

Housing Authority of the City of Laredo
Regular Board of Commissioners Meeting

Zoom Video Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87052801362>

Call in Number: 1-346-248-7799

Webinar ID: 870 5280 1362

LHA Board Room

2000 San Francisco Ave.

Laredo, Texas 78040

Thursday, November 19, 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-R-10

Minutes

November 19, 2020

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** Chairman Ceballos called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m.
- 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Chairman Ceballos led them in the recital of the pledge. Chairman Ceballos stated that he hopes everybody finds themselves safe and bearing the COVID pandemic as best as possible and mentioned that he himself went through a short quarantine period due to his wife being exposed to a positive relative and they were very fortunate that they tested negative and hopes this is also the case with as many of them given what is going on.
- 3. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM** Mrs. Mary Gaona, Executive Director, proceeded with roll call and stated that they have a quorum.

Commissioners Present

Jose L. Ceballos, Chairman (by zoom)

Dr. Sergio D. Garza, Vice-Chairman (by zoom)

Anita Guerra, Commissioner (by zoom)

Dr. Marisela Rodriguez Tijerina, Commissioner (by zoom)

Gloria Ann Freeman, Resident Commissioner (by zoom)

Commissioners Absent

Staff Present

Mary Gaona, Executive Director

Christy Ramos, Administrative Assistant

Robert Peña, Director of IT

Melissa Ortiz, Director of Section 8 (by zoom)

Bulmaro Cruz, Director of Construction Projects (by zoom)

Diana Cruz, Human Resource Manager (by zoom)

Jessica Martinez, Director of Community and Economic Development (by zoom)

Sara Vicharelli, Interim Director of Housing Management (by zoom)

Jennifer Barrientos, Director of Finance (by zoom)
Sonia Flores, Accountant (by zoom)
Daniel Colina, Accountant (by zoom)
Miriam Villarreal, Resource Center Coordinator (by zoom)
Ricardo De Anda, Attorney (by zoom)

Others Present

Rosie Rios, Central Resident Council President (by zoom)
Miriam Quintanilla, resident (by zoom)

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 no citizens comments.

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

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any disclosures related to the business of today from staff or any members of the Board. There were no disclosures of conflicts of interest.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes for Board of Commissioners Meeting on October 29, 2020.

Chairman Ceballos stated that they have the minutes in their packets and would entertain a motion.

Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina moved to approve the minutes of Board of Commissioners meeting on October 29, 2020.

Chairman Ceballos seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

7. PRESENTATION BY CENTRAL RESIDENT COUNCIL

Ms. Rosie Rios, Central Resident Council President stated that they did the survey for the Five-Year Plan hoping that it would be approved and mentioned that they made the survey at all of the projects for the priorities needed. Chairman Ceballos thanked Ms. Rios for the participation and effort they did and stated that he knows that with the need of protecting from the pandemic, it is a lot more difficult to communicate or receive information that it was a lot easier before, so Chairman Ceballos thanked Ms. Rios and also stated that they will open the hearing today and will close it in December, so that they still have time for everybody to review the Five-Year Plan and make any adjustments or comments; they will not approve it today, they will

basically announce that they will open the hearing and that they will close it in the future. Chairman Ceballos stated that he is reviewing the Five-Year Plan and will provide his comments to Mrs. Gaona to share with them and if they would need to hold another meeting aside from these meetings, they can also do it and asked if the Commissioners had any comments in regards to the residents.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman mentioned that she understands there had been a problem in regards to putting out the flyer and stated that she was given an hour to turn in the flyer and asked how many residents had responded to the Five-Year Plan. Ms. Rios stated that they had approximately a 10% response from Colonia Guadalupe; 5% from South Laredo, 30% from Meadow Acres, 5% from Senior Home, 4% from Asherton, 10% from Ana Maria Lozano, and 20% from Carlos Richter and mentioned that the majority asked for what they needed, which are issues that can be done through the Manager with each of the project's resources, so they just considered the priorities in each of the surveys and what the residents are able to ask the Managers was handled separately in order to provide the information to each of the Managers because the residents did not understand that they were just asking for the priorities for renovation like electricity and plumbing; residents would ask about landscaping and they considered talking to the Managers in regards to requests that do not qualify for the Five-Year Plan. Ms. Rios informed that Ms. Martinez has the surveys from all the properties. Commissioner Ms. Freeman asked Ms. Rios if she considered 5% response was enough participation to find out the needs of each of the Properties.

Ms. Rios responded that if they have 2,500 residents, 5% response she considered is a good response and mentioned that due to the COVID some residents would place the survey in a ziploc bag and return it. Ms. Rios informed that she personally delivered the survey by placing them in the mailboxes and calling the residents by phone in her property and stated that Commissioner Ms. Freeman is in Russell Terrace which is not included in the Five-Year Plan, but still they considered providing the survey to find out about their needs and Ms. Rios stated that the residents did respond and that Ms. Resendez has the residents' responses and mentioned again that Russell Terrace is not included in the Five-Year Plan given the fact that it is in perfect condition.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman thanked Ms. Rios as well as Chairman Ceballos who stated that they still have time in regards to the Five-Year Plan and that they will not approve it today, so they still have time to take more information and mentioned that the Five-Year Plan does not apply to projects that are not part of Public Housing, but it is still important to take their information and take care of it at the property level.

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any more comments. There were no more comments.

- 8. PUBLIC HEARING: To receive public comments and input, and close the public hearing period.** Presentation and public comments on the proposed Public Hearing Agency Annual Plan and Five-Year Action Plan for fiscal years 2021-2025, under the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act/Housing Reform Act of 1998.

Chairman Ceballos informed that they are not closing the hearing period today and that the public hearing period will continue until they actually have a final plan to present and asked Ms. Gaona if she had anything to add. Ms. Gaona responded that they presented all the information in the packet to the Board which was put together by the staff for the Five-Year Action Plan plus any open grants they have and stated that if the Commissioners have any questions or would like to sit down and discuss, she would do that with them. Chairman Ceballos asked if Commissioners had any questions they would like to entertain, if they would like to do that separately or if there was any interest before they would get to the final plan in December.

Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina asked if a project would keep adding every year because it would take so many years of timeframe or if it is because it would not get done a year before because she feels it is not clear on certain projects that they keep adding or if it needs to be done on a yearly basis. Chairman Ceballos asked Ms. Gaona if she would like to respond to Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina. Ms. Gaona responded that each year they would get about \$1.2M per project based on the number of units, so if they have 200 unit, it would be based on a certain percentage of money for that property and if the electrical is going to take \$2M, they would have to spread it throughout the five years to be able to complete it. Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina mentioned that she just wanted to make sure that it would get done on a yearly basis as stated on the plan and thanked Ms. Gaona for the clarification.

Chairman Ceballos informed Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina that sometimes they would take projects with staff that are listed and move them depending on the expenditure levels as they would recall they were late on expenditures last year and even going into this year, so what they may see if they recall from another year, they might have put it off as the Board to expend in other areas, so it is kind of a combination of extended projects and then reprogramming as necessary to keep expenditure levels.

Ms. Gaona stated that she wanted to advise the Commissioners, since the Resident Council is in the meeting, that they clarified to them that they had needed to move items due to COVID and they could possibly continue to still have to move items out from the 2019 Capital Fund. Chairman Ceballos asked Ms. Gaona to explain why they would have to do it. Ms. Gaona stated that they have a two-year obligation deadline that they have to meet and if they are not able to meet that obligation, they will have to move those items and put items that would allow them to be completed within the timeframe required. Chairman Ceballos stated that the reason is because they cannot get into the units. Ms. Gaona confirmed. Chairman Ceballos mentioned, to be very specific, that if there is a repair that involves working in the unit around family, they probably will not be able to do it during the pandemic, so it would need to be reprogrammed. Ms. Gaona confirmed.

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

Chairman Ceballos stated that he would acknowledge the standing reports and presentations because he thinks that they do not have enough time to cover the whole report and asked Ms. Gaona if there was anything pressing that she would like to cover in regards to this item. Ms. Gaona stated that in case the Commissioners have any questions in regards to leasing, she stated that they have a large number of units that are not leased and she will be addressing

that and it will be in the report for the upcoming meeting. Chairman Ceballos asked if there was a reason for it. Ms. Gaona responded that one of the main issues is that she was told that there was an issue with the waiting list and also that some of the units are not ready to be leased, but the main problem was the conversion of the waiting list from Emphasys to Yardi.

Chairman Ceballos stated for the staff that is on the line that they now have these technology problems and they are now impacting families that are not able to actually receive assistance and be housed because they have an IT conversion and mentioned that he would ask Ms. Gaona to develop a paper driven option that would not stop them from housing people because they cannot have 60 or 90 days of bulking up the waiting list because our technology is not ready to handle it which does not seem fair for people that are waiting, especially with the pandemic, so Chairman Ceballos wants to really stress that and would ask Robert Peña to not withhold this kind of information from coming to the Board directly, if needed, to alert the Board that they have an occupancy issue because technology has fallen behind and wondered if the Board had any other comments and stated that his directive to Ms. Gaona is to have this information provided to the Board because they have regular meetings and for them to hear that it is a technology issue while they have vacancies. Chairman Ceballos asked how many vacancies in total they would be talking about in public housing. Ms. Gaona responded that they are talking about a total of 45 vacancies. Chairman Ceballos stated that it makes no sense to him that they have 45 units available to rent and that a technology issue has resulted in a delay like that, so it needs to be addressed. Commissioner Ms. Guerra agreed.

A. Executive Director's Report to include status of Rapid Rehousing Grant Program, and ongoing construction projects.

Chairman Ceballos asked Ms. Gaona if Rapid Rehousing would be starting this week. Ms. Gaona confirmed and informed that they just had a call with THN and HUD yesterday and they also discussed the coordinated entry with Bethany House this morning to make sure that it is still in place so that they can start getting referrals. Chairman Ceballos stated that he would talk to Ms. Gaona off line because he is curious whether they have those one-bedroom units vacant in public housing because of the homeless people that are moving in and he thinks they only opened the waiting list in Section 8, so it may not work and he is worried that some of the people that are coming in who are formerly homeless and are looking for one-bedroom units may not be able to find them, so Chairman Ceballos is wondering if they hold any units in public housing that they could address the availability of one-bedroom units. Ms. Gaona stated that she would look into it.

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any comments from the Board or questions for Ms. Gaona on the Executive Director's Report. There were no comments or questions.

10. CONSENT AGENDA: RESOLUTIONS

All of the items may be acted upon by one motion. No separate discussion or action of the items is necessary unless desired by a Commissioner.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that all the items in the consent agenda relate to Ms. Gaona's designation as Executive Director with various banks, credit card and Casa Verde Apartments

- A.** Discussion and possible action to ratify the authorization of Mrs. Maria M. Gaona – Executive Director as an authorized signer on bank signature cards at Falcon International Bank and BBVA USA Bank and access to all HUD online systems.
- B.** Discussion and possible action to approve the authorization to change the authorized user, Mrs. Maria M. Gaona – Executive Director, on the agency credit card.
- C.** Discussion and possible action as the general partner for LHA River Bank Village, LTD., and BAH Casa Verde Apartments, LTD., appoint Mrs. Maria M. Gaona – Executive Director as Chief Executive Office and Manager for the Laredo Housing Opportunities Corporation and approve Resolution No. 20-R-11.

Chairman Ceballos moved to accept items 10A, 10B, and 10C under consent agenda as presented.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

11. ACTION ITEM

- A.** Discussion and possible action related to the NeighborWorks Community Loan Center of Laredo Community Lending Program proposal and the associated Memorandum of Understanding. This item may be discussed in Executive Session, pursuant to Section 551.071 (consultation with attorneys).

Chairman Ceballos stated that they had a long discussion on this MOU before and mentioned that the attorney and NeighborWorks came back with a proposal based on input from Ms. Gaona and from Chairman Ceballos and referred to item 4 under Section A, page two: employer shall properly add the program to the employees customary description of employment benefit and stated that it is not a benefit, so they are not going to add this item as a benefit or agreement as a benefit to the employee and stated that they got stricken with pretty much any responsibility of the Housing Authority promoting or coordinating any marketing of the program and stated that on section C. Mr. De Anda added a sentence that basically says that, so Chairman Ceballos stated that he feels comfortable with these changes and the program can be of help particularly to the lower income community in our agency and will potentially make use of it and stated that it limits their involvement and puts the responsibility of promoting the program on the agency, in this case NeighborWorks.

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any questions from the Board or any additions from Ms. Gaona. Commissioner Ms. Freeman asked if they would need

to get special software to place in the system to accommodate the partnership with NeighborWorks. Ms. Gaona responded that it will only be a deduction that will be posted in the accounting system.

Chairman Ceballos stated that one thing that got taken out, which he had suggested and that he thinks would be good for them, was for us to agree to have an orientation announcement to the staff, so they took it out and sent back that they did not have a problem with that. Chairman Ceballos stated that he did not want to have our staff to be leading it, so it will be like what they do with everyone else that wants to have a presentation; if they want to have that presentation, they are good to do it and they can have back up for them. Chairman Ceballos asked Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina if she feels comfortable with the changes and the amendments. Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina stated that she agrees how it was worded this time and thanked Mr. De Anda and also mentioned that she agrees that if there is any orientation, it would not be from our staff talking about it, but rather showing a presentation coming from the company and also stated that she agrees that we are not to represent them. Commissioner Ms. Guerra mentioned that local lenders orientation falls under B., page 2.

Chairman Ceballos moved to accept the edits with the add-on that they can have an orientation led by them and to strike no. 4 as Chairman Ceballos discussed it. Commissioner Ms. Guerra and Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

- B.** 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 551.071 (consultation with attorneys) and 551.074 (personnel matters).

Chairman Ceballos stated that he did not have anything to discuss in this item and that Ms. Gaona might and mentioned that they will keep a watchful eye as they are going into the winter season and potentially convening the committee to talk about any work from home and returning from work from home option possibly and stated that he thinks that what they have been doing has been working, although they had a couple of minor glitches from staff that had congregated which has been discussed internally, but for the most part, having Waldo Lopez on board has been a huge relief to the response in having his expertise and also having Mr. De Anda handling the legalities on that committee has been very helpful, so Chairman Ceballos thanked them for their work and then asked if Ms. Gaona had anything to discuss on this item. Ms. Gaona stated that she did not have anything to discuss.

Chairman Ceballos asked the Board if they had any questions on this item. Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina stated that she would recommend for them to keep assessing their practices and that due to newest surge, if they would have a meeting even with three people in the room to assess what they are currently

doing and she would suggest what they are doing at her workplace; there is no events whatsoever, not even curbside, unfortunately, for Thanksgiving they could not even have curbside only because the cases are going up also internally, so she recommended to be cautious about it and start making that plan from here until February when this anticipated flu/corona virus season is in effect.

Chairman Ceballos stated that he would like for the HR Director, under Ms. Gaona's direction, to be completely engaged regularly with the staff and what he means by that is that he knows that there were groups from two different projects that got together from different departments and there were some folks that tested positive and stated that we need to be proactive and schedule meetings with departments to keep them well informed of expectations and also keep them well informed of options they may have with working from home, with scheduling changes and other needs because he knows that there are some needs and some questions were raised about having coffee makers and having microwaves, so Chairman Ceballos stated that he thinks that the HR Manager needs to take the lead and be proactive and stated that he does not know if she is doing it and if she is, he thanks her for doing it and if she is not, he recommends for her to create a plan so that the employees have an easy go to answer those questions and mentioned that they also talked about considering, maybe at the next meeting coming back to the Board with the one policy that wraps everything up so that the employees can have it posted in their workplace and will know what days they get paid for, when sick leave qualifies, when it does not qualify, what gets paid from federal requirements; all of those Q's and A's posted at every site are important, so Chairman Ceballos stated that he is asking Ms. Gaona to lead that along with the HR Manager and be proactive so that employees are not confused about what gets paid and what does not get paid. Ms. Gaona agreed.

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any more comments. There were no more comments, so Chairman Ceballos stated that there is no action on this item and they will move to the next item.

- C. Discussion and possible action to approve the hiring recommendation by the Executive Director, for any management positions requiring Board consultation. This item may be discussed in closed session pursuant to Texas Government Code, Section 551.074.

Chairman Ceballos asked Ms. Gaona if she had any items related to this item. Ms. Gaona responded that she had one, a property management position that she would like to get filled. Chairman Ceballos asked Ms. Gaona if they need to go into executive session or if she is ready to make the recommendation. Ms. Gaona stated that she is ready to make the recommendation of the staff and Ms. Gaona to hire Cecilia Maria Sosa as Property Manager for Ana Maria Lozano and Carlos Richter properties and stated that Ms. Sosa has been there since October 11, 2020 as Interim Property Manager.

Chairman Ceballos asked the Board if they wished to go into executive session or if they accept the recommendation and mentioned that it is his understanding that the Board wants to act on it. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza agreed.

Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to accept the recommendation made by Ms. Gaona and staff on this position.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

12. 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).

13. ACTION ON ANY EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEM


14. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to adjourn the meeting.


Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 12:32 p.m.



Jose L. Ceballos, Chairman



Mary Gaona, Executive Director