol a couple times per shift. Chairperson Parker, Jr. thanked Mr. Grogg for his input. He said when he and Mr. Afoun talk to the Mayor they may be able reach out to the police chief. Vice-Chairperson McCowan said chief is good with community reach out.

Chairperson Parker, Jr. asked if we ever get information on things that might be happening at the schools with our student residents. Mr. Afoun responded no we do not have that formal relationship with the school here where they provide us with information. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said he is guessing the students that live in our complex are either attending Washington, Wilson, or MHS. MHS and Wilson already has a police officer, so we just need to formalize that relationship and get that information coming to us then it would just be a situation with getting information from Washington. This could be very good information for us to have. Kids disputes oftentimes turn into adult disputes. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said more than once every other week or month he wants to know as soon as it is happening. Commissioner Stange-Crotty said it may be a privacy issue. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said be proactive rather than reactive when it comes to issues involving children. He did not feel we did everything we could to make it a safe and loving environment for all the rest of our residents. Vice-Chairperson McCowan said the ball got dropped and was pretty ticked off about it. Someone sat on their hands, he doesn't know who. If we just follow our own policies and do our jobs a lot of this can be headed off and hold people accountable. Review our policies and make sure we are going to follow our policies.

Vice-Chairperson McCowan read through the document stating everything that happened during the incident that was sent to the commissioners twice and made some notes. He said we can have that deeper discussion about it later. Commissioner Stange-Crotty said she wants a copy of that report. Mr. Afoun stated that everyone said everyone got it. She then asked for that to be sent out again. Ms. Williams asked for a copy of this report as well. Chairperson Parker, Jr. asked Attorney Remus if under the employment closed session, we would be able to discuss this all. It would be performance is what Chairperson Parker, Jr. said. Attorney Remus should be included in any closed session. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said he thinks we should have a look at our processes and figure out what we can do differently. Vice-Chairperson McCowan, Commissioner Stange-Crotty, and Commissioner Capan all said they are interested. A special board meeting is scheduled for June 7th at 5:30pm. Chairperson Parker, Jr. and Mr. Afoun will get together later this week to give ideas

as to what they are looking for. If anyone wants to talk to Mr. Afoun to give him ideas as to what they are looking for please reach out to him directly.

5. Any other business that may come before the Board including comments from the general public:

Mr. Trevor Gross stated that he has a list he would like to go over. First off he is very upset of the fact that there is no flag flying out front. A month and a half ago Mr. Afoun was requested to take it down because it was torn and tattered and it is an insult to have it up like that. He is very offended there is not a flag up there due to family members in the armed forces. He believes there was even a congressional medal of honor recipient who grew up in Spring Brook. His other thing is the percentage of vacancies. He thinks these guys are doing pretty good if they are hitting 10% or less. He stated that a banker wants to see over 50% to 75% occupied and therefore they are doing good. Chairperson Parker, Jr. said he appreciates his feedback, but we have to base it on HUD's requirements. Mr. Grogg then stated the next thing is we redid roads and did the curbs. The curbs are about 3 inches higher than the grass and we need to backfill due to the trip hazard. He further stated that it is upsetting we went and cut all those trees down but couldn't repair any of the damage left on the rest of the grounds. We deserve nice looking yards like the front has. Next, Mr. Grogg said that we got \$75,000 in CARES Act funds and we were told we were going to get Walmart gift cards. He wants to know where they are at. Mr. Afoun said the gift cards are for Section 8. We said we were going to give laundry cards to public housing residents. The only reason we haven't given the cards out yet is because we are waiting for the new laundry cards to be given out for that to happen. Mr. Grogg argued that the initial flyer didn't say anything about laundry cards. It said \$25 out to residents for Walmart when they received the flyer. He still has not received his rent bill for December 2020 and he wants it. Those are things he wants taken care of. He wants to have the \$25 Walmart card, not a laundry card. He cannot be in the laundry room because there is no restroom and he has an issue with anxiety. Commissioner Stange-Crotty said we are going to have a discussion as to how we are going to use the rest of that money anyway.

6. Adjournment:

There being no further business, a motion was made, and seconded, to adjourn the meeting. All voting members present voting "aye", none against; the Chairperson declared the meeting adjourned at 6:59 P.M.

David Parker, Jr., Chairperson