

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

Zoom Video Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kJ0fTBMxU>

Call in Number: 1-346-248-7799

Webinar ID: 849 4640 9740

LHA Board Room

2000 San Francisco Ave.

Laredo, Texas 78040

Wednesday, August 26, 2020

4:00 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-6**

**Minutes**

**August 26, 2020**

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** Chairman Ceballos called the meeting to order at 4:05 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 that they had a quorum.

**Commissioners Present**

Jose L. Ceballos, Chairman (by zoom)  
Dr. Marisela Rodriguez, Commissioner (by zoom)  
Anita Guerra, Commissioner (by zoom)  
Gloria Ann Freeman, Commissioner

**Commissioners Absent**

Dr. Sergio D. Garza, Vice-Chairman

**Staff Present**

Alma D. Mata, Executive Director  
Melissa Ortiz, Director for Section 8  
Daniel Colina, Accountant (by zoom)  
Sonia Flores, Accountant (by zoom)  
Valeria Cabello, Interim Procurement Officer (by zoom)  
Jessica Martinez, Resident and Community Services Director  
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 from the Commissioners or the staff or the Board. There were none.

## **6. ACTION ITEM**

- A.** Discussion and possible action to award HVAC and other related bids for the Ana Maria Lozano BiblioTech project as recommended by staff.

At this time Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez informed that she was joining the meeting.

Ms. Mata presented to the Board and stated that they had three different bidders: Sunbelt Air Conditioning, Gateway Air Conditioning and Mora AC Services and Refrigeration for the work at the Ana Maria Lozano Bibliotech and they had two options, the installation of the HVAC system with the metal duct or with the fiber duct which is relatively less expensive than the metal duct and the recommendation is to go with Gateway Air Conditioning as they are the lowest bidder for both of those installations. Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any questions from the Board and asked if it was over the budget. Ms. Mata confirmed and stated that the budget was \$21,700. Chairman Ceballos asked if they have a source to cover the difference. Ms. Mata confirmed.

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any questions. Commissioner Ms. Freeman asked if Bulmaro could answer a question as to what was fiber ducts and the life span on them. Mr. Bulmaro Cruz mentioned that the manufacturer carries them either metal or fiber and asked if they remembered seeing the ducts when they were constructing Russell Terrace and stated that those were the fiber ducts and that they last a long time. Commissioner Ms. Freeman thanked Mr. Cruz for the information.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman moved to award the bid to Gateway Air Conditioning. Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez seconded the motion.

Chairman Ceballos asked if they were going with the alternate or with metal ducts. Ms. Mata stated that the recommendation is to go with the alternate being that the item is already over budget. Chairman Ceballos asked Commissioner Ms. Freeman if that was her motion. Commissioner Ms. Freeman confirmed.

**Commissioner Ms. Freeman moved to award the bid to Gateway Air Conditioning.  
Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez seconded the motion.  
Motion passed unanimously.**

- B. Discussion and possible action to adopt Resolution No. 20-R-9 and adopt the Utility Allowance Schedule for the Russell Terrace RAD Energy Efficient Duplexes effective 10/1/2020 as recommended by staff.

Chairman Ceballos asked if they consulted with Nelrod. Melissa Ortiz mentioned that they did consult with Nelrod and mentioned that she asked them if they could prepare a study. Ms. Ortiz mentioned that there was a difference, a variance, so she will be going through Ms. Mata and take it to the Board for approval and stated that before they made the conversion there were just duplex units and now after they did the conversion they are using the energy efficiency utility allowance and after consulting with them they decided to see if they could meet in the middle and somehow get a plan specific for RAD properties and for duplex units and she mentioned that in the presentation they would see that based on the bedroom size; a difference of \$13.00 for the one bedroom, \$30.00 for the two bedroom, \$44.00 for the three bedroom and \$62.00 for the four bedroom. Ms. Mata mentioned that it was in favor of the tenant. Ms. Ortiz confirmed.

Chairman Ceballos stated that he has confidence in Nelrod and that his only question is if the units are more efficient than what they had before. Bulmaro Cruz responded that the water cost used to keep going up. Chairman Ceballos agreed. Ms. Ortiz mentioned that it is not as high as the duplex, but it is not as energy efficient as the apartments, so they are going somewhere in between the duplex and the apartments. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that it is going to have a financial effect in the project; therefore, he would ask them to make sure they track that financial impact because they will see less rent. Ms. Ortiz stated that it was correct.

Chairman Ceballos stated, for the record, that even though the water was going up, the electricity was much higher for residents when they had window units.

**Commissioner Anita Guerra moved to approve item 6B as recommended by staff.  
Chairman Ceballos seconded the motion.  
Motion passed unanimously.**

- C. Discussion and possible action related to the extension authorizing the Executive Director to execute a modification agreement with BBVA Compass Bank to extend the Russell Terrace Revitalization loan conversion date to be determined and approved by BBVA and adopt Resolution No. 20-R-10

Ms. Mata stated that there have been a total of two modifications, so this would be the third modification to the loan; the initial modification was done to extend the loan based on the construction not being completed yet; the second modification was extended to September 21, 2020 to meet the stabilization rate and this proposed modification is also

for the stabilization rate and stated that the date of the 21, they were shy by five days, so when they were in conversations with BBVA for the second modification agreement they started the initiative, but they were looking at the beginning of the month versus being based on the 21 of the month so they are going to be four days shy of meeting that stabilization so BBVA has requested to make the modification likely in December, but they are going to get back to us as to when the final date will be, but they are anticipating it to be at the end of December of this year. Chairman Ceballos stated that he asked them what the cost would be and they said it would be just legal fees for changing documents which should be nominal to the agency.

**Chairman Ceballos moved to approve Item 6C as presented subject to BBVA stipulating the extension date.**

**Commissioner Anita Guerra seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

- D. Discussion and possible action to ratify the approval of a significant amendment to the Capital Fund Grant Years 2016-2020 PHA 5-Year and Annual Plan Submission.

Jennifer Barrientos, Director of Finance, presented to the Board and stated that due to the COVID-19 pandemic they experienced limitations on work items that had been approved for the CFP Grant; some of the items require staff and vendors to enter inside the resident units; therefore, they are requesting the following to be ratified as changes to the Grant to keep staff and vendors safe and healthy in addition to also meeting the obligation and disbursement for each grant; for the 2016 she referred them to the color coded changes and stated that in Colonia Guadalupe they removed the electrical upgrade and replaced it with Public Housing operations money and COCC administration which is in blue and in purple they have Ana Maria Lozano and Carlos Richter parking asphalt sealing was removed and added landscaping and surface upgrading to that project. For 2017 in Colonia Guadalupe they removed the electrical upgrade as well and replaced it with the 2019 CFP work item in Ana Maria Lozano and Carlos Richter for Administrative and Community Modernization. Chairman Ceballos asked Ms. Barrientos to provide little detail on that change. Ms. Barrientos mentioned that the Administration and Community Modernization is the BiblioTech work and also the rehabilitation at Ana Maria Lozano, so they are removing the electrical upgrade and putting the money in Ana Maria Lozano and Carlos Richter. In 2018 they are also removing the HVAC in Colonia Guadalupe and replacing it with the Administration and Community Modernization which is also to fund some of the reconstruction of the building and also for BiblioTech and for Ana Maria Lozano and Carlos Richter they are removing the HVAC and replacing it with BiblioTech at Carlos Richter as well and the phone system showing at the bottom they are removing it and adding that money to Carlos Richter and Senior Home where they are doing the office and restroom retrofit and adding electrical upgrade at Senior Home. Chairman Ceballos stated, for the record, that the phone system is already completed and upgraded. Ms. Barrientos confirmed. In 2019 at Colonia Guadalupe they removed the HVAC and the dryer hook ups and replaced it with electrical and restroom ventilation upgrade and resident relocation because they will be needing to relocate some of the residents while they do the

upgrade; at Ana Maria Lozano and Carlos Richter they removed the HVAC and replaced it with electrical upgrade in Carlos Richter. In 2020 they removed the HVAC, electrical upgrade and kitchen cabinets in Colonia Guadalupe and replaced it with electrical, restroom ventilation upgrade and resident relocation to continue the work for the entire property; in Ana Maria Lozano and Carlos Richter they removed HVAC and added electrical upgrade, plumbing and resident relocation at Carlos Richter.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned to the Board that he asked Ms. Mata, Ms. Gaona and Bulmaro Cruz that they have HVAC in several developments, but they cannot do HVAC until they do the electrical, so he asked them to program it so that electrical can be completed in all the units and then they will start HVAC work so that they are not complicating where they have some units that have electrical upgrade with HVAC and other units that do not have anything, so he asked them to get all the electrical done and then start the HVAC conversion which would be smoother and they will not have to go back into the unit once they actually completed one of the items. Ms. Barrientos asked if anybody had any questions.

Chairman Ceballos stated that the Board is aware that they are distributing because of COVID and referred them to go back and look at where they allocated some money for Colonia Guadalupe because of COVID they are retrofitting offices where they have shared offices like Section 8 and where they have other work spaces upstairs that are Public Housing or COCC funded, so now they are going back to the old model of having private offices where people are not working across from each other directly and they will be putting glass walls where people can see each through and are also segregating and reducing the congestion and having people in different floors and different offices so that they do not have the promulgation of infectious diseases because of the design, so they will see that everything they do is going to go back to the old model of private small independent offices and not sharing the workspaces anymore, so they already know that they are doing that temporarily and the Board Room is now serving as part of Ms. Mata's office and the executive team and Public Housing is going to take one wing too and they are also segregating the air condition systems and building some mitigation practices into the air conditioner system, so he wants to remind them that some of that expenditure relates to retrofitting for COVID and reducing the number of people in the offices.

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any questions from the Board or from anybody who is working on it and asked for Ms. Gaona's input. Ms. Gaona stated that as they continue with COVID she wanted to advise the Board that they may need to come back to the Board again if they cannot meet any of the obligation deadlines due to not being able to go into the units. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he would provide some background and stated that doing work in the units involves getting the staff in there and they may not be able to do it under the COVID reality if it continues into winter and spring of next year, there may be occasions where the program funds need to change and what they are trying to do is to obligate and stated that every table they have has an obligation date and a disbursement date and mentioned one that is 2016 and mentioned that they are down to the last extension of April 12, 2012 to obligate and

they have two years from there to actually build it out and mentioned that Ms. Gaona's point is that if something is not moving because of COVID they will bring it back to reprogram it. Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any questions. Commissioner Ms. Freeman mentioned that they might not lose that money because it is already in the system. Ms. Mata mentioned that they get the money awarded and as they complete the project they obligate and are able to draw the money down, so with the changes it will allow them to work on projects so that they can meet the obligation and expenditures dates, so that is why they are moving the money to different projects or bringing forward projects like in the administrative building versus having them at the tenant units, so the items at the tenant units are still part of the 5-Year plan, but they are just being pushed back it to a later date so that they can mitigate the COVID issues they currently have.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that the other thing he wants Commissioner Ms. Freeman to be aware is that they had entertained doing the upgrading of HVAC at Colonia Guadalupe then they ran into the situation that they do not have the electrical set up to handle the HVAC operation, not even the dryer upgrade, so in the next year or two they are going to have to tackle the option of doing a RAD conversion for Guadalupe and possibly doing the same thing they did with Russell Terrace doing sectional renovations where instead of investing one million dollars now they may want to do a RAD conversion and do the whole project 30 units at a time until they are done, so that is something they are going to have to come back to make a decision by the Board and he thinks now with the community seeing what a RAD conversion does to a neighborhood like Russell Terrace it will be easier politically for Colonia Guadalupe to see that kind of transformation and obviously when others had tried it in the past, nobody really wants to demolish Colonia Guadalupe, but he thinks that they can even come up with a design similar that keeps the historical presence as well and is mentioning it because the decision is going to come back to them whether they pump more money into Guadalupe with the idea they never see the complete retrofit, so that is going to be up to the Board, but he just wanted to make them aware because the staff is having to tackle that question whether they put more significant money into Colonia Guadalupe or they just jump into a RAD conversion and reconstructing two or three years down the road and they need to be aware of that.

**Chairman Ceballos moved to approve the 2016-2020 PHA 5-Year and Annual Action Plan and that the Staff keep them posted on any needed changes as they go along with it and COVID-19.**

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

**Motion passed unanimously**

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that as a forecast for the next meeting they will be discussing restructuring the non-profits and mentioned that Mr. De Anda and Mario Jasso and others in the team have been working on presenting it and it will be ready by the September 9, 2020 meeting and he thinks that they will be spending at least 30 minutes just discussing that item and it will lay out how they are going to structure non-profits that can give them access to new funding including CDBG and the Emergency

Shelter Grant through a different category of non-profits and some decisions that will need to be made after that, so that is to give them kind of an insight and asked Ms. Mata what else is coming up next that the Board needs to be aware for September. Ms. Mata stated that they will be bringing within the next couple meetings and will be separating to keep the meetings within the timeframe the Board has allotted and will be bringing the COVID policies and procedures and the protocols that they have implemented throughout the agency for adoption by the Board or just to give an update on it and will also be bringing the Strategic Housing Plan which is another one that they will be looking at possibly awarding in the next two meetings.

- 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 stated that this item is just a general update; there will be no action on it. Ms. Mata mentioned that she just wanted to give the Board an update on the status of the agency as it relates to COVID and mentioned that in the past few meetings they discussed staffing issues regarding the tier system they implemented and informed that they had all the staff return to work on site in the property and as Chairman Ceballos mentioned they have separated the work spaces for staff to minimize the traffic within each office and they continue to adapt some of the existing spaces so that they can retro fit them into offices and continue that separation as well as allow for the renovation of the buildings that pertain to the CFP Grant and asked if the Board had any questions related to COVID.

Chairman Ceballos asked if Ms. Mata could provide a general update of Senior Home. Ms. Mata mentioned that they currently placed several protocols into action at that facility and informed that they were inspected the previous week by a city inspector and when she talked to them, they were rather impressed with the conditions of the facility and the steps they have taken and Ms. Mata mentioned that they have not had any new positive cases as of the last three weeks; they did have a couple cases previously and they have been working with the Health Department to get tenants tested periodically and were able to get a second round of testing at that facility three weeks ago and they identified three tenants that were positive and made sure they were quarantined and continue following them up and have not had any additional positive cases there.

Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any questions for Ms. Mata and stated that the staff under Ms. Mata have been doing a good work with the homeless committee which is obviously a lot of work and she will be assigning a coordinator for that too and hopefully it will facilitate having Ms. Mata and Chairman Ceballos being so involved and reduce the load on other people including Christy who has been helping and thanked her help and stated it is really appreciated and asked if there were any questions on this item before they move on. There were none.

In regards to the Census Chairman Ceballos informed that along with Ms. Mata they visited with Tina Martinez at the City and Chairman Ceballos suggested to come up with

some sort of lottery for people that have completed the Census and getting people into using nonfederal monies to get some gifts and maybe doing a lottery for people that have completed the Census and providing a chrome book, something that is technology educational driven and maybe they can get some enthusiasm for completing the Census at every project and hopefully they can reach the goal of getting any households that are left to complete the Census and maybe setting out a schedule of those different raffles and going live on Facebook and mentioned that he learned recently that a lot of the Census effort is restricted to the Census takers, so if the official Census takers do not help, they cannot really help out filling out the information in the system.

Chairman Ceballos stated the he sees they put up some update on it and recommended to work to motivate the residents to complete the Census, it would help the City and the County reach their goals which ultimately if will mean more funding for our region and our City. Chairman Ceballos asked if Ms. Mata or Ms. Martinez had anything to add. Ms. Mata stated that they are housing in one of the buildings some Census representatives that are doing outreach through the phone with all of the tenants, so they provided them with a listing and they have signed the confidentiality agreement, so they are housing them out of one of the buildings to facilitate them being able to reach the tenants and mentioned that they are having some success in having people submit their Census information through the phone with the Census representative and they are also adding some temporary staff to assist with that through the month of September, so anybody they are not able to contact via telephone they will be making visits door to door so that they can submit.

Chairman Ceballos stated that he had a question for Mary Gaona, Jennifer Barrientos or anybody that knows the answer which is in reference to the earnings they have from Russell Terrace and the other RAD properties, if those are defederalized at the point that they have earned them and if they do not know, it is fine, they can go ahead and research it. Ms. Barrientos stated that she would need to research it and she will reach out and will let the Board know. Chairman Ceballos stated that he thinks they are defederalized because it is a nonprofit and does not think they continue to be federal once funds are in the nonprofit checkbook and stated that he is only asking because if a property has money maybe they can buy gifts for the raffles and recommended that they make sure they keep the raffle encouraging items to educational items, so they can defend the expenditure.

Chairman Ceballos asked if there was anything else from the Board or if they were ready to close the meeting. There were none.

## **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

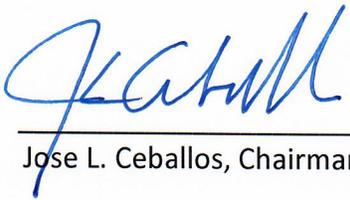
real property), 551.073 (deliberations about gifts and donations), 551.074 (personnel matters), 551.076 (deliberations about security devices) and 551.086 (economic development).

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

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

**Chairman Ceballos moved to adjourn the meeting.  
Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez seconded the motion.  
Motion passed unanimously.**

**Meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m.**



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Jose L. Ceballos, Chairman



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Alma D. Mata, Executive Director