

**Housing Authority of the City of Laredo**  
Special Board of Commissioners Meeting  
Zoom Video Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88297139708>

Call in Number: 1-346-248-7799

Webinar ID: 882 9713 9708

LHA Board Room  
2000 San Francisco Ave.  
Laredo, Texas 78040  
Tuesday, June 30, 2020  
12:00 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-S-1** **Minutes** **June 30, 2020**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Chairman Ceballos called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Chairman Ceballos led them in the recital of the pledge.
3. **ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM** Ms. Alma Mata, Executive Director, proceeded with roll call and stated they had a quorum.

**Commissioners Present**

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

**Commissioners Absent**

Anita Guerra, Commissioner

**Staff Present**

Alma D. Mata, Executive Director  
Melissa Ortiz, Director for Section 8  
Daniel Colina, Accountant  
Valeria Cabello, Interim Procurement Officer  
Jessica Martinez, Resident and Community Services Director  
Maria Hernandez, Public Housing Manager  
Christy Ramos, Administrative Assistant  
Robert Peña, IT Director  
Sara Vicharelli, Director of Public Housing Management (by zoom)  
Jennifer Barrientos, Finance Director (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)

There were none.

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

Chairman Ceballos asked if there are any disclosures that need to be made by the staff or the Board. There were none.

## **6. ACTION ITEM**

- A.** Discussion and possible action to award RFP #20-0614-1 Site Improvements at Ana M. Lozano BiblioTech and authorize the Executive Director to finalize negotiations and contract(s) with the selected firm(s).

Chairman Ceballos stated for the record that Attorney Ricardo de Anda, Consultant Mary Gaona, Sara Vicharelli, Director of Housing Management and Jennifer Barrientos, Finance Director, are all present by Zoom.

Ms. Mata stated that they delivered the three bids that came in to the Commissioners and mentioned that she tabulated the information in a simpler format for them to view it; they had responses from Royal Inn Construction at \$120,463.33 which was submitted only for selected demolition; Romo Contractors submitted the bid for the entire scope of work for \$317K and if they include the alternate that was requested it would be \$339K; Quantum construction submitted for \$299,980.20 and including the alternate it would be at \$330,647.70 which is for the BiblioTech locations and the alternatives included the playground rubber surface and the second alternative was the removal of the condensing equipment for the HVAC system.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he understands that all the amounts are over the budget and asked what the budget is. Ms. Mata responded that the budget is \$174K per site. Chairman Ceballos stated that the Architect and LHA Staff prepared a per cost estimate that gave them a \$175K budget and it is also the amount that City will be contributing to that project. Chairman Ceballos stated that he would like to take any questions or comments before he makes a motion and said that he is ready to make a motion that will confine them to that budget and then make changes to the scope if the contractor allows it to meet the budget, but would like to consider first if there are any questions for him or for Ms. Mata. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza stated that he sees a difference of \$155K and mentioned that they may have \$156K and rounded it off and stated that they were given an estimate and wondered what had happened that it is so much now. Chairman Ceballos asked if they could share the worksheet that was shared with Chairman Ceballos. Ms. Mata confirmed. Chairman Ceballos recommended Ms.



Valeria Cabello, who is present, that in the future she would work on providing the same trades when they do the bidding and stated that the contractors in this particular RFP submitted based on a bid form they prepared, so for the future they want the staff to create the budget items and then have the proposers fill out the amounts. Ms. Mata stated that the probable cost column showing \$174K is what they had budgeted and mentioned that they have a commitment with the City and then they see where the three different proposers filled in the scope of work that is being requested from Quantum, Romo Contractors and for Royal E. Construction. They can also see that they only bid on certain items and not the entire scope of work. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he would be inclined to go with Royal E., but knows that there are certain things that Royal E. does not do, for example landscaping which is one of the differences between the contractors like Quantum and Romo who are general contractors, so imbedded in their numbers is their cost for subcontracting work, whereas, Royal E. is more of a concrete contractor. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they want to continue giving it to one contractor that could handle most of the work, but it would be up to the Board and stated that the landscaping cost for Quantum is huge, which is \$86,000. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza stated that Romo bid \$112,000 for landscaping and mentioned that one thing he noticed is that Romo is including trees, allowing \$72,000 for trees and the probable cost is at \$8,000 and wondered why it is so high and what they are basing their numbers on.

Chairman Ceballos stated that his guess was that the form had not been prepared yet and said that the landscape and irrigation on its own is not going to be \$72,000 and asked if somebody would explain about Quantum. Ms. Mata stated that Bulmaro had been involved in the discussion with them, but was not in the meeting due to a family emergency and had to step away and mentioned that she had briefed with him early before the meeting and he mentioned that all of it was included in that price. Chairman Ceballos asked if the trees are included as well. Ms. Mata confirmed. Chairman Ceballos stated that there was no way the irrigation itself would be \$79,000. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked if irrigation would only be for the BiblioTech area or the entire Ana Maria Lozano project. Chairman Ceballos responded that it would be only the area of the BiblioTech and the office building which involves the plumbing lines, the valves, the sprinkler heads and also mentioned that he would like the Board to consider negotiating with Quantum Construction to the amount of \$174K and if they are unable to come into an agreement with them, then they will go with the lowest bidder and negotiate with them.

Chairman Ceballos stated that the Architect gave them a cost of \$17K for the canopy and there is a huge difference between the two bidders; it needs to be studied and bidders need to understand that it is a fabricated canopy as mentioned by Ms. Mata and Valeria and that this is where miscommunication provides discrepancies in the bid and asked if anybody told them that it was a sole source provider for the canopy. Ms. Mata confirmed that they are using the sole source. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they had marked up more than twice the amount and that it was either that or the Architect's numbers are completely wrong. Chairman Ceballos asked Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza what he thought about negotiating it down to their budget. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza



mentioned that the highest is Romo Contractors; second is Quantum with \$299K and last is Royal E Construction which they are only doing certain areas of the scope and asked if they are back at point A. Chairman Ceballos stated that it is not unusual to rebid the whole thing, but because it is a proposal they could work with them on the scope now and say they will take this out or change it and they could also say that they would not be interested because it would not be what they bid for, so it would be up to them. Chairman Ceballos stated that the only reason he would be going with Quantum is because in regards to the drainage he thinks they have a very reasonable number on the site work, whereas, Romo has a very high number for that and frankly, it is probably the most complicated work of the whole project. Chairman Ceballos asked Ms. Mata if she had any comments or if there was something she would like to see different. Ms. Mata stated that she agrees with the recommendation to renegotiate with them to the budget they have for that project so that they do not exceed the resources they already allocated for that project. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that the second one to renegotiate would be with Royal E. if Quantum does not agree and also recommended to make sure that the Quantum number on the site will stand at \$34K because if it does not, they may not be the lowest bidder. Ms. Mata asked if it was in regards to the drainage. Chairman Ceballos confirmed. Ms. Mata agreed. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked if they want to go with Royal. Chairman Ceballos responded that it would be to start with Quantum and then Royal E. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza mentioned that it would only be for the canopy and will not be doing any landscaping, so they would have to bid again for the landscaping. Chairman Ceballos stated that they will have to remove the whole landscaping scope of work if they decide to go with Royal E at some point if they cannot negotiate a price with Quantum within the budget, they would have to do the landscaping in a separate bid if possible, but they just wanted to do everything together and as far as the canopy, it is a product that comes prefab which just gets installed by the contractor.

Chairman Ceballos asked Commissioner Ms. Freeman if she had any comments.

Chairman Ceballos stated, for the record, that Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez at this time was joining them at the meeting. Commissioner Ms. Freeman asked if they could negotiate with Quantum and see how close they could get to the original budget on the bid. Chairman Ceballos stated that it is a proposal, it is not a bid; therefore, they get to pick and choose the scope based on the budget; they can still disagree and will move to the next bidder or proponent.

**Chairman Ceballos moved to approve that the Executive Director would negotiate with Quantum Contractors to arrive at our budget and if that does not occur, to go to the next lowest bidder Royal E. Construction to negotiate with them.**

**Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Mata asked if they could entertain under the same item the awarding of the electrical and the plumbing at Ana Maria Lozano. Chairman Ceballos stated that they will, but that it will not be official, so they could bring it back to ratify it. Ms. Mata



presented by power point the proposers they have and the totals. Chairman Ceballos asked what the budget is. Ms. Mata stated that the budget for plumbing they had it established at \$13,600 with \$800 per fixture, so Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they are over the budget as well. Ms. Mata confirmed and stated that the closest one is Hilario Gonzalez, but he is over budget by \$6K. Chairman Ceballos stated that something is off, either the Architect is completely outdated on the cost because they are 30% over the budget and asked if they could go to the next one. Ms. Mata mentioned that on electrical they are closer to the mark; they have a budget of \$38,812 and they are at \$11.20 per sq. ft. in the budget, so ACDC comes the closest to it. Chairman Ceballos stated that these items are not on the agenda, but he would like to at least take action to give staff the ability to value these items and negotiate with the lowest bidders and then bring it back to the Board for ratification at the next opportunity. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked if they know of the work of the plumbing by ACDC, the lowest bidder, if they know how good their work is and if they had checked it out. Ms. Mata mentioned that they have done work with all the people proposing. Chairman Ceballos informed Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza that ACDC had done Russell Terrace, A & S Electric is doing the Balcones apartments and Isaías the Tiny Homes, so they know them all and are all good and competitive. Ms. Mata mentioned that in the plumbing they had Orozco and Hilario Gonzalez at Russell Terrace and RG plumbing was at Tiny Homes and Russell Terrace. Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any more questions or comments. There were none.

**Chairman Ceballos moved to work on both items with the lowest bidder; it is not on the agenda, but it would at least get the project going and they are to bring it back to ratify and to work on the budget to value engineer the materials selected and stated that the value engineering should be led by the Architect so they will know what is changing in terms of quality or quantity.**

**Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Chairman Ceballos stated, for the record, that for the electrical it is ACDC and for the plumbing it is Hilario Gonzalez and mentioned that it will be the same thing; if they cannot arrive to an agreement, they will go to the next proponent.

- B. Discussion and possible action to award concrete cutting and pouring bid at Balcones Apartments renovation project, as recommended by staff.**

Ms. Mata mentioned that for Los Balcones they had some proposers for the concrete cutting and stated that for that project they have a budget of \$39K and presented the Board the breakdown of the items they bid on related to the concrete cutting and the pricing they received. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that all those people have done work for LHA as well; Zapata and Villegas worked at Russell Terrace and Royal E. also worked at Russell Terrace. Chairman Ceballos asked if anybody had any comments. There were none.



**Chairman Ceballos moved to award this item 6B as recommended by staff to the lowest bidder Raul Villegas for the concrete cutting and pouring.**

**Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that in regards to Balcones he would suggest that they can award and to separate framing teams into two different contracts; if they start them together it would have to be two different teams or contractors and will not have to wait for the next Board meeting to award it and stated that it should come under the approval threshold; they cannot have the same contractor on each building; otherwise, they will need to come back to the Board.

- C. Update, discussion and possible action related to the current COVID-19 health concerns and impacts to the Agency. This item may be discussed in executive session pursuant to Section 551.071 (consultation with attorneys) and 551.074 (personnel matters).**

Chairman Ceballos stated that they will not need to go into executive session on this item and that Ms. Mata will provide an update.

Ms. Mata stated that in regards to the health concerns for COVID, they went ahead and implemented the protection program they had with the different tiers; Tier 1 is anybody affected directly with COVID; Tier 2 is anybody that meets the age and combined underlying conditions; Tier 3 is where the employee meets either age or condition and then they added Tier 4 which includes reducing the work schedule for the staff from 5 days to 4 days and having them work that one day from home. Chairman Ceballos asked Ms. Mata to show the memorandum to the Board which is dated June 26, 2020 and the reason they issued the memo is because there was an increase in COVID cases and the City of Laredo extended the declaration of public health emergency through July 31 and are also considering the fact that the hospitalization rate had doubled in the last 48 hours as of the date of that memo and additionally, it was declared that all the hospitals' intensive care units are at patient/staff ratio capacity; they had already implemented bringing back all the staff that was working from home or on modified schedule, but they decided to go back to the setup they had going on before because they want to reduce exposing the staff; they would hate to see somebody get exposed and get sick and not be able to receive any kind of treatment at the hospital given the full capacity they are at; therefore, they came to the conclusion that it was best to have staff working from home or assigned to modified schedule if they meet the age criteria or they have underlying conditions; additionally, they considered the fact that there is staff that has been working five days a week, full schedules, because they do not qualify under either one of those criteria and we implemented having them work from home one day out of the week to try to reduce their exposure as well.

Chairman Ceballos asked if they set up a perimeter for it. Ms. Mata stated that she asked HR and the Managers to coordinate with the Department Heads so that they can continue to operate Monday through Friday as an agency, but they will have to reduce the staff on either Monday or Friday, the reason for it to be on Monday or Friday is that



they want to allow staff to stay home continuously for most of the time versus having them take a day in between and they would come and leave their house throughout the week, so Ms. Mata asked staff to meet with the Department Heads in that regard so they can stagger them and have enough staff onsite to continue operations on a Monday through Friday schedule.

Chairman Ceballos stated that it is an action item, so if they would like to see something changed, it will be the opportunity to do it and mentioned that the Committee kind of discuss and brainstorm altogether and asked if there is a second page to this item and whether there are any edits or updates from the Board and asked Ms. Mata how they are doing. Ms. Mata responded that they are doing fine and that it was the first day the staff was out because they wanted to meet with everybody individually to make sure they understood what tier they fall under and work with the Department Heads to make sure the schedules work for them as well.

Chairman Ceballos stated that there does not seem to be any action for this item and thanked Ms. Mata for the update and asked the Board if there was anything else they would want to discuss.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked how they are doing in regards to the Census. Ms. Mata informed that they just put together a team and they will be going door to door and have interviews and mentioned that the number of people they have available to do it is changing and will be doing it through a phone system, so they are working currently through that process; maybe the people working from home can assist in calling and walking the tenants through filling out the questionnaire. Chairman Ceballos asked Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza if they could set a very reasonable goal for Ms. Martinez who is 100% on board on it. Chairman Ceballos stated that 100% of the tenants have responded to the Census and thanked them for helping with the Census which he said is very important and mentioned that there may be some additional funds that might be coming down and other appropriations that are coming down and they are keeping track of these funds through Ms. Martinez department and they will probably ask the Economic Development Consultant with Inner City to keep track of it and to help so that they do not lose any opportunities for federal funds and stated that Ms. Mata is working along with Ms. Gaona to put together an expenditure plan for the COVID 19 funds that were received because they have a very short use to December 31 for expenditure.

Chairman Ceballos stated that if they have any questions about the funds and how they are being used to please reach out to Ms. Mata or Mary Gaona and mentioned that they will see improvements at all the facilities, improvements such as automated sliding doors and also improvement to the HVAC system with ultraviolet lights in the duct work that will help clean the air and also at the Senior Home there will be a little remodeling to provide more space for tenants inside an outside as well, so if they have any ideas on things they would like to see, they can suggest them now or by next week when they will be finalizing that budget.

## **7. 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).

**8. ACTION ON ANY EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEM**


**9. ADJOURNMENT**

**Chairman Ceballos moved to adjourn the meeting.**

**Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**Meeting adjourned at 12:37 p.m.**



---

Jose L. Ceballos, Chairman



---

Alma D. Mata, Executive Director