

Housing Authority of the City of Laredo
Regular Board of Commissioners Meeting
Conference Ph. No. 1-866-866-2244 Code: 214750#

Zoom Video Link:

<https://zoom.us/j/677683935?pwd=blkzMFY4WGIVRHRpUThNVWRsakszQT09>

LHA Board Room

2000 San Francisco Ave.

Laredo, Texas 78040

Monday, March 30, 2020

1:00 P.M.

NOTE: Due to recent COVID-19 health concerns, this meeting will be held by telephonic/video conferencing and the public may join via conference call number or via website provided above.

A-20-R-2

Minutes

March 30, 2020

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Chairman Ceballos called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Chairman Ceballos led them in the recital of the pledge and stated that he acknowledges today's reality of social distancing and everybody observing good practices to keep us safe and mentioned that he was trying to avoid having a Board meeting, but it is required to have one due to having to submit the approved budget to HUD though he suspects that they would be kind to understand if they did not.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they have few items and stated that he asked the Commissioners to look at the items beforehand and mentioned that the meeting would go as long as the Board would want it to go; it could go quickly or it could go in detail; it would be up to them and then asked Ms. Mata to do roll call.

3. **ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM** Ms. Alma Mata, Executive Director, proceeded with roll call and stated that there was a quorum. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez would join them by zoom as well as Mary Gaona, LHA Consultant; Doug Poneck, Legal Counsel, and also Mr. De Anda would be calling in and recommended to call Mr. De Anda in case he is waiting to be notified that the meeting is starting.

Commissioners Present

Jose L. Ceballos, Chairman
Dr. Sergio D. Garza, Vice-Chairman
Dr. Marisela Rodriguez, Commissioner (by zoom)
Anita Guerra, Commissioner
Gloria Ann Freeman, Commissioner

Commissioners Absent

Staff Present

Alma D. Mata, Executive Director
Christy Ramos, Administrative Assistant
Jennifer Barrientos, Director of Finance
Robert Peña, IT Director

Doug Poneck, Attorney (by zoom)
Ricardo De Anda, Attorney (by zoom)
Mary Gaona, LHA Consultant (by zoom)

Others Present

4. CITIZENS COMMENTS

This is the opportunity for visitors and guests to address the Board of Commissioners on any issue. The Board may not discuss any presented issue, nor may any action be taken on any issues at the time. There will be a 3-minute limitation per speaker. (Texas Attorney General Opinion-JC-0169)

Chairman Ceballos stated that although they are present he talked to Mr. Poneck to check if it is permissible to do it by phone and mentioned that the Attorney General put out some guidance which were provided although it was not necessary after all and stated that they are following protocols in posting the meeting by telephone and by video.

5. DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST FOR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that there were none.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Approval of Minutes for Regular Board of Commissioners meeting on January 10, 2020.
- B. Approval of Minutes for Special Board of Commissioners meeting on February 8, 2020.

**Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza moved to approved minutes for both items 6A and 6B.
Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.
Motion passed unanimously.**

7. PRESENTATION BY CENTRAL RESIDENT COUNCIL (POSTPONED TO A LATER DATE)

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that there is nobody from the Resident Council, so this item will be postponed for a later date and will bring it back.

8. STANDING REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS (No Action to be taken on these items)

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they have the items in the packets and asked Ms. Mata to go through the highlights and the highlights that he would like to hear are the ones related to the Russell Terrace project and anything else the Board wants to discuss.

- A. Executive Director's Report

Ms. Mata mentioned that the usual report they present to the Board is in the packet and they also have a checklist the provided to the Board for the closing and stated that currently on the Russell Terrace Revitalization Project they completed the construction of all 162 units, the renovation and reconstruction, so they are currently in the closing process and are pending a few items to submit to BBVA which include the as built survey, the lease stabilization, the certificate of occupancy for the units that were completed and mentioned that they are working with the City of Laredo Building Department to get them completed as soon as possible because the bank requires them for the closing; however, they are working with them to try to get inspectors there to certify.

Chairman Ceballos stated, for the record, that Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez is joining the meeting.

Ms. Mata mentioned that the City of Laredo Building Department is working very closely with them to make sure they get the Certificates of Occupancy as soon as possible and stated that they were scheduled to be inspected on Friday, but they were short staffed, so they rescheduled for today; therefore, they will have another update in the afternoon as to how many they will obtain; currently they are pending 24 Certificates of Occupancy for which work is complete. Chairman Ceballos asked if water is on. Ms. Mata confirmed. Chairman Ceballos also asked if utilities are on. Ms. Mata confirmed and stated that they have four buildings that were pending and informed that AEP was on site last week completing those final installations and said that as of 5 p.m. on Friday they were just pending the final inspection from the City.

Chairman Ceballos asked Ms. Gaona if she could send an updated wrap up of the financials to the Board and asked Ms. Barrientos if she would work together with Ms. Gaona and stated that she gave them a snapshot, but he would like an update to circulate through the Board this week or early next week.

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any incidentals the Board would need to be aware in regards to Russell Terrace. Ms. Mata mentioned that they are currently working on getting the as built survey and stated that they requested bids from different firms which has been received, so they will be meeting with the Title Company to see if there is any way they can meet the requirements without having to incur such high expense; additionally, Ms. Mata mentioned that she had a call with Rossy Chase from BBVA in the morning just updating on both ends to see what they are missing and Ms. Mata stated that they have not had anything submitted turned back needing correction, so they are good so far and the only thing they are concerned is the as built survey which they would like to have by April 20 and are hoping to not have to request an extension which is something they are considering if they do not have it ready by that date and are also considering possibly the option of an extension which would include extension fees. Ms. Mata mentioned that the last one they had was about \$1,080 when they extended it for six months, so they would be looking at something similar if they

cannot meet the deadline. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they would know soon if they can mobilize the survey. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked if they were being charged a late fee. Ms. Mata mentioned that in the conversation she had with Ms. Chase in the morning Ms. Chase mentioned that the bank would be willing to work with them to see what the minimum cost would be to get the extension if it is required because they understand the health concerns that are going on right now, but they have not fully explored giving an extension yet which is what they are working right now. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza mentioned that maybe they would consider just doing away with the fees this time. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they will know tomorrow if there are some concessions with the survey, if not, he thinks they could get it done within the time period.

In regards to the leasing Chairman Ceballos mentioned, for the Board to be aware, that they have 38 units where people did not move or that were not originally rebuilt and informed that they made a last push to invite those residents to move into the new units; there are four families that chosed to remain, so they are going to make one extra effort to advise them that they still have an opportunity to go into a renovated unit, so that they do not go into any problems or that there will be a misunderstanding that they did not realize it was a forever decision, so they are going to give them one last chance before they actually fill those units and mentioned that those 38 units that were not renovated are under a different rental structure; they have their own rent; they are not subsidized rents. The renovated rents are all under Section 8 structure. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked if there was any reason for them not moving. Chairman Ceballos stated that there were personal reasons and that they just want to stay in the unit and he wants to make sure they understand because there is an elderly that maybe does not understand the technicality, so they will help them make the correct decision for them, they might still decide to stay there, but at least they would have told them everything once, twice or three times and as far as Chairman Ceballos has been advised, there are only four families remaining that decided to stay.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked what it means that they are restructured. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that the rent structure is different; the rents are set at a market rent; it is a low income rent, but basically the one, two, three or four bedrooms are set rents and Section 8 although it is set, it has a subsidy; the unit is subsidized by the federal government and those 38 units are not, so the tenant pays the rent and if there are Section 8 tenants living in those 38 units and they may have a subsidy which he does not know if that is the case and asked if they were in Section 8. Ms. Mata confirmed, so Chairman Ceballos stated that they have a subsidy too and that the only difference is that they cannot say in two weeks after they convert that they want to move which would not be possible unless a unit gets freed up and they will have to go through the waiting list.

Chairman Ceballos stated that he wants to make sure they do not miss and then they have a crisis because they misunderstood the opportunity and stated that they have tried various times. Ms. Mata stated that they are going to make one

last attempt before they lease up because they have to lease up the whole property for the purpose of the bank closing, so they are going to make a last attempt with those four families; two of them in the new property as well as the renovated section and see if they are still not interested, then they will move on and said that they already opened up the waiting list for both, the project based which are the 38 units and for the renovated area; they have a healthy waiting list with 330 in the RAD units and 260 in the project based section, so they have a healthy waiting list to lease up rather quickly. Ms. Mata mentioned that she had talked to the Section 8 Director Melissa Ortiz and stated that it should not take them longer than 45 days which is accounting for the model they are following given the COVID-19 situation, so they should be fully leased in 45 days.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman asked if it was older people in the units that are hesitant to move. Ms. Mata confirmed. Commissioner Ms. Freeman mentioned that it could be that those tenants might not be understanding the way it has been proposed and explained to them and suggested bringing a family member and explain to them. Ms. Mata stated that it is exactly the step they are going to take now by doing it at an administrative level. Chairman Ceballos stated that by also walking them through the new units so they will see the difference because where they are living they do not central air and also the amenities are much more improved and stated that he is supposed to and wants to be part of that process because he does not want any misunderstanding and he would want them to move to the new units where bill should be cheaper. Ms. Mata stated that they would do it in a few weeks.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman mentioned that she wanted to talk about the incident at Ana Maria Lozano and said that both the husband and the wife involved in that incident had records and asked how was it that they had Housing if they had police records. Chairman Ceballos stated that he did not know the specifics of the family, but stated that he knows that having a record does not disqualify from receiving assistance and mentioned that he did not know what kind of records they had, but some records considered aggravated related or where there is an assault against people or crimes against people may disqualify depending on the type of violence, but ultimately those are very good questions and would suggest that Ms. Freeman meet with Ms. Mata and maybe cover that privately and look at the details with that particular household which was a very unfortunate incident and he has not asked the staff about the details, but from reading the media reports, there was some history there and it looks that there was a legal intervention to protect the family from the male in the household which he breached and it was a very bad incident, so he recommended to look at it closely to see if there was anything else to learn for the sake of that family and the children that remained and others that may be in similar circumstances. Chairman Ceballos thanked Commissioner Ms. Freeman for bringing it up.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra suggested that maybe the safety and security program can take special precautions or initiatives. Ms. Mata mentioned that they would

have to report to the Agency the order is in place. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they have relationship with the JP Courts which may be something to talk to them about which is a public record and may be they can share some of that information with the Agency and recommended to look at it. Ms. Mata mentioned that they are looking closely at it and are handling that case internally and stated that she has been in contact with the attorney as well regarding the next steps to follow and said that it has been a little delay because they cannot meet with the families because they are not meeting with the public, but they are handling it and are still continuing to receive the statistics from the Police Department and they started to tie the calls related to that as well; not necessarily related to that particular case because the Board had requested for them to follow up on any item or issues that are recurring in the households to that they make sure they are proactive.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that if there are any questions regarding the standing reports to feel free to contact Ms. Mata.

- B.** Unaudited Financials for the month of February 2020
- C.** Community Safety and Security (Peace Officer) Program Report
- D.** Status and progress of ongoing construction projects

9. ACTION ITEM

- A.** Discussion and possible action related to the current COVID-19 health concerns and impacts to agency. This item may be discussed in executive session pursuant to Section 551.074 (personnel matters).

Chairman Ceballos stated that he talked to both Doug Poneck and Ricardo De Anda over the matter and mentioned that Ms. Mata, since the national declaration of emergency, reached out to him and they have kind of handled things as they have come up; Ms. Mata put some measures in place and provided copies to the Board and mentioned that they are all stressed with the news and making sure they are doing the right thing and keeping distances and keeping other people safe that they care about and mentioned that they have some level of uniqueness in essential service; providing people housing and maintaining the households is an essential function, so they have some responsibilities and have some staff that is stressed, concerned and busy with children that normally would be in school, so he wants to make sure the Board has a conversation of what they think is best in taking care of the tenants, taking care of the staff and taking care of the community in general, but also taking care of unique situations, particularly our congregated housing which is downtown, the elderly in particular.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he talked to Mr. Poneck about the legalities of providing the staff time off if needed with pay beyond the regular benefits and

doing it consistent with the law so that they are not breaching anything, so Mr. Poneck is looking at it which is probably easier in terms of compliance, but he just wants to make sure they are conforming to the orders.

Mr. Poneck prepared a resolution which is included in their packet informing the chronology of the national emergency, the state declaration, the local order and what our response is; essentially as it is written it provides a way for the Agency through the Executive Director in consultation with the Chair or a Board member setting out any responses, so if anything different happens the way Ms. Mata has been doing it is kind of bouncing it off Chairman Ceballos and if they need help Chairman Ceballos will call someone whether it would be the Health Department or consulting the Attorney to find a path forward, so it is how they have been doing it and stated that he would like to support the staff and if they face a dilemma because they are taking care of their kids or parents, anything that relates to family due to the change, that they would provide the financial support for them to decide to stay home it would allow it; it does not mean it is a blanket order; it means that Ms. Mata in consultation with the Board is approved to handle it, so it is the main thing and he would like feedback; the second aspect of it is that he asked Mr. De Anda to formulate some procedures in place with downtown, the Senior Home which is a congregated housing, making sure that we have strict procedures they can feel comfortable with assuring to the best degree possible that people are going to be safe, both guests and staff and they will do the best to regulate it; those are independent households, so each unit is allowed to have guests. Ms. Mata mentioned that they have restricted the entrance of the public; they have some services that provide food for the elderly; said operations have changed, so they can just go and pick up the food and they have restricted the use of the common area downstairs so they are not able to congregate there, they are asked to go back upstairs to their units; they have not restricted the visitors, but Mr. De Anda and Ms. Mata had a conversation earlier in the day looking at the protocol the nursing homes are using to screen visitors going in, so it is only the essential visitors like the nursing staff that goes to visit them, no family visits unless the persons are in a condition that they need to be seen, so they are exploring maybe following some of the protocol the retirement homes are using.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra asked if they had sanitizer available for people going in and if they check people's temperature. Ms. Mata responded that all the properties including Senior Home have access to sanitizer, face masks and gloves, but they are having a hard time getting the thermometers. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked in reference to the need for food, whether the care providers would buy it for them. Ms. Mata mentioned that they all manage on their own and informed that there is an elderly services coordinator in that property that would take them to H.E.B. to buy their groceries, but those operations have changed because they do not want to expose anybody, so they need to work on a plan to put in place in that property. Commissioner Ms. Guerra mentioned that they would probably not be going in big groups in a van to the store. Ms. Mata mentioned that they would probably limit that operation to about three persons

at a time. Commissioner Ms. Guerra asked how many people would typically use it. Ms. Mata mentioned that it is a 15-passenger van. Commissioner Ms. Guerra asked how big the complex is. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that it is a big complex with 100 units. Ms. Mata stated that typically it would be approximately eight residents that use the services and all the other ones do their own grocery shopping. Commissioner Ms. Guerra wondered how they would be doing it now with the situation. Ms. Mata mentioned that the Management Staff have taken the step to visit them to check if there is anything they need so that they can try to assist as much as they can.

Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez mentioned that they also did a resolution at Laredo College and stated that the Board was very supportive and when dealing with personnel matters because of the situation which came as a surprise would be to treat employees in the same manner; they are trying to eliminate people from going to the campus and actually nobody can go to the campus unless the supervisor has approved it, but everybody has to work remotely from home, so everybody was able to transfer their calls to their laptops or to their device and if they are not able to work remotely they would deduct time off from them or if they are sick they would have to provide a doctor's excuse and mentioned that she sent an e-mail to Ms. Mata on preparing a continuity plan and be fair to all employees because they were getting calls about persons not being asked to work remotely and also about others being deducted and at the end of the day they cannot have the offices completely shut down because they still have to maintain the calls and the operations.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza mentioned that he agreed, but stated that his concern is if they had the required software in order to help the Agency move forward. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they had to consider that half of the program staff deals with social security numbers works with confidential information such as social security numbers which they will not have go out of the office, so it would not be practical and it would be too risky which was part of the discussion he had with Mr. Poneck about sending someone home to provide safety in the office, so the minute they do it, they would pay them because as an entity they needed to do it and it means that they do not take leave, the entity pays them administrative leave and mentioned that it is different than what Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez was saying about them being asked to work from home because if you are a Section 8 technician and you are going to send a couple of them home and rotate them to increase social distancing, they should not lose pay because they are resolving a safety issue in the workplace nor should they take leave which is his opinion in keeping the business continuous, but also assuring that staff does not lose pay when they are resolving a safety issue and not everybody can work from home.

Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez mentioned that there is software that when people call the office it goes to the staff's device and stated that they issued out devices, but they still have staff going in on a rotating basis; they are trying to avoid mass

of people going in. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza suggested having staff coming in on a rotating basis, separate them and have them use Lysol. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they are not facing a crisis right now, but if anything changes they may end up in that situation and stated that he does not think they have any distancing issues. Ms. Mata confirmed.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that if something changes they will be forced to look at that, but will still caution them about giving somebody access from home to information that includes other person's information. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked about the Asherton site. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they have an office and there is only one person in that office. Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez mentioned that the City's ordinance is to keep people six feet apart if they were to come in and not having more than ten people in a room. Ms. Mata confirmed that the ordinance is still going on. Commissioner Ms. Guerra mentioned that they also need to provide hand sanitizer. Ms. Mata mentioned that she contacted the Health Department in that regard and they asked them to provide hand sanitizer and the sanitizing wipes if they are available, but they also have to have access to soap and water and they also inquired about the face masks which can be worn at the discretion of the employee and they stated that they do not recommend to wear the mask when they are not sick because they are only keeping the bacteria in the face mask, but if the employee feels more comfortable that way, they will allow them to wear it. Ms. Mata also mentioned that everything has been provided to all the locations.

Chairman Ceballos asked Mr. De Anda for his input on the congregated housing topic who stated that he had talked to Chairman Ceballos and Ms. Mata in the morning and mentioned that they have a pretty good action plan to deal with the crisis with regards to the employees and the tenants and especially with the tenants at risk.

Chairman Ceballos asked Commissioner Ms. Freeman if there was anything else she would like to add who stated that in regards to the discussion they had about sending staff home, she wondered how they would address it in payroll and suggested that they need to give it a name or a code and not list under furlough or time off. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza stated that it is not time off nor furlough and mentioned he had a concern in regards to the elderly as who could go in and wondered about Colonia Guadalupe and Ana Maria Lozano because he thinks they should have strict control and whether they should have visitors or not because there could be people from outside going into the projects and spreading the germs. Commissioner Ms. Guerra mentioned that she does not think they are restricting guests at all. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked if they had thought about the other projects because it is important to have some control.

Ms. Mata mentioned that they have control at Senior Home because it is one entrance and they go to the general lobby area, so they can control the people going in and out and mentioned that she would find it nearly impossible to control

people visiting at the other properties because those are individual residences and they would have to have somebody at each unit surveying who is going in. In regards to Commissioner Ms. Freeman's comment about coding the leave Ms. Mata mentioned they have administrative leave which she had never used until this situation with COVID-19, so it will be coded under administrative leave and the policy allows to exercise that and pay them to either work from home or being excused from working and they will obviously document why they use of the administrative leave was put in place.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that in regards to the resolution, he would like to edit it to introduce some language that refers to consulting a health expert and stated that he personally does not have any health expertise, so he wants to make sure that in the consultation between the Executive Director and the Chair, for the record, that there be consultation with the health expert as needed and mentioned that either the Executive Director or him will reach out to the health authority and consult as needed. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked who it would be. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that Dr. Gonzalez, City Health Department Director, is accessible and stated that it makes sense to articulate that they will reach out to him whenever they have questions.

Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez stated that she wanted to make it clear that she supports the resolution and requests that whenever major changes are made, to e-mail the Commissioners as far as what decisions are made, so that they continue the communication on whatever decisions are made.

Chairman Ceballos moved to approve the resolution as presented with the above mentioned edit and as noted with the instructions from Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously

- B.** Discussion and possible action to approve Operating Budgets for Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2021, for the Housing Authority of the City of Laredo and adopt Resolution No. 20-R-03.

Chairman Ceballos stated that the budget presents an Operating Budget that shows a 3% step increase for staff or for the positions and mentioned that they have not had a step increase in at least a couple years and it will still be subject to staff earning the increase which means it is based on an evaluation and whoever is not performing will not receive an increase and stated that the vacant positions do not show the increase in the items; the budget is presented the same way it has been presented before which is kind of a center master sheet with revenues and expenses and at the bottom of the second page they will see the net income for each property or each amp.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned he did not have an opportunity to set up a workshop for obvious reasons including COVID-19 and many other reasons and he would like to go through each amp and take a look at what the operating cost looks like and if they would have any edits to suggest them and bring them up to discuss them and have staff come back with the responses at the next Board meeting or workshop, whichever they would like to have; page 4 of 33 shows vacant positions represented there and if they look after page 4 they will see a table on a legal size portrait format and going down to Total General Expenses they will see non-routine expenses and that number is going to tie to a sheet that will follow which is another table for those items, so a Net Cash Flow has a non-routine expense which is essentially the other sheet in the packet.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza mentioned that he had questions about non-routine expenses and the golf cart. Ms. Mata mentioned that those were requests the projects are making that are non-routine and are not budgeted in, so they gave a list of the non-routine expenses to try to budget them into the current budget or try to schedule them to future budgets or under the CFP grant.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra asked about the super diesel truck with gooseneck. Ms. Mata mentioned that in this case Colonia Guadalupe is requesting a vehicle to meet those specifications for the work of the maintenance department. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that part of what could happen is that it would have been a budget workshop exercise, so they would fund the requests from the current budget, the current fiscal year budget which will be ending, from next year budget or from Capital Fund because they did not go through the exercise they and are now having to program some of those things in, so he asked that they show what could be programmed into this budget, and what could be programmed into next year, so they could handle it that way or they could have a budget workshop within the next 30 days where they could actually dedicate themselves to the capital outlay which will probably be around \$300,000 or a little more than that, so it is the wish list which needs to be scrubbed interdepartmental wise because it is generated from the Public Housing side without the Capital Fund side being at the table as much as it should and what he means is that there are some items that could very easily be absorbed by the Capital Grant.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra stated it would be better because that is a grant and this is operating and she would be fine if it is fine with the Commissioner and would be advisable by Chairman Ceballos who mentioned that he recommended having staff sit down within departments and to come back with a recommendation because they are not going to spend anything between now and 30 days, so the Board would need to come back and work on it for about one hour.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza also wondered about the truck with the gooseneck, what it would be for and asked which is the largest project and Commissioner Ms. Guerra asked what they would use it for. Ms. Mata responded that the largest project is Colonia Guadalupe and mentioned that the cost of that truck is not

\$56,000. Chairman Ceballos explained that what happened was that the wish list became a financial spreadsheet without the Departments nor the Executive Director scrubbing through it sufficiently and mentioned that they are not going to spend \$56k on any truck because they are not on that position to do it, so at a meeting a few days ago they determined that \$35k is sufficient and sometimes even less than \$35K is enough to buy a truck to haul and do the things they need to do and mentioned that they ended with a budget with some items that really need to be scrubbed internally and what he means by scrubbed is to look into it and decide upon them and mentioned that some of them should not even be on that kind of budget because they are so minor expenses that should just be part of the operating expenses and not see it in the Capital Fund or non-routine expenditures, so his preference would be for staff to kind of look through it and bring it back; they would not approve the non-routine expenses as part of the budget, but they would bring it back as an amendment.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza also had questions in regards to the golf cart for Colonia Guadalupe. Ms. Mata mentioned that it is being requested to have a golf cart for maintenance which would facilitate moving some materials around the project like pails of paint and all the materials they are using when working on turning in a unit and not having to take a vehicle in between the property because they have been restricted to get on the property. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza mentioned that they have them at TAMIU. Commissioner Ms. Guerra stated that they have to have a license. Ms. Mata confirmed and mentioned that in regards to them asking if they really need an F-250 vehicle, they will have somebody look at that and see what the real needs of the properties and would like to mention that a lot of the properties have rangers because on prior years they had ordered rangers for all the properties and some of those do not have the lifts and sometimes it makes it a little bit difficult to be moving appliances around on such small vehicles, so she would rather have a full size vehicle, maybe not necessarily an F-250; it would really depend on what the vehicle is going to be used for; they do haul debris when they do repairs and things like that and they would need to have capability to pull a trailer.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman asked what would be the heaviest they would need to haul that they are asking for a gooseneck trailer. Chairman Ceballos stated that the reason he is smiling is because Commissioner Ms. Freeman is right; there is nothing that heavy that they are doing routinely. Ms. Mata mentioned that those vehicles would need to be able to pull a trailer to take the debris when they cut trees or they are picking up branches. Commissioner Ms. Freeman mentioned that a gooseneck would be looking at pulling tons of materials and said that she had a little Toyota engine pick up and was able to haul or pull a 21 ft. flatbed trailer with five levels of bales of hay on it, so they do not need a F-250; it just does not justify it. Chairman Ceballos agreed and mentioned that it was the reason those items come before her. Ms. Mata mentioned that they can get to the point of standardizing the maximum capacity of a vehicle they would require to have. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that this item is not going to make the budget cut,

so they will see it back in either a workshop or as an action item with advanced list and it will not come in as a surprise.

Chairman Ceballos stated that he has given Ms. Mata some feedback on the structure for Russell Terrace since they are still converting and looking at page 9, it is his belief that they do not need three maintenance and one foreman; four maintenance staff and it would be fine to let it ride for 90 days to see how it operates because he does not see the need of much staff when they have new units and mentioned that if they look at the net income, the property could support it, but it has to do with efficiency and asked Ms. Mata to come up with a metric, not by unit, but by work order because he also thinks that Colonia Guadalupe has perhaps one maintenance staff person too much and he has been tracking the work orders that get presented to the Board every month and he would like Ms. Mata and team to evaluate those work orders and come back with a metric and if he is wrong he will accept it, but he just sees a lot of down time where there is a lot of staff, but yet he also sees some properties that need help in terms of maintenance, so it is his feedback to Ms. Mata looking at Russell Terrace and at Colonia Guadalupe and mentioned that other people have brought up that Farm Labor has a full-time Manager in a project with 48 units, so maybe rolling down that full-time Manager under another Amp might work and stated that the budget will not be changed or suggest changing it and thinks it looks fine, but Chairman Ceballos is just kind of highlighting his observations in regards to the budget.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he did not look in great detail at Section 8 and stated that the department has not really changed much and asked Ms. Mata and Ms. Barrientos if there were any changes in Section 8. Ms. Barrientos stated that they just added mainstream vouchers and more admin fees. Chairman Ceballos stated that he knows there is going to be some capital outlay with Section 8 and stated that last year they had mentioned to him that they needed more filing space, so he knows they should bring it back with the Capital for the retriever filing system which is pretty full; it is automated and it is relative to the program because Section 8 is a big program. Ms. Mata mentioned that they are looking to implement a digital format as much as they can to reduce the amount of storage needed and stated that Mr. Peña is working with that department to see how much can be held digitally.

Chairman Ceballos stated that this budget is obviously going to be worked on some more and mentioned they have \$1.2M Net Cash Flow Revenues minus Expenses and asked how it compares with prior years. Ms. Barrientos stated that she would have to double check this year and said that they are still working on the books for March, so she could bring it back to the Board when they present again, but said that it is a little bit more from last year. Ms. Mata mentioned that this year is higher than last year. Ms. Barrientos mentioned that it is more because they also have Tiny Homes and Meadow Elderly and stated that the leasing is the most important part; Russell Terrace had more joining rents and the subsidy was

lower last year and next year since it is going to be fully leased it increased. Chairman Ceballos asked that if they are tiering the rent structure in the lease up on the budget they have for Russell Terrace. Ms. Barrientos mentioned that they are at 98%. Chairman Ceballos asked if it was for the whole year. Ms. Barrientos confirmed. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they have to size that back because they will not be at 98% on April 1st and they have to go back because it is going to affect the Net Income, so she is going to start at 50% which is what they are now roughly and forecast herself four months and asked if Ms. Barrientos was stating that she will be at a 100%, on the record. Ms. Mata mentioned that the goal is to be fully leased in 45 days. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he would give them four months to get to 100% and mentioned that it is going to be an adjustment to the budget.

Chairman Ceballos asked the Board what they would prefer to do, if they would like to do a workshop and act on the non-routine. The Commissioners decided to do the workshop which they scheduled for Saturday, April 18, 2020 at 10 a.m.

Chairman Ceballos moved to approve the budget as presented with the adjustment to the Section 8 lease up numbers to reflect lease up within 120 days from April 1, 2020 for Russell Terrace. Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any comments or changes. Commissioner Ms. Freeman mentioned that she had a comment and asked about the people from the community that have been sent home and are renting from the Agency whether there have made allowances for their rent adjustment throughout this incident. Ms. Mata mentioned that currently they have not made any adjustments because they have not had any requests yet, but with the rents coming up tomorrow they will be looking at them individually as they come in and stated that Management of the properties at Casa Verde and River Bank has already reached out to see what concessions are going to be put in place, so they will work with the tenants to possibly defer the April payment or give them other payment options bi-monthly or weekly to reduce the burden of paying the full month rent at a time, so those are the concessions they are considering.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that it was a good point and stated that he talked with Mr. Poneck about it, but left out of his comments and asked if they would like to formulate an action they can bring back the other item and make it in the form of a motion through the COVID-19 related agenda item if they would like to see something formally. Commissioner Ms. Freeman mentioned that she agreed because they need to protect the tenants that may be afraid they will be evicted since they have already been out of work for two weeks, so Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they will vote on the budget and then bring back the other item.

Chairman Ceballos moved to approve the budget as presented with the adjustments they recommended.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Ceballos moved to bring back item 9A discussion and possible action related to the COVID-19 health concerns and impacts to the Agency.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Ceballos asked what kind of concessions they would like to see for the tenants in Public Housing or any other rental properties. Commissioner Ms. Freeman stated that she would like an adjustment to their rent. Ms. Mata mentioned that the way the program works is that whenever someone loses their employment and has a change in the income, they report it and they would make it effective the following month; typically if it affects them with an increase, they make the change and it will affect them two months later and in this case Ms. Mata asked staff that if they have anybody coming in reporting a decrease in their income to make sure they process it and make it effective the 1st of the month and stated that she knows that Section 8 does not have any pending; they have a few that are pending which are increases because they actually had income increase and those will be effective until May which is the way the program works and stated that they have not had anybody coming in expressing the need to work arrangements for the rent, but having it in place would be beneficial in the event that somebody would request it.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman suggested sending a flyer to the tenants that work who are not on SSI or Social Security; the people that actually have hourly income, to advise them that if they have been affected to go apply at the unemployment office, the food stamps office, and medic aid for the kids because they might not know what to do and are struggling mentally and emotionally because it is going to be affecting them and there maybe outlets in the community that can help them.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza stated that he agreed with Commissioner Ms. Freeman, but they need to be careful because some people may misinterpret things. Ms. Mata mentioned that it was the reason they are taking it case by case and stated that they have not have anybody come in to discuss a change that is affecting them to the level of them not being able to pay their rent; they have been willing to work with them, but would like Board's approval to be able to make those concessions; to be able to give them a timeframe if they would need to defer April's payment and what would be the timeframe the Board would be comfortable to work with the individuals to pay what is due to the Housing Authority. Ms. Mata would also like to talk about the security deposit as they lease up, if they would allow them a six-month period as they did in Asherton for them to come up with the security deposit because they need to continue leasing the properties, but she understands that given the current situation some people might not have the funds to provide a security deposit ahead of the rent.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he has four notes, the first one being no evictions, though it was not mentioned; he is going to mention them to formulate the action and stated that Commissioner Ms. Freeman suggested that there would be deferral of any rear payments and stated that Ms. Mata is already doing it on a need basis and he agrees that it should be done on a need basis, case by case, and that there will be an informative general flyer that tells people where the resources are, not necessarily encouraging them to apply for rent because most people if you invite them to seek reduction of rent they will come and get it, but a general flyer that tells them where the resources are and the last thing is allowing for the security deposit to be paid over six months. Commissioner Ms. Guerra asked what the flyer will say. Chairman Ceballos stated that the flyer will probably say that if they are in a situation that they are financially strained to seek services from the Texas Workforce Commission and from FEMA and would be written up in a way that would give them the resource contact for that Agency and mentioned that the unemployment will be handled through Texas Workforce Commission. Ms. Mata mentioned that there are already some sample flyers out in that regard, so they will look into see what they are providing.

Chairman Ceballos moved that the Laredo Housing Authority and any of its affiliate properties provide for deferment payment options and arrangements on a case by case basis based on a request and based on need and for the Agency to provide an informative flyer that details resources to those unemployed or seeking supportive services from the community and others to all units and the last thing is to provide for security deposit options for it to be paid over six months and that they honor no evictions while the emergency crisis is still ongoing.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Ceballos thanked Commissioner Ms. Freeman for bringing it to the Board.

- C. Discussion and possible action to approve updates to agency organizational structure and any staff assignments. This item may be discussed in executive session pursuant to Section 551.071 (consultation with attorneys) and 551.074 (personnel matters).

Chairman Ceballos asked to take this item into executive session and stated that it should not take very long because they are something they would like to do administratively and then come back and take any action.

Chairman Ceballos moved to go into executive session.

Commissioner Anita Guerra seconded the motion.

Motion passed.

Chairman Ceballos called the Board of Commissioners, Ms. Mata, General Counsel and Mary Gaona into executive session.

Chairman Ceballos provided instructions because the conference call will be ongoing and asked if there was anybody from the public on conference call and also anybody from the public on zoom and stated for the record that there being nobody from the public on zoom or on the call they would go into executive session without the record of the calls and zoom and they will resume for any potential action after they are done.

Chairman Ceballos asked Mr. Poneck if that was legally correct. Mr. Poneck stated that he was just making sure that they technologically know that no one else is listening to the close session other than the Board members, Ms. Mata and the attorneys. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they discussed this before and said that the call number would be available, but that it will be muted while they are in the executive session meeting.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE

The Board of Commissioners for the Housing Authority of the City of Laredo reserve the right to adjourn into Executive Session at any time during the course of this meeting to discuss any of the matters listed on the posted agenda, above, as authorized by the Texas Government Code, including Sections 551.071 (consultation with attorneys), 551.072 (deliberations about real property), 551.073 (deliberations about gifts and donations), 551.074 (personnel matters), 551.076 (deliberations about security devices), and 551.086 (economic development).

The Board went into executive session at 2:20 p.m.

The Board reconvened from executive session at 3:17 p.m.

11. ACTION ON ANY EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEM

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they came back from executive session where they discussed item 9C.

Chairman Ceballos moved to approve changes to the Organization which is to separate the Director of Community and Economic Development into two departments: Director of Planning and Community Services and Director of Construction Programs and stated that the current Director will serve as Director of Planning and Community Services.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that there are other items that will come back and they will entertain those at a later date and stated that they have non-profits board meetings that they will have them at the next meeting.

Chairman Ceballos thanked everybody present for the distancing as well as they could for the meeting and hoped that it worked.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Ceballos moved to adjourn the meeting.


Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.



Jose L. Ceballos, Chairman



Alma D. Mata, Executive Director