

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

Zoom Video Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86534800168>

Call in Number: 1-346-248-7799

Webinar ID: 865 3480 0168

LHA Board Room

2000 San Francisco Ave.

Laredo, Texas 78040

Thursday, December 17, 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-11**

**Minutes**

**December 17, 2020**

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** Chairman Ceballos called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.
- 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Chairman Ceballos led them in the recital of the pledge.
- 3. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM** Mrs. Mary Gaona, Executive Director, proceeded with roll call and Chairman Ceballos stated that they had a quorum.

**Commissioners Present**

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

**Commissioners Absent**

**Staff Present**

Mary Gaona, Executive Director (by zoom)  
Christy Ramos, Administrative Assistant (by zoom)  
Robert Peña, Director of IT (by zoom)  
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)  
Valeria Cabello, Interim Procurement Officer (by zoom)  
Daniel Colina, Chief Accountant (by zoom)  
Ricardo De Anda, Attorney (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 no citizens comments.

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

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any disclosures. There were no disclosures.

**6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. Approval of Minutes for Board of Commissioners meeting on November 19, 2020.**

**Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina moved to approve the minutes of Board of Commissioners meeting on November 19, 2020.**

**Chairman Jose L. Ceballos seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**7. PRESENTATION BY CENTRAL RESIDENT COUNCIL**

Mrs. Gaona stated that Ms. Rosie Rios, Central Resident Council President, would not be able to attend the meeting due to a death in the family. Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona to express their condolences to Ms. Rios.

**8. PUBLIC HEARING: To receive public comments and input, and close the public hearing period as it relates to the proposed PHA Annual Plan and Five-Year Action Plan for fiscal years 2021-2025.**

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any comments and stated that they took comments last meeting from the Resident Council and mentioned that he had an opportunity to meet with Mrs. Gaona and several department heads particularly over the proposed 2021 and 2022 plans which will potentially be activated and stated that he had no objections over what was presented.

**Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to close the public hearing.**

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

**Motion passed unanimously.**

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

- A. Executive Director's Report to include status of Community Safety and Security (Peace Officer) Program Report, Rapid Rehousing Grant Program, and ongoing construction projects.

Mrs. Gaona informed that they had several staff development activities for the staff via zoom and staff continues to go through trainings and getting training on the new system, on the payroll system and also new staff is getting training in their departments.

In regards to vacancies Mrs. Gaona mentioned that they are still looking to fill some of those vacancies and they will be coming to the Board with a proposal in one of the meetings in January and stated that they also have vacancies at both properties, Casa Verde and River Banks, and stated that due to COVID they are struggling a little to get those vacancies filled, but they have been talking to them and working with them to try to get it resolved.

Chairman Ceballos stated for the record that Commissioner Ms. Guerra was joining the meeting.

Mrs. Gaona mentioned that in regards to BiblioTech, they still have those locations closed, so the curriculum users are basically remaining the same. In regards to the pic score Mrs. Gaona stated that they continue to be fine in all the properties and mentioned that they still continue to have difficulty with leasing and said they adjusted from November to December and she wanted to advise the Board that in Colonia Guadalupe they had taken the opportunity of the vacancies to do transfers and address the under housed and the over housed within the property, so they had about 8 to 9 of those taking place this month and will go ahead and address them during this opportunity. Chairman Ceballos asked if they were still at 20 vacancies. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that they are currently at 23 because of the transfers they are doing and they have two families that are getting ready to move in and also mentioned that they are seeing problems at Senior Home and are going through the list pretty quick being that it is an old list, so a lot of the letters that were sent out, the residents are denying the assistance because it has been so long that they already found other locations.

Chairman Ceballos asked if they are planning to open the waiting list. Mrs. Gaona stated that the elderly waiting list is always open and are trying to work through it. Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona if they should reach to the homeless shelters to see if there are any elderly that could be fast tracked into the waiting list. Mrs. Gaona responded that they can and mentioned that they have sent out 100 letters and they received very few and Ms. Monica Rivera is struggling with some of them denying the assistance because of the lack of parking. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he did not want to take too much time because they have

other items, but stated that Mr. De Anda has raised a concern in the COVID committee and he is still researching and mentioned that they need to include Mr. Waldo Lopez in the Board meetings because he does not think he is, but they probably should start including him, so the matter of whether they can obligate someone to have a COVID test before admitting them is something they should research as they admit people, particularly to Senior Home and mentioned that he knows Mr. De Anda has raised that concern and also stated that he does not know the answer and that the last time they talked about it, none of them really knew whether legally they could go as far as that and he would like to lean that the answer is yes, but they should get an answer to it, especially if they are going to admit 15 new tenants to an already difficult situation. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that they have been requesting that they take the COVID test and they have not had any problems them denying and said that they did have a situation with one gentleman that was not getting the results, but he did go twice and was not getting the results. Chairman Ceballos stated that maybe it is not a problem, but it could become; therefore, they need to get an answer for it. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that it is a high rate, more than a 10% vacancy rate, so they need to really work at it.

Mrs. Gaona informed that in Section 8 the pic score is at 98%, lease up is at 96%, but HAP utilization is at 104%. Chairman Ceballos asked if they get all the points. Mrs. Gaona confirmed and stated that they can see in the report that it is at 100%; they have the whole 145 points because Ms. Ortiz is using funding utilization.

In regards to IT projects Mrs. Gaona informed that they have already done the third payroll. Chairman Ceballos asked before going to IT, to look at FSS and asked if they are getting all the points there. Mrs. Gaona confirmed and Chairman Ceballos stated that he wanted to congratulate Ms. Ortiz and the team for getting them to this point and he knows it has been a while, but just to know that it has been taken care of and will get those points without question which is deserving of acknowledgement, so Chairman Ceballos congratulated Ms. Ortiz and also Mrs. Gaona for her leadership as well.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman asked in reference to the homeless referral preference assistance and asked if they will be using any of that money to house homeless if the temperatures drop in Laredo and there are no more vacancies in the shelters. Ms. Gaona confirmed and stated that they have to be on the waiting list and they would utilize this funding to rapidly move them in and assist them with the deposits. Chairman Ceballos stated that Commissioner Ms. Freeman was talking about the rapid rehousing and asked if they can put them into rapid rehousing as they wait to be in Public Housing or Section 8 and asked Commissioner Ms. Freeman if her question was if they are going to house people when they are homeless given the weather. Commissioner Ms. Freeman confirmed and Chairman Ceballos stated that they have not done that traditionally, but thinks that they should be able to put them into rapid rehousing; they would send them to Bethany House and have them referred back to us and

then they would get placed, not in a hotel, but they get to find a unit. Mrs. Gaona informed Commissioner Ms. Freeman that they have been working with the rapid rehousing and they could also use these funds, but rapid rehousing has money and they would have to go through a coordinated entry assessment which is one of the requirements, so they are referring them to Bethany House, where they would get assessed and then they can house them for the rapid rehousing program and stated that they currently have eight families that they can assist through that funding source, but based on the funding they can also maybe adjust it to 9 or 10 depending on the cost of the rent.

Chairman Ceballos informed Commissioner Ms. Freeman that other thing that is happening is that they also have COVID money that the City has been receiving based on formula which is sitting idle and the service providers are there with capacity issues and yet, there is money there, so they may see something develop in the next sixty days where they may come back with some sort of proposal, a collaborative to be able to handle it and mentioned that he knows the weather is going to change, but he does not know whether they can do it any faster and stated that they heard today that maybe there is an interest by Bethany House to take on something more than what they are taking on, but does not know if it is realistic yet; if it is the case, it would allow them to come back to the Board for financial support or to help address the clientele she is concerned for and he knows that the whole Board is concerned. Chairman Ceballos also mentioned that everybody is aware including Mr. De Anda because they had a session a couple months back and stated that they have the vehicles to help with either constructing, building things out, but what they cannot do is operate shelters as the Housing Authority, so they need other service providers to be recruited or to be willing to be those operators or potentially the City of Laredo would help in some way and stated that they have funding along with leadership, they just need capacity with the non-profits to ask them to do more when they are already exhausted is a problem, but yet they have federal money right now, so they need to really get going and do something.

Chairman Ceballos stated that to answer Commissioner Ms. Freeman's question, it is a yes and thinks that they could probably be referred quickly to us within a week and would give them a voucher; a different kind of voucher, but basically an authorization to go find an apartment or a house and asked if it would be paid out for a year. Mrs. Gaona confirmed and mentioned that for now they have fifteen months. Chairman Ceballos stated that if they know of anybody to go ahead and put them in touch with Jessica Martinez or Stephanie and they will work with Bethany House because for the homeless there is a coordinated system that requires them to go to Bethany House first and become registered and scored and then they get referred out. Commissioner Ms. Freeman thanked Chairman Ceballos for the information.

Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona if Tiny Homes is vacant. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that there is still one individual in Tiny Homes that they are trying to

do rapid rehousing and move her out. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that the three houses at Tiny Homes are being used for COVID purposes which has been very helpful and stated that right before that they were going to deliver them to new tenants, but COVID hit and then they used them for COVID and they can see that they have been very helpful to have them and he still thinks and it is the reason he is bringing it up, that they should leave them for COVID for a few more months before they give them to other permanent tenants if the Board agrees and asked them if they should keep them to serve this COVID issue. Commissioner Ms. Freeman stated that at this moment they should keep them for COVID response.

Chairman Ceballos stated that they had a hotel nearby in our neighborhood which was very helpful and was a huge relief when they had an outbreak at a shelter that lasted about six weeks mitigating it and stated that it is the only hotel that takes publically COVID positive persons and there are other hotels that take COVID positive persons, but they do not want it to be known and are fine and happy to support, but sometimes the dynamics of a hotel with kids is not the best, so he thinks that Tiny Homes should continue to help until they hear that things are better, hopefully in the early spring.

Mrs. Gaona continued informing about IT projects and stated that they are currently finishing implementing Kronos with all the challenges they have and are at more than 50% on that. Chairman Ceballos asked Mr. Peña if he is on target with his original schedule. Mr. Peña responded that he is not on schedule due to mainly things outside of the project and stated that they have two mayor projects going on right now; the Yardi implementation as well as the Kronos implementation and stated that the Yardi implementation has experienced issues with staff getting on board and being able to manage the software and is having to fill in some capacities in order to help assist and make sure that the system is able to move forward and in the Kronos side there have been a couple of glitches. Chairman Ceballos asked what Kronos was for. Mr. Peña responded that it is a payroll and banking system and with the Kronos there has been some technical issues with the accrual of leave; it calculates correctly the personal holidays, but not the annual leave, so there are a few issues there that have caused them to fall behind, but the main issue is on the Yardi side and he is having to double his efforts to train the staff and get them up to speed and able to manage the software and also with staff being out on COVID leave also presents a barrier; at one point they had half of the Public Housing managers out on COVID leave which really put a dent on the timeline; they had about four to six weeks and he could not train them.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked Mr. Peña about the issues with the sick leave and also who handles that, if it is Mr. Peña or the company. Mr. Peña stated that he handles the employees and makes sure that they are in the system. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked about calculations not being correct. Mr. Peña stated that it is handled by the consultants who are doing the set up and it did not quite go perfectly. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked if they are responding when they call the

consultants. Mr. Peña confirmed and mentioned that Ms. Barrientos just set up a meeting with them for the coming Tuesday and stated that they are on top of it.

Chairman Ceballos asked Mr. Peña if they have full funding for Windows Pro for everybody. Mr. Peña confirmed.

Mrs. Gaona informed that the construction projects at Ana Maria Lozano is currently on hold and Los Balcones also due to permits with the City and hopefully they would be able to resolve both of those issues. Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona if she would give some details for the Board to be aware. Mrs. Gaona stated on Ana Maria Lozano project they had some concerns in regards to utilities which has been resolved and they are trying to upload and mentioned that they got a new system at the City which has been complicating the procedure for them as well as for us; they have all the information ready for them to get it uploaded and hopefully they can get that permit and at Los Balcones Apartments they have been back and forth with the City also and stated that the last issue they had was that they wanted the agency to re-zone the property and by forcing them to do it, it would delay them by at least two more months and they have a deadline of October 2021 to be able to complete that project, so they are also disagreeing with them on the need to change the zoning and mentioned that Mr. Solis, the architect, Chairman Ceballos, Bulmaro and herself met with staff and will see what the response is on their side so that they can go ahead and start on this project again.

In regards to COVID-19 Public Health and Safety projects Mrs. Gaona stated that they have the former executive office and they got the demo practically completed and they are going to start looking at submitting that project for permit and hopefully they can expedite that. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that the Balcones have been apartments since they were built, but because the permit expired they got a new look at it and now they are saying we have to rezone, but rezoning will put them off by 90 days, so they are fighting it and it looks like they are going to have an opportunity to discontinue the review process and stated that the building permit review process at the City is very challenging which should not be, but it has become very challenging, very tedious and is taking a lot of time, not just weeks, but months to clear things that should be very simple to clear and they are also moving from a paper system to an on-line system which has made it challenging not just for them, but for us as well and hopefully, beginning the year they will get into full steam with both of them.

## **B. Unaudited Financials**

Jennifer Barrientos, Director of Finance, presented the October 2020 unaudited financials which is an overview of revenue and expenditures for each of the properties and the programs and she is happy to announce that they have a profit in the programs and amps so far, as well as Section 8 and Farm Labor. Ms. Barrientos mentioned that they should be at 58% and stated that they are

struggling a little bit in Asherton as well as Farm Labor, Amps and are at 58% and below of the expenditures. Ms. Barrientos also presented the overview of the salaries and benefits they have in the properties and stated that they have about \$261K in savings.

Ms. Barrientos presented the PFC's and mentioned that the Laredo Housing Facilities Corporation revenues and expenses as of April through October and informed that in October they converted from the construction loan type permanent loan at Russell Terrace; therefore, they had some expenditures there and also mentioned that they are leased up to 90%, so they should see that revenue coming in next month. For the Laredo Housing Opportunities Corporation Ms. Barrientos presented the revenues and expenses for River Bank and Casa Verde and also for the Laredo Housing Development Corporation, the Los Balcones Apartments, she stated that they have revenue and profit in that Corporation.

In regards to the Capital Fund 2016 Ms. Barrientos stated that the disbursement end date is April 21, 2022 and they have \$115K remaining to expend for the items that are still open and that they are working on: for Ana Maria Lozano and Carlos Richter landscaping; Senior Home, the concrete flat work and in Asherton, the gypsum board. Chairman Ceballos asked for the date by which they need to expend the money. Ms. Barrientos responded that it is by 2022 and informed that for 2017 the disbursement date is also in 2022 and they still have \$150K and it has to do with the remaining funds for the Ana Maria Lozano project and the Asherton sidewalk, flat work that is still pending; for the 2018 grant the disbursement end date is May 28, 2023 and they still have remaining \$1M to expend; they have the Colonia Guadalupe administrative renovation, the Senior Home, the Meadow Elderly, Meadow Acres and Asherton for either pending items that have started or will be starting soon. For the 2019 Capital Fund Grant the start date started in 2019 for the obligation and the end date for the obligation is in 2022; the disbursement end date when they have to use all the funds is 2024 and it is for \$1,696,733 and mentioned that next month, they will be seeing expenses for this project. For the 2024 Capital Fund Grant Ms. Barrientos stated that they started in 2020 and the obligation end date ends in 2023 and the disbursement ends in 2025 and it is for \$1,798,213. Ms. Barrientos informed that they are still pending the 2020 environmental which are with the City of Laredo and they should be getting feedback from them if any corrections need to be made, so they would correct those and send them to HUD for clearance so they can start using the project as well. Mrs. Gaona and Chairman Ceballos thanked Ms. Barrientos for her presentation.

## **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. The Laredo Housing

- A.** Consideration for approval of the 2020 Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program Payment Standard Amounts effective January 1, 2021 using Fair Market Rents and adopt Resolution No. 20-R-12, as recommended by staff.
- B.** Consideration for approval to adopt the Public Housing Flat Rents effective January 1, 2021 and adopt Resolution No. 20-R-13 as recommended by staff.
- C.** Consideration to authorize the public posting and sale of surplus various LHA construction materials and supplies, subject to 1) rules requiring setting a minimum sales pricing per materials unit or bulk, established in writing by the Executive Director in consulting with the purchasing agent, and sold to highest bidder.

**Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to pull item 10A from the consent agenda and they will deal with it once they get to the action items.**

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

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Chairman Ceballos entertained a motion to adopt items 10B and 10C of the consent agenda and mentioned that both relate to the annual adjustments to flat rents and the second one relates to having a surplus sale for construction materials that are overwhelming the warehouse.

**Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to accept items 10B and 10C of the consent agenda.**

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

**Motion passed unanimously.**

## **11. ACTION ITEM**

Chairman Ceballos stated that they will now deal with 10A as an action item; Consideration for approval of the 2020 Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program Payment Standard Amounts effective January 1, 2021 using Fair Market Rents and adopt Resolution No. 20-R-12, as recommended by staff.

Chairman Ceballos informed that this is what they use to pay the Section 8 landlords and basically HUD allows them to have a range between 90% to 100% of what they call a fair market rent for our area and we as the housing authority, based on what the staff tell us, would have enough money to cover, however many units and set the percentage based on the fair market rent and mentioned that Ms. Ortiz presented an initial draft earlier in the week and they along with Ms. Gaona worked on updating it and adjusting it to be able to basically not be at the lowest level, but to maybe be able to increase in the one, two and three bedrooms at a little bit more than what they originally had planned.

Ms. Ortiz, Section 8 Director, stated that the fair market rents for Laredo increased significantly from last year, so when they were looking at it, they were below the 90 % threshold, so they

would have to adopt payment standards at 90% of the fair market rent or above and when they were looking at it, Nelrod proposed to go at 90%; to increase the amounts because they were already below and when they were going back, they were analyzing whether they were having trouble housing families, having trouble finding units or the amounts they would qualify for was a big factor in proposing to increase them.

Ms. Ortiz stated that they did an analysis initially and were at about \$144K to stay at the same payment standards they had which are: 94% for one bedroom, 92% for a two bedroom, 96% for a three bedroom and 92% for a four bedroom so they went back and checked which units affected them and which ones they were housing more families, so they decided, based on Chairman Ceballos recommendation after they met, that they would increase them all to 94% and the four bedroom to leave it at 92% and with those amounts she presented the difference in HAP that they would be increasing which will allow more families to be able to lease in other better opportunity areas as opposed to concentrating everybody in lower income areas, so Ms. Ortiz is recommending 94% for the zero to three bedroom and 92% for the four-bedroom.

Chairman Ceballos asked to show the map Mr. Peña prepared, which is a very good map, so that they can see where the Section 8 tenants live in the City because one of his biggest concerns is, from a global standpoint if they could potentially concentrate them in places where there is minimal opportunity to get ahead economically or educationally.

Ms. Ortiz presented the map that Mr. Peña was able to populate the data from their current unit population, so they see that they have 112 tenants. Chairman Ceballos stated that they could see where the Section 8 tenants are residing and that they could see that Central Laredo has the bulk of the Section 8 tenancy and stated that he is surprised that it is fairly well spread which means that people are able to find units throughout the city, maybe not as much in north Laredo, but as they allow them a little bit more money they can afford, it would get them into that; although, Russell Terrace story proved to them that they can succeed anywhere and from anywhere, but they want to make sure that people have an opportunity and live in places where they choose to live and it is generally where people live in Section 8. Ms. Ortiz stated that the map also shows how many people are being assisted in each zip code.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked how was it that Asherton rents are higher than Zapata rents; Asherton being a smaller town than Zapata. Ms. Ortiz responded that they conducted a study and stated that the fair market rents are based at national levels and it is HUD that publishes those, so it is all based on the fair market rents that HUD publishes and she does not know how they determine that information, but this is just information HUD gathers and forwards and then they set the rents at 90% or above. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that when they had the oil and gas boom, they had a hard push to increase the rents.

**Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to adopt the standards as presented based on the rationale they discussed.**

**Commissioner Ms. Freeman seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

- A. Discussion and possible action to adopt Resolution No. 20-R-11 and to finalize and adopt the Public Housing Agency Plan and the 2021-2025 PHA Five Year Action Plan, as presented by staff and in consideration of all public input, to become effective April 1, 2021.

Ms. Jessica Martinez, Director of Community Services, and Bulmaro Cruz, Director for Construction Projects, presented to the Board. Ms. Martinez informed that for 2021 at Colonia Guadalupe they are doing an electrical restroom upgrade which is something that will solve a lot of the mold issues coming up. Chairman Ceballos stated that it is not a mold issue, but a humidity mildew issue because mold is different, when they say mold it represents a different issue and he wanted to make sure to clarify it. Ms. Martinez mentioned that it will definitely help reduce a lot of the humidity there; they also have bathroom renovation added to Colonia Guadalupe. Chairman Ceballos recommended Mrs. Gaona to correct that sheet because if there is mold, they would have to require to do a remediation. Bulmaro Cruz stated that it is unit ventilation and that they changed the wording. Chairman Ceballos stated that the worksheet says mold. Mrs. Gaona stated that they need to remove it.

Ms. Martinez stated that for Carlos Richter they have plumbing replacement, electrical upgrade and renovation for the administration building at Carlos Richter including some retrofit relocation for the plumbing and electrical that is going to be happening in that amp; for Senior Home they continue with electrical upgrade and sewer line replacement; for Meadow Acres and South Laredo, they have some resurface of the parking spaces and to help with water runoff drainage; in Asherton they continue with some flat work and door and screen replacements and will begin a study for the water softener; they asked for some funds here, but they have to continue the study to see how much it will cost to add the water softener in that amp. Ms. Martinez asked if there were any questions for 2021. There were no questions.

For 2022 Ms. Martinez stated that they have HVAC contemplated for Colonia Guadalupe in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 and it should help complete all of Colonia Guadalupe HVAC upgrades; for 2022 they have bathroom renovation continuing in Colonia Guadalupe; for Carlos Richter they have electrical upgrade and continue with resident relocation and also have some handicap unit upgrades that need to happen, mainly with kitchen cabinets and other minor upgrades; they have landscaping and they zeroed out the vehicle barrier that was discussed previously and they added electrical upgrade for Carlos Richter. For Senior home they continue with the electrical upgrade and sewer line replacement and they have the door screens replacement for Meadow Acres and South Laredo and water line and fixture replacement at Asherton and they also allocated more funds for the water softener. For 2023 they continue with the HVAC and kitchen cabinets at Colonia Guadalupe and start HVAC at Carlos Richter and kitchen cabinets for Carlos Richter and Ana Maria Lozano and they did have the vehicle barrier that was zero out and added the kitchen cabinets fund. For Senior Home they continue with the

electrical upgrades to finish the electrical inside work for Senior Home and domestic water booster pump that is needed for that facility; they also have the water heaters and gypsum board replacements for Meadow Acres and South Laredo and in Asherton they have the water runoff drainage and playground equipment.

Chairman Ceballos stated to Ms. Martinez that he thinks it is clear and that he wanted to explain to the Board that every year they get to plan this work and stated that he thinks that if they are looking at what they are going to do before it comes back to the Board again next year would be 2021 and prior years and particularly for him, one item that he would like to change is the domestic water pump at the Senior Center is to move it to 2020 or 2021 because he does not think they should wait three years or more for an \$18K expense because it could be more than three years, so Chairman Ceballos stated that he would appreciate if they can do that adjustment and to somehow work it into a prior year, 2020 or even 2019 and he knows that everything is tight because everything is in construction, but he would not leave that mechanical issue pending for three or four years. Ms. Martinez stated that they will definitely move it on. Chairman Ceballos asked where BiblioTech in Carlos Richter is budgeted, if it is in 2020. Mrs. Gaona responded that it is part of 2020 and 2021. Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any questions from the Board. Chairman Ceballos stated that he did not know whether this Board is going to do it or maybe the next Board, but for Colonia Guadalupe should really become a RAD Conversion project which is the challenge they may face next year when they plan this, when they hit the 2021-2022 expenditures whether they will spend half a million dollars in something that can be converted and it is a decision they are starting to make in 2021, but they are limiting the HVAC improvements to just restroom issues and ventilation issues, but next year it will be a tougher decision, so maybe Mrs. Gaona needs to work this year to figure out if there is a potential for RAD conversion for this property before they sink in a million dollars over three or four years, so if the decision is that it is not likely to be a RAD conversion because the program is not growing or whatever; then, they will continue in this path, but it is something for the Board, whoever remains past the next mayor will have to deal with that question because anything they do in Colonia Guadalupe takes hundreds of thousands of dollars because it is 272 units, so everything is expensive once they multiply it by 272, so it is FYI for the Board.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman asked about the COVID issue in trying to protect the employees while doing this work and moving the projects forward and trying to ensure their safety, if they could use some of this money or if they can reallocate it. Chairman Ceballos asked in which way. Commissioner Ms. Freeman responded that the money allocated, for example, for bathroom renovations at Colonia Guadalupe. Chairman Ceballos stated that some dates have already been pushed forward with HUD giving them extensions because of COVID and HUD has also encouraged them to reprogram them so that they do not end up in the unit while people are living in the unit and having that COVID exposure potentially, so the

answer to Commissioner Ms. Freeman question is yes; it is already happening; they have been reprogramming funds, in fact they reprogrammed years 2019 and 2020 to put some money into the facilities here to segregate staff and departments more permanently; they already improved some of the ventilation, but they are going to improve systems in the two story building to improve that ventilation which is close to 15 years old and stated that it has been done.

Chairman Ceballos asked if Mrs. Gaona had anything to add. Mrs. Gaona stated that just for 2021 she does not foresee us having the opportunity to reprogram that funding because of COVID and God willing they will be able to do that within the four years, but all the older Capital Fund programs have been extended an additional year for them to be able to do it eventually. Chairman Ceballos stated that it is a good point and the fact that they are already working on is a very good point to keep in mind.

**Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to adopt the PH Plan and Resolution No. 20-R-11 as presented with the adjustment to the Senior Home booster pump to be allocated in a prior year to be done next year.**

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

**Motion passed unanimously.**

The Board proceeded to go back to item 11B.

- B.** Discussion and possible action to authorize the Executive Director to proceed with awarding competitive procurements of up to \$50,000 for CARES Act and Capital Fund Grant related projects to accelerate project progress and meet expenditure deadlines through 2021, contingent on these procurement items being subsequently presented to Board of Commissioners.

Chairman Ceballos stated that they did something similar with Russell Terrace to accelerate that project, so he asked Mrs. Gaona to include this item to authorize her to negotiate, to procure and award competitive procurements subject to them being presented to the Board at the next meeting and Chairman Ceballos stated that he hopes that all are in agreement and mentioned that he is open to anything they might want to do, but just thinks that it is appropriate and that the procurement requirement allows them to do so and stated that they have used this before, so Chairman Ceballos stated that he will entertain any questions.

Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina asked who had seconded the motion for item 11A.

**Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to bring back item 11A and take action on it.**

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

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Chairman Ceballos asked if there is any discussion with item 11B, if there is any discussion there and if everyone is comfortable with that and stated that what it means is that if Mrs. Gaona procures competitive bids for plumbing work or for framing work, she can basically mobilize them and get them going without having to come to them; Mrs. Gaona will have to come back to the Board and present what she did and show how she did it, but essentially she will mobilize the work a little faster. Chairman Ceballos stated that he came up with that amount based on his knowledge which he thinks will cover a lot of the work, not a major contract, but at least most of the minor work. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza mentioned that Mrs. Gaona would be informing them. Chairman Ceballos confirmed and stated that she will need to bring them back to the Board which will not be for award anymore, but to inform them of the contracts she has started a week ago or whatever and if there is a problem, they would address it at that point. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza stated that he is just thinking for the future. Chairman Ceballos stated that it is only through next year when he hopes most of the COVID work would be done. Chairman Ceballos asked if they are ok with it; if they have any concern or anything to add. All the Commissioners agreed, so Chairman Ceballos entertained a motion.

**Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza moved to approve to authorize the Executive Director to proceed with awarding competitive procurements for up to \$50,000 for CARES Act and Capital Fund Grant related projects to accelerate project progress and meet expenditure deadlines through 2021, contingent on these procurement items being subsequently presented to the Board of Commissioners.**

**Commissioner Ms. Freeman seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

- C. Discussion and possible action to extend the COVID-19 Educational Videos Contract with Laredo Film Society through December 31, 2021 and to allocate funding in the amount of \$10,000.

Chairman Ceballos stated that they have been doing clips through the homeless committee and have not push them through Facebook as much as they would like, but it will be started with some of this money and it is essentially messages about what COVID is, there are social media clips and mentioned that there is a commercial that is running that is a PSA that was produced by our team, by the committee efforts, and they will see it every once in a while during football games; it shows a little girl about six years old telling the story about her family and there is movement in the family and discussion and she is concerned for her mom being worried; it is a COVID masked Laredo message, so it is the work they are doing and if they have not seen it, they hope that with this additional push they will be able to see it, so the team that is doing it will work with KLDO and KGNS and push that message and they are also going to do another video clip that will include a more basic COVID message which will try to hit more of the elder folks to understand how to prepare; it is really a preparedness message so that they get prepared with phone numbers, family members information, cell phone account information, things that would be important if they cannot care for themselves or whether

there is a couple, that they are both in quarantine as it happened in his family where relatives were not able to care for themselves and others that were willing to help them do not know where to find information as to how to pay their bills, so that is what it is and he thinks that \$10,000 is a low number, but it is a good start.

Chairman Ceballos stated that the Laredo Film Society is actually a non-profit group out of Laredo that does work at a very minimal cost. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked if it was the group that had a little workshop session on how to make the film. Chairman Ceballos responded that it was Roxanne which is a different group, but they are all in the same community. Chairman Ceballos asked if there was anything else, they would want to add. Mrs. Gaona stated that she wanted to add that this was a \$2,000 original purchase contract they did and it is why it is shown as an extension, but it did not come to the Board because it was only a \$2,000 contract at the beginning.

Chairman Ceballos asked if Ms. Martinez had the videos so they could see them and asked her to play the one with the young lady which is played during football games. Ms. Martinez shared with them a couple of videos including the one in English with the young lady. Chairman Ceballos stated that some of them are on Facebook, they just have not promoted them on Facebook; they were waiting for the elections to be over because everything was saturated with campaigns and mentioned that this effort started through the Homeless COVID Response Committee and they thought that since homeless have a phone that they would be able to reach them that way and also asked to show them the video in Spanish that has the family, so they saw the video in Spanish and Chairman Ceballos stated that there is a lot in that video and that it is part of that work and would let the creative team polish it and mentioned that those are good messages to have to help the Health Department and the City who have their own messages, but having something fresh like that helps.

**Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez Tijerina moved to approve item 11C.**

**Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**D. Discussion and possible action to approve and update the LHA Personnel Policy Section 7 B. Holidays and D. Sick Leave.**

Mrs. Gaona stated that they brought this item due to having difficulties after holidays because a lot of employees have been reporting sick either before or after holidays and the policy is not clear; therefore, they are requesting to make this amendment to update it and be able to require an excuse from a licensed physician in the United States when an employee is out on sick leave after a holiday.

Chairman Ceballos stated that he had a question Mrs. Gaona answered via e-mail. Mrs. Gaona stated that Section D says anytime in excess of three days the current

policy reads only proof of illness, injury or medical care. Chairman Ceballos stated that all full-time employees have benefits, the agency pays the healthcare coverage, so they should have access and stated that his concern is why it says United States is because right now with COVID he does not want them going to Mexico and getting a release and coming back right to work and potentially creating an exposure; the United States is a COVID concern, but the other concern is that they get used to a pattern that if there is a holiday they will take the next day as sick leave or the day before and when it is legitimate they would go to the doctor and mentioned that his only concern is that when he gets sick he usually does not go to the doctor; if it is something minor, he will sit it out for a day or two, so Chairman Ceballos does not want them to go to the doctor, especially right now when there is COVID at the doctor's office; it has to be also fair, but it is only if they choose to do that. Mrs. Gaona stated that only if they choose to claim that they are sick before or after the holiday or if they are out after three consecutive days. Chairman Ceballos stated that the second one is good for COVID; although they get paid for COVID leave which is not a concern for them. Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any questions. There were no questions.

**Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to accept the changes and approve the update to the personnel policy Section 7B and D, sick leave.**

**Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza and Commissioner Ms. Freeman seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.**

- E. 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 asked Mrs. Gaona if there was an update. Mrs. Gaona stated that they currently only have three individuals out. Chairman Ceballos stated that he would like to acknowledge Mr. De Anda for being extremely helpful with the Senior Citizens Committee and mentioned that having that committee took a lot of weight off Chairman Ceballos back when they formed it and was feeling very stressful for Chairman Ceballos, so he is thankful for Mr. De Anda's role and sticking through it because it is a weekly commitment and stated that they have lingering issues for the Board to know and they are trying to address the legal questions about what can be absolutely required and they will work through that and then asked Mr. De Anda if there is anything he would like to inform the Board about the committee. Mr. De Anda stated that he would just like to stress to the Board that the committee has been very active in keeping Senior Citizens Home safe; they have had some infections, but have not had an outbreak for they have been able to keep the facility under wraps and now that they have testing right around the corner at San Agustin Plaza; they are making an effort to have the residents at Senior Citizens Home being tested as much as possible during this period and he feels very comfortable with the work the committee is putting together and the care they are giving to the residents because they have been very concerned of the age of the cohort that lives at that facility about any potential

outbreaks there and it has been an ongoing process and from what he can see people are committed as they were back in March.

Chairman Ceballos thanked Mr. De Anda and mentioned that he knows Waldo Lopez is working administratively in trying to get the Texas Department of Health, he believes, to find a way to prioritize the senior citizens particularly in common living facilities like that one and hopefully, they would get some success and get prioritized with the vaccine and stated that the whole committee and the staff really deserve a lot of recognition and he thinks that they will soon do so formally and maybe at the next opportunity they will have some acknowledgement and mentioned that they are not done with COVID and like he mentioned at an earlier meeting, to padding them on the back because they really have been holding strong, doubling the cleaning duties, pantries to manage and many different things and they are going to start with improvements to that facility that is going to change the workflow and resident flow for that facility, so there will be more work for them, more dust to clean and asked Mrs. Gaona if she can make it a point to see how they can acknowledge the team at the next opportunity .

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any other COVID updates. Commissioner Ms. Freeman asked if the committee is just for the working areas or if it is for situations with the residents. Chairman Ceballos stated that the committee was set up specifically for Senior Home because of the common entry and mentioned that there is that committee consisting of mostly staff, Waldo Lopez, Mr. De Anda, Mrs. Gaona and Chairman Ceballos, but there is a small committee set up by the Board which is composed of Mrs. Gaona, at the time Alma Mata, Chairman Ceballos, Mr. De Anda and at some point Mr. Poneck also and that committee dealt more with the policies the Board put in place months back, but what has been ongoing at the Senior Home is when they have somebody that is infected, there are mitigation practices that go in place and mentioned that there is a lot of different things that have to occur when people do not have a way to care for themselves or when they notice that food was down, they put a pantry together, so that is the committee that was set up there for that facility because it is considered congregated living and when you go there you are going to touch the same hallway rail, touch the same elevator wall; there are a lot of different things that are not common and would not happen in other facilities.

Chairman Ceballos stated that there is no action on this item; it is more of an informational item.

- F. Discussion and possible action related to the evaluation of staffing and possible changes to the organizational structure and filling of management positions. This item may be discussed in Executive Session, pursuant to Section 551.071 (consultation with attorneys) and 551.074 (personnel matters).

Mrs. Gaona stated that she would like to seek authorization to fill the Rapid Rehousing Case Manager position and mentioned that staff has interviewed seven

candidates and the recommendation is to fill the position with Stephanie Garcia. Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any questions from the Board and if there are, he stated that they cannot ask anything of the candidate and anything else they would like to discuss, it would need to happen in executive session. There were no questions.

**Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to accept the recommendation.**

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

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Chairman Ceballos stated that he has been working with Stephanie in the homeless committee and mentioned that she is a great candidate and hopes she is successful in that position which is going to be obviously very demanding, but he thinks she is a good fit and wishes her all the luck and success in that role.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he has asked Mrs. Gaona to bring back, potentially in January, if she has any recommendations on the vacant positions that are directorships and some actions and she is going to bring back an organizational chart and a timeline to fill those spots, some of them are ready; some of those folks are in internship and Mrs. Gaona will bring those back to the Board on the first or second meeting in January and stated that he would not extend it any further than that because they are in budget season.

- G.** Discussion and possible action to review and approve the Executive Director's employment contract. This item may be discussed in Executive Session, pursuant to Section 551.071 (consultation with attorneys) and 551.074 (personnel matters).

This item was taken to executive session.

## **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).

**Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to go into executive session.**

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

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**The Board went into executive session at 1:24 p.m.**

**The Board reconvened from executive session at 2:03 p.m.**

### 13. ACTION ON ANY EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEM

Chairman Ceballos stated that there was no action taken in executive session as it relates to item 11G, Discussion and possible action to review and approve the Executive Director's employment contract.

**Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to approve the proposed form for the contract as discussed in executive session.**

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

**Motion passed unanimously.**

### 14. ADJOURNMENT

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

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

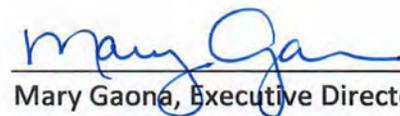
**Motion passed unanimously.**

**Meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.**



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Jose L. Ceballos, Chairman



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Mary Gaona, Executive Director

*Chairman Jose L. Ceballos wished everybody a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and also thanked everyone for the work they have done this year and stated that as they do in every meeting, they wish each other health and as much happiness as they can grab from each other.*