

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

Zoom Video Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88137191722>

Call in Number: 1-346-248-7799

Webinar ID: 881 3719 1722

LHA Board Room

2000 San Francisco Ave.

Laredo, Texas 78040

Friday, September 24, 2021

12:00 P.M.

Board of Commissioners

Jose L. Ceballos, Board Chairman
Dr. Sergio D. Garza, Vice-Chairman
Anita L. Guerra, Commissioner

Dr. Marisela Rodriguez Tijerina, Commissioner
Gloria Ann Freeman, Resident Commissioner

NOTE: Due to recent COVID-19 health concerns, this meeting will be held in person with telephonic/video conferencing options. The public may join in-person, via conference call number or via weblink provided above.

A-21-R-9

Minutes

September 24, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ceballos called the meeting to order at 12:07 p.m. and thanked everybody present and those joining on zoom.

2. INVOCATION PRAYER

Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman led them in prayer: "Dear Heavenly Father, we pray that you protect and guide us in our daily lives; we pray for unity and solidarity in our state and nation; we pray for our military, keep them safe and the world at peace; we pray for our firefighters and first responders that are battling major fires throughout the world; we pray for all the essential workers in the medical front line, teachers, staff and students as they return to school; we pray for the homeless, the infirmed, those with mental illness and lastly, we thank you for all the blessings you have bestowed on us, in Jesus name we pray, Amen." Chairman Ceballos thanked Commissioner Ms. Freeman for her prayer.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Chairman Jose L. Ceballos led them in the recital of the pledge.

4. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Mrs. Gaona proceeded with roll call and mentioned that Commissioner Ms. Guerra is on her way to the meeting and that Commissioner Dr. Marisela Rodriguez Tijerina will be absent today and stated that they have a quorum.

Commissioners Present

Jose L. Ceballos, Chairman
Dr. Sergio D. Garza, Vice-Chairman
Anita Guerra, Commissioner
Gloria Ann Freeman, Resident Commissioner

Commissioners Absent

Dr. Marisela Rodriguez Tijerina, Commissioner

Staff Present

Mary Gaona, Executive Director
Christy Ramos, Administrative Assistant
Robert Peña, Director of IT
Bulmaro Cruz, Director of Construction Projects
Jennifer Barrientos, Director of Finance
Sonia Flores, Senior Accountant (by zoom)
Diana Cruz, Human Resource Manager
Melissa Ortiz, Director of Section 8 (by zoom)
Jessica Martinez, Interim Director of Housing Management
Valeria Cabello, Procurement Officer
Alejandro Jimenez, Assistant IT Director
Ricardo De Anda, Attorney

Others Present

5. CITIZENS COMMENTS

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

Chairman Ceballos stated that there were no citizens comments.

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

Chairman Ceballos stated, for the record, that there is a disclosure on his part; there is a legal item that will be entertained and he will refrain from voting and mentioned that he has scored the proposals and refrained from scoring the De Anda proposal.

There were no other disclosures.

7. PRESENTATION BY CENTRAL RESIDENT COUNCIL

Mrs. Gaona mentioned that she spoke to Ms. Rios who mentioned that residents are asking when they will be opening the Ana Maria Lozano BiblioTech and that she also mentioned that there had been some concerns over furniture and items being left on the street over the weekend and that maybe they could send out a flyer and advise the residents not to take out furniture and stuff during the weekend and maybe set a schedule to do it every other Tuesday of the month so that there would not be so much trash left over the weekend. Chairman Ceballos asked which project. Mrs. Gaona responded that it was at Carlos Richter and Ana Maria Lozano projects. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that it was a good comment and suggested that maybe Mrs. Gaona could coordinate with the city and that he knows they have the bulk pickups. Mrs. Gaona confirmed and mentioned that they have the bulk pickups in different areas, but usually it happens on the weekend because she even sees it here by IH-35 that they take it out. Mrs. Gaona stated that they are in discussions with the Central Resident Council for their first meeting for October 8, 2021 with them. Chairman Ceballos asked if it will be in person. Mrs. Gaona confirmed and stated that it will be just for the Central Resident Council and stated that the residents feel comfortable meeting in small groups.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that it will probably come back to Mrs. Gaona, Mr. De Anda and Dr. Lopez and mentioned that the city asked the staff to come back with a reopening date for the recreation centers and said that currently they are open to the elderly, but they want to open wider to the youth, so he mentioned to Mrs. Gaona that they ought to talk about how and when they will resume or if they continue to wait. Mr. De Anda asked under what conditions and if they will require vaccinations. Chairman Ceballos confirmed and mentioned that they spoke about requiring vaccinations which was the discussion, but it has not come back for action and he thinks that it is going to be a requirement which he thinks the recreation director told the media last night or two nights ago. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that some of the staff had concerns about opening and having all the children because of all the cases that have been announced at the schools with the children.

Chairman Ceballos recommended to Mrs. Gaona if they can work on it between this and the next meeting and stated that he is not in any rush and mentioned that they have the outdoors for the kids and he thinks that they are not there yet and mentioned that he heard someone was reaching immunity and wondered if it was El Paso. Commissioner Ms. Guerra stated that she thought so and mentioned that they are an international community and that the people they vaccinate may be from Monterrey and Mexico City. Mr. De Anda mentioned that it was correct and that it was the same with us, that we have a lot of out of towners that get vaccinated. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that we are so close to having our children vaccinated and so let's just wait until that happens, that it is not for action yet and that the policy is not going to change today so, it is something to think about.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes for Board of Commissioners meeting on August 27, 2021.

Chairman Ceballos thanked them for typing the invocation prayer too, which he thinks is a nice touch as well, on the minutes.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he was really just confirming the tax credit write up item on page 20 of the minutes which he mentioned was a very long discussion and said that everything got in there and that the resolution is on page 20, the separation between the advisor agent and the developer which seems to be written as they discussed it.

Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to approve the minutes for Board of Commissioners meeting on August 27, 2021 as presented.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

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

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that no action would be taken on this item and stated that these are to be presented by the Director and the Finance Director as well and other staff.

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

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he would like for Mrs. Gaona to start with the Public Housing lease up rate. Mrs. Gaona informed that currently for September they are at 97.23% and that out of 759 units, they have 738 leased and for October 1, 2021, she is projecting to be at 745 units leased which will put them at 98.02% and that is because currently there are three families looking at houses, who are going to come back to let them know on the deposit, so that if all of that happens, they should be at 98.02%.

Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona to provide them background information on Public Housing, their meeting with HUD and their interest. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that they had a meeting with HUD in regards to the leasing and stated that they usually had been at 98% in prior years and last year they came in at 94% and right now if they average through September, they still remain at 94% for the year and mentioned that they had a discussion with them and their concerns on the leasing and how it could affect their funding and their scoring for the future, so they are working on that and stated that as she mentioned in previous conversations, they have families moving from Public Housing to Section 8 and have problems with families not wanting the units, some do and some do not; they recently had a couple of elderly people pass away, so it has been a challenge and mentioned that they had a call on Thursday, which is a HUD call they normally have monthly and mentioned that Eagle Pass is also experiencing the same challenges and they are also relating it to COVID or not COVID, but they still continue to also have problems leasing.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that last time they discussed about providing incentives and asked Mrs. Gaona about the incentives. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that they advised the property managers to let them know once the house is being shown and to offer the air condition if that becomes an issue and she has also asked for them to start putting the blinds and mentioned that at one time they offered the blinds and put the blinds on the windows and have it more presentable, so they will be doing that for the future and possibly going back for any that they see that needs the blinds in their units and also trying to reach out to

see what agencies can assist with the security deposits. Chairman Ceballos stated that they should do it themselves and that they are at a point that they do not have time and mentioned that the background to the Board is that the reason he wanted all of them to be aware is that if they do not get it up, the potential for them not being high performer is there and unfortunately even though it does not seat squarely on Mrs. Gaona because it goes back before she came back, it is going to seat squarely on her now, so Chairman Ceballos does not think that Mrs. Gaona has wiggle room and she needs to budget some of those resources just like they do it for the homeless; she needs to do it for this property and Chairman Ceballos suggested Mrs. Gaona to put her best manager here and compensate them well because the last thing they want is to be forced into a standard or even worse, troubled. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he knows the trend Mrs. Gaona has been telling him is back up, but she is also saying that she is losing people and stated that whether this Board is here or not a couple years from now, this project needs to be renovated because folks just simply are not choosing it anymore and we are not what it used to be even 10 or 15 years ago where you still wanted to be in Central Laredo and Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he told HUD directly that they do not have a grocery store nearby and they have this disinvestment that is happening and people do not want to live in Colonia Guadalupe now, whereas before people were choosing to be and said that they lost the store and the best store in the area is that Lowe's grocery store by Carlos Richter which is not really a full store and mentioned that they should be aware because HUD was very blunt about the potential; they see the trend, but they understand that it takes months because they are at 94% even though today they are 98% on average, so they have until the end of this fiscal year to really rake up and said that they can project 98% and will probably be shy of what they need to be.

Chairman Ceballos stated for the staff that is listening and that is running those programs, that they do not have time to go to an agency to get a security deposit and that they need to put the blinds and that they need to put the air conditioner and stated that he is just telling them this because he will not be able to save them; it is too late and said that he and the Board will not be able to save anyone of them because the numbers are the numbers and to go to a standard performer and not be able to do the moving to work which is what they authorized Mr. Solomon to pursue which did not work out because of changes in the HUD world, that opportunity may come in a different way and mentioned that he is just saying that so that everybody understands that under prior leadership, they started seeing that trend which was not being addressed and that they can see that when vacancy rates are budgeted in the private sector, sometimes they budget 10% and stated that he wants to make sure he does not underplay this for this Board because they should not be guessing and said it respectfully that it is not the time to be like referring them out; it is the time for them to budget and expend that money and said that respectfully for everybody that is working on this and recommended to get their best team and mentioned that the Board has said that Colonia Guadalupe is their money maker. Mrs. Gaona stated that for October they have currently just four vacancies and like she said, they are filling those four and they just found two more units, so it continues, but said that they are working hard to get them there and are making the changes; they are changing the ceiling fans to make the unit more appealing to the residents as they come in and if they have time they will try to renovate the shower and the tile if they have 30 days to bring in the family; if they catch it at the first

of the month, they have time to do that so, they are addressing those to be able to do that and stated that she knows that they are going to have some challenges still and they continue to have the challenges leasing Asherton which remains a challenge to lease those units and mentioned that it is a conversation she is planning to have with HUD on the over housing and under housing issues of that property. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked if there is a factor that is contributing to that. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that Mrs. Gaona stated that it could be COVID and said that he does not think it is COVID because they can see the trend there; it is fully entering the COVID, but they lost amenities in the inner city which is what he thinks and stated that why would he choose Colonia Guadalupe over an apartment along the Loop where they have a Walmart, an HEB, a pharmacy and restaurants. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that right now they have Meadow and South Laredo 100% leased because of the location and that as soon as they have the unit available, the family goes and looks at it and they accept it. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked if they were able to find some for Asherton and said that Asherton is one of those cities and asked who would like to go live in Asherton; it is just a small city and people like living in the big city areas. Mrs. Gaona confirmed.

Chairman Ceballos stated that he just thinks that they do not have time and he does not mean to excuse them because there are legitimate ways of conducting business, but they are in a new territory and mentioned that the reason he has been pushing and has encouraged others to push for redevelopment in the inner city is because that it is the reality and wondered who are they going to have left and mentioned to the ones that are going to the summit that the economic development world has not really been the real world they operate and they should, so how are they going to move somebody here if they do not have a grocery store which is the reality and strategically the Director needs to take them in that path, even beyond his time or whoever is here, they would need to stay on it and for those that are staff, career people, they need to stay on economic development because it is the beginnings of deterioration in mass and he looks at Mr. De Anda who has been with the agency for a long time, if he remembers that they used to say in Russell Terrace that Public Housing was better than what was around it and eventually the deterioration is going to catch up, "todo se va a ver igual" when they do not have a store and the gasoline stations are so run down and stated that he knows that in the late 80's Mr. De Anda was probably the attorney, they suffered through a period when it was pretty brutal, but his whole point is that they need a strategy and they need one person for Asherton, they need one for here and they probably need a different one for Carlos Richter that is similar to Colonia Guadalupe.

Chairman Ceballos stated that it is not new and that he hates to say it, but Russell Terrace when they were fighting for it, they were talking about loss of students, so why were they losing students and said "es lo mismo," they are five years into this and they continue to lose students; now they are losing residents, so that is why they are in the inner city discussion redevelopment and said that it is going to be super challenging and mentioned that he hates to say it, but the back page of that cover on the summit, they will see it which is very depressing and mentioned that the income in the inner city is \$28,400 on average and the average income based on HUD standards is \$44,000; 75% of the people that live in the inner city do not work in the inner city, so what does that mean; they do not have jobs

in the inner city. Commissioner Ms. Guerra asked if it was with the City of Laredo or national. Chairman Ceballos stated that it is a HUD localized median income, so now that they are living through it and that they had that conversation with HUD he had to prepare and is having this conversation in public and on the record, but anyway, he will say it because it does not hurt to say it; they have to prepare on what is really happening; people are coming in, walking into the unit and they really need it and they are choosing not to and stated that Mrs. Gaona asked him a very good question the other day, if they can draft a policy that precludes them from taking Section 8 and said that he does not know and that it is a legal question, a regulatory question and does not know the answer to that, but at the end of it all, it is the units and the place where they are located that they are no longer a viable option, people are walking away from them; they are eligible for the unit, they waited for the unit and are walking away from it.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that the discussion last time was that maybe they do not really need it and it is still some of it, but still the situation has not changed, they have a unit that is no longer attractive even for people that are seeking housing and he thinks that the person that sought housing for a period of time looks the same “los que lo necesitan bastante y los que lo necesitan un poquito” and thinks that it has varied over time and feels like he has talked about this topic enough. Commissioner Ms. Guerra mentioned that maybe the stimulus helped a little bit with people having options that they were not at the lower end and did not really need it and said that it does not take away anything from what Chairman Ceballos is saying, but she thinks that maybe people are a little bit better off. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that the income levels are not really showing it and stated that during COVID, the Mayor released something that indicated that incomes had gone up and said that it is possible that there was a spike, but he is not seeing it; visually he is not feeling it and their study did not show it and mentioned that HUD released those income levels, those percentages, but those are generated on sample studies. Chairman Ceballos said to Mrs. Gaona to not be surprised if they do not keep at this level and would suggest to Mrs. Gaona to project through the end of the year to see where they land and then come back and share with the Board where they are. Mrs. Gaona confirmed. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they hope to be at the standard level and said that he does not think they reached the high performer level and asked if Mrs. Gaona has confirmed that. Mrs. Gaona responded that she has not and stated that they are pushing to stay at the 98% which is what she has been pushing for and that they should be very close, but based on whether they get scored or not and what the change would be at the HUD level on what they will use to score and like she said, they have had several calls and it is not just them locally, but it is happening at other agencies, so they will have to come up with a decision.

Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona if she is thinking that there may be a compensatory factor that they will put in to adjust. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that something like they did last year. Chairman Ceballos stated that it will take care of the status and stated that he does not think it fixes the units and if HUD would ask them about the Capital Fund money and said that together they made a decision to not invest too significantly with this idea that they will renovate which sounds like a similar story with Russell Terrace and said that HUD asked that question, but it is not enough when they have 200 and some units and you only have \$700K or \$500K to split to use in this property which is not enough. Commissioner Ms.

Guerra mentioned that they are not going to make a significant change to make it more attractive with that kind of money. Chairman Ceballos stated that it took them to the conversation of repositioning their assets which is what they call it, being able to leverage it, so they will talk about that on their next call which they agreed will be within sixty days of their last one and mentioned that it will resolve the problem on how they begin to renovate because if there is a permissible way for them to use their reserves and go leverage to start remodeling and actually in this case, their exercise, and mentioned that he told them the whole story, that they went to a unit and they tried to do the electrical retrofit because he was convinced that it could be done and then they saw what needed to be done and when they are trying to wire across bedrooms, they have to deal with that kind of situation which does not make any sense, they have to expose conduit everywhere and it makes no sense to retrofit; unlike Russell Terrace, which he completely feels they could have just got it and retrofit it and feels different about Colonia Guadalupe and to other people's credit that have been telling him that they can figure that out and said that the ceilings are so short that they really do not have a way to build the chaise or that kind of situation, so he told them that his opinion was that they could not retrofit it and they gutted it and retrofitted it with air conditioner and the works, washer and dryer, new plumbing and everything so, here they are looking at similarly like what they did in Colonia Guadalupe, but also they would not keep the foundation because these foundations are different, they were poured with wood under a very different method, so now they are talking about doing 40 or 50 units and then rebuilding to a new standard and to a new model, so if they can get authorization to do that whether it would be through another RAD or through some other repositioning opportunity, they should take it; it has come a time for Colona Guadalupe to be redone, leasing is telling them, the analysis on retrofitting the units is telling them and the disinvestment is telling them that.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that the other piece is not all they do and he understands, but it is working with others to bring back a few stores, a few things that people can walk to; it is not in our real house of work, but they should do it and the staff needs to understand why they are doing it and if they go to a lower standard, they cannot sustain the operation, it is unsustainable and HUD is not going to let them be at 80% or 85% and they are going to start borrowing or already are because it has always been a good performer and stated that he took a lot of time because he wanted all to hear that because he thinks it is the future of the Housing Authority and that it has always been a fourth of the units roughly and mentioned to Commissioner Ms. Freeman that politically and socially he thinks the community is ready for this development to be redone and now seeing what happened with Russell Terrace and how that bettered the neighborhood, he thinks that people in the community will accept them doing it and if they do not, they are going to live through this leasing loss and mentioned that the City is demolishing homes because they are in disrepair and nothing is coming back and said that people are not building.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman mentioned that she totally agrees with Chairman Ceballos and with Mrs. Gaona on the blinds and stuff to make it more presentable for the tenants, but if it is the question of the person coming in and not wanting to take Public Housing vs Section 8 and said that they see it and would say that they have to put out pocket for all the deposits to move in and decide that they are going to wait for something out there that would give

a little bit more. Commissioner Ms. Freeman mentioned that what could attract to bring those numbers up would be to provide the utility deposits upfront instead of waiting the next statement in from the utilities and present it to the office and then wait 60 to 90 days to get their money back because she mentioned that hers got lost and she had to go and ask for her money, so she thinks that presenting the money to the utility company upfront when they are preparing to move in and change their utilities will be much easier for them; it would be a drawing point, to her it would because she chose to live in the inner city and preferred the inner city and mentioned that when they went to Austin to talk to the City Council, she argued about the inner city, the community and the businesses they would lose in the area if Russell Terrace shut down which was her key point and said that she did not focus on her personally, she focused on what the city would be losing in that community and mentioned that they need to push to bring and maybe have a pow wow with HEB and have them send something to "Las Lomas" and target both Russell Terrace and Colonia Guadalupe.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he was in the South Laredo area the other day and saw that Variety Meats has a big store in the South and mentioned that there is a Variety Meat up the road, but it is pretty far for this side of the creek, but maybe if they encourage them to find a spot for them and build one over here. Commissioner Ms. Guerra mentioned that there is a variety of stores and wondered that if they just target HEB by itself, what the chances were and said that they are good corporate to work with the community to address certain services. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that it was a good point and that the build back challenges is not on the agenda, but only because they got tied up with a lot of different things and forgot to add it to the agenda, but it is going to come back on the agenda and mentioned that President Biden build back challenge through EDA, Economic Development Administration, is pushing out these grants for infrastructure and they are formulating some sort of opportunity to pull some money in areas in the inner city which requires a match down the road, but he thinks that these kinds of projects would be something that if they have the right partnership, they can make it happen and if they do not do it in the next year or two, those stimulus monies will go away and they won't do it, so when that gets all formulated, they will bring it back and stated that it is all related, at least for the inner city and said that health wise too, they are under served and under capacity in that area too. Commissioner Ms. Guerra mentioned that it is the problem with the border because the people that are under served, they just go to Mexico, so there is never going to be clients for them to make profit. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that hopefully they will get the summary of the building back better challenge soon, maybe early next week and then, they will bring it to the Board and mentioned that it has a very short fuse on that grant and stated that they understand that there will be more, so there will be a different cycle coming later too.

Mrs. Gaona mentioned that the PIC score for Section 8 is at 100%, HAP utilization is at 99.60% and the lease up is at 98.58% and stated that they had 85 emergency vouchers; they received 41 referrals; 26 of them are out searching and 11 families have already been assisted and in the Rapid Rehousing they have 10 families that have been assisted.

Bulmaro Cruz presented on Los Balcones and showed them the work on the apartments and said that by now the kitchen cabinets are covered with the counter tops and all the closets are in place now and the ceiling has been painted and also the walls are already painted and with the trim around on the base. Chairman Ceballos asked for the percentage of completion. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that it is about 80% as per the report. Mr. Cruz confirmed.

Mr. Cruz also presented the work at Ana Maria Lozano and mentioned that they are doing the painting touch up. Chairman Ceballos asked if the landscaping was done. Mr. Cruz stated that they are putting the weed barrier and the wrought iron fencing separating our building from the head start will be completed. Chairman Ceballos asked if they want to fence it. Mrs. Gaona confirmed. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they learned that the head start may not have students there and that he wished they would have known that because they would have treated that project differently which is nobody's fault; he thinks that they just decided that recently, but if they are not going to have students, that trailer is not in very good shape for long term and they could have done something differently in designing the center. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that she has a pending call with them to discuss because they expressed to Ms. Barrientos that they were trying to sell it and they were not able to get somebody to buy it so, Mrs. Gaona thinks that it is a discussion they need to have with them; they called her, but she did not answer, but they will be discussing that with her and will probably be bringing it to the Board. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that the analysis to it is how many cars will be parking there too and if she brings more staff to the head start, it is going to impact the BiblioTech space. Mr. Cruz stated that the air condition units have been repaired inside and outside.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman asked Mr. Cruz on the completion of HVAC. Mr. Cruz responded that it is at 85% completion.

Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona if Rapid Rehousing is doing fine. Mrs. Gaona confirmed. Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any questions for Mrs. Gaona. There were no questions.

10. ACTION ITEM

- A.** Discussion and possible action to award landscaping services for Bernal Sunrise Courts, Russell Terrace and Meadow Elderly to Greener World Landscaping, LLC effective October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he understands they are already using them and that they would like to proceed into a longer-term agreement. Mrs. Gaona confirmed and mentioned that they already use them at all three properties and are recommending to go with Greener World and stated that they have provided them also with a schedule as to when they would be doing the edging, the fertilizing, the weed control also at Russell Terrace. Chairman Ceballos mentioned to the Board that this is a minor migration of what is traditionally an inhouse, and given some recent lapses on how they take care of their difficult to manage landscaping, things behind people's yards, things around the offices like

at Meadow Elderly, he asked Mrs. Gaona to do an analysis to figure out if it was more cost efficient to contract it out, so this is an exercise in some of that and mentioned that they were already doing that in Russell Terrace, if they remember, they had it for a period contracted for landscaping, so they are aware and mentioned that Mrs. Gaona will be looking at it cost wise whether it improves and whether it makes sense financially at the end of the term. Commissioner Ms. Guerra asked if it is going ok with the contractor. Chairman Ceballos asked how it is going with the contractor. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that under her watch they have only done it this one time and that the staff had mentioned that previously they had done well when they were doing Russell Terrace, so she expects for it to continue going well and they will be monitoring it and doing any modifications needed and mentioned that the agency will be providing the fertilizer and all of that, but they will be applying it. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza asked if they have a schedule as to when they are going to show up. Mrs. Gaona confirmed. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he thinks she said that they included that they will also service the Russell Terrace sprinkler system. Mrs. Gaona confirmed.

Chairman Ceballos recommended Mrs. Gaona to at least do a testing twice a year so, if there is a leak, they will not have a huge water bill. Commissioner Ms. Freeman mentioned that she feels that the contract provider is much better than doing it inhouse because it removes the liability from them into their hands if anything ever happens. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza mentioned that it also deviates the employees from other areas they might need them too. Chairman Ceballos agreed.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza moved to award landscaping services for Bernal Sunrise Court, Russell Terrace and Meadow Elderly to Greener World Landscaping, LLC effective October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

- B. Discussion and possible action to renew the Workers' Compensation and Automotive Liability Insurances for the Housing Authority of the City of Laredo effective October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022.**

Ms. Barrientos stated that it is just the renewal of the Workers' Compensation and Automotive Liability Insurances and mentioned that she wants to advise them that they get audited after the year is over so they can adjust the premium if they have to get credit for it or if they have to increase the premium depending on how many staff members they have, so, they get audited every year. Ms. Barrientos mentioned that on the Workers' Compensation, the rates stayed the same on the clerical and the maintenance and said that they have rates for the clerical and for maintenance and those stayed the same and that the payment actually, went down this year.

Chairman Ceballos moved to approve the item to renew the Workers' Compensation and the Automotive Liability Insurances as presented. Commissioner Ms. Freeman seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. De Anda stated that he noticed that on the Automotive Liability Insurance they have \$500K limit and recommended to increase it to at least \$1M.

Chairman Ceballos agreed and asked Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza if he agreed to that amendment. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza as well as Commissioner Ms. Freeman agreed. Chairman Ceballos asked for all those in favor and mentioned that he also supports that amendment and stated that it is very wise.

Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Ceballos thanked Mr. De Anda.

- C.** Discussion and possible action to approve the 2022 Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program Payment Standard Amounts effective October 1, 2021 using Fair Market Rents and adopt Resolution No. 21-R-09.

Mrs. Gaona mentioned that on this item they came to the Board last meeting to approve the payment standards at 100% for all units except for the one bedroom and were now asking to be able to utilize the 2022 FMR's that came out in October, to put them effective October, November and December. Chairman Ceballos asked if it would be at the same percentages as approved before. Mrs. Gaona confirmed. Chairman Ceballos stated that it is basically updating the table. Mrs. Gaona confirmed and stated that it is updating the table with the 2022 FMR's for HUD and mentioned that they did an evaluation and it would increase their cost by maybe \$8K to \$10K, based on whatever new units were leased and stated that the reason she wanted to make sure they did it for October is because they got an additional \$20K in funding so, she would like to be able to utilize a little bit more of that to avoid recapture if any is left.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that it would also get the one-bedroom opportunities up. Mrs. Gaona confirmed and stated that also to get any of the other units increased a little bit and mentioned that some of them stayed the same, but the one bedroom would increase from \$735 to \$760. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that it is helpful. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza mentioned that in Asherton there was a \$45 drop which Chairman Ceballos mentioned does not help and asked if they want to adjust it, to raise it. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that usually the one-bedrooms are the ones that get adjusted so, they may come back to the Board with the CSA in Asherton.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza moved to approve the item as presented.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

- D.** Discussion and possible action to award the demolition of the Colonia Guadalupe (AMP1) Maintenance Shop Building as recommended by staff.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that this is a bided item. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that they did a request for quotations for a small purchase for this particular work item and stated that staff is recommending to look at awarding it to Royal E. Construction at \$14,550 and

said that IIPG Enterprises came in at \$14,700 and Midas Contractors original bid came in at \$42,500 and submitted a revised bid at \$33,500 because they were including the back building and the other two contractors were not so, they asked them for that and submitted a revised quote at \$33,500.

Chairman Ceballos stated that it is the building that is right next to them and mentioned that he walked it with Mrs. Gaona and Ric Solis, the architect, this week and said that they can expect a little bit more than that expenditure; the contractors will be asked to add some sidewalks there around the building which they did not determine during the walk through, but they want to clean up the area so that they do not have spotty concrete left so, they can put some trees and irrigate it while they decide what to do with it next.

Chairman Ceballos moved to award as presented by staff. Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion. Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any questions or discussion.

Commissioner Ms. Freeman asked where they are putting all the stuff that is in the shop; where would they store it. Mrs. Gaona stated that they have the other container at the warehouse that has material already and are also planning to bring the container from Ana Maria Lozano that was being used at the construction site and they are looking at bringing it to Meadow Elderly and put it there which they almost got it all cleaned out and got refrigerators and stuff, it is easy just to put back in there and said that they are missing the cage which has a little bit more of items that need to be disposed of so, they need to do that transition of items there, the metal and miscellaneous items that have been left behind for years, so they are cleaning it out.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza mentioned that he was curious why Midas would submit such a high bid or what is it that they are looking at that they are not seeing. Chairman Ceballos stated that he could answer that and mentioned that they are not in the demolishing business which the other two are so, equipment wise, they would have to go rent the equipment or it will take them longer and mentioned that Midas is the company that is doing the parking lot and they are general contractors and the other two are concrete; IIPG, Pedro Gonzalez, who bided at Russell Terrace and did not get the job, but he has been in demo probably for about 30 years, a long time, so they know the unit metric for bidding these project which would be his opinion and asked Bulmaro Cruz if he had something different to say. Mr. Cruz stated that it is exactly what Chairman Ceballos was just saying and that IIPG have been in the demolition business for the longest time.

Chairman Ceballos moved to approved this item as presented by staff.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

- E. Discussion and possible action to award RFQ#21-0120-1 General Legal Counsel and authorize the Executive Director to finalize negotiations and return to the Board for approval of proposed contract(s) with selected firm(s).

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he understands Mrs. Gaona has the scoring sheets for the Board members. Mrs. Gaona confirmed. Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona, for the record, to say the respondents, but before Chairman Ceballos wanted to thank all the groups and all the entities that are not present, for the record, that responded and mentioned that he knows they extended it at least once to try to get a greater pool from Laredo and San Antonio and mentioned that his understanding of the strategy is to keep a Laredo firm and to keep a San Antonio firm or an out of Laredo firm and the reasoning behind that is to remove a bit of the politics sometimes on issues that come before the community and the Board, so that is the spirit of at least how he proceeded which is kind of what has been their approach and mentioned that they learned with Russell Terrace that it was a good thing to have.

Mrs. Gaona mentioned that the agency received three local firms; De Anda Law Firm; Kazen, Meurer & Perez and J. Cruz and Associates. Chairman Ceballos mentioned again, for the record, that he personally wants to thank them for responding and he knows that responding on line and preparing packets takes work and takes people's time so, he wants to thank them all for preparing that and for being interested in working with us.

Mrs. Gaona mentioned that they received one out of town firm which is Escamilla and Poneck.

Chairman Ceballos stated that he would like to ask the Board that they split this item because he cannot vote on Mr. De Anda's proposal, but he would like to vote on the San Antonio Firm so he would like to make a motion that they entertain having two counsels in similar fashion and would like to make a motion that they continue to retain Escamilla and Poneck. Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza stated that he seconds the motion. Chairman Ceballos stated that it is probably appropriate that Mrs. Gaona reads the scores first.

Mrs. Gaona stated that for the local firms, De Anda Law Firm scored at 92; Kazen, Meurer & Perez scored 79.75 and J. Cruz and Associates scored 78. Chairman Ceballos asked the score for Escamilla and Poneck. Mrs. Gaona stated that Escamilla and Poneck has a 92.50. Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona if she could rank them. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that it would be Escamilla and Poneck, De Anda Law Firm; Kazen, Meurer & Perez and J. Cruz and Associates.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that his motion stands for Escamilla and Poneck to be retained and stated that last time they voted the same firms that are at the top; they voted to have a General Counsel and Secondary Counsel or Co-General Counsel is the way he would like to see it so, he would make his amendment to the motion that way.

Chairman Jose L. Ceballos moved to award item 10E as discussed and amended above.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza moved to award to De Anda Law Firm in Laredo that came in first as Co-General Counsel.

Commissioner Ms. Guerra seconded the motion.

Motion passed.

Chairman Ceballos abstained.

Chairman Ceballos congratulated Ricardo De Anda and Escamilla and Poneck.

Mr. Ricardo De Anda thanked them for their confidence and stated that he looks forward to working with Escamilla and Poneck as he has in the past.

Chairman Ceballos thanked them both.

Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona if there was anything she would like to cover with the Board before they close. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that some received the package yesterday for the agenda for the Summit and stated that all were welcome to attend. Chairman Ceballos stated that they all know the background of the Summit, but that this year's Summit is a little different and said that they moved it to the College for a variety of reasons and mentioned that they developed a COVID policy that cut their attendance in more than half, but they offered them three rooms, but at their main executive conference room which they all have been to, they are going to have a limit as of today of 60 and the room next to it has a limit of 20 and then another room at 20; it is going to be very awkward so, they will accommodate as best as they can, given the perimeters the College has given them and mentioned that he is hoping they can get a number of up to 80 and mentioned that it is their local College policy and not the City of Laredo Health Department; it is something they decided to do and maybe they will let them have 80 people in the main conference room so they may have some fluidity with people coming in and coming out.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he knows all of them had said that they will be there and mentioned that they also have the tiny home built going on right now with a lot of pressure with the staff with all that they have going on and there are a lot of people involved and said that Mrs. Gaona is leading the charge to fully complete one of the tiny homes and through Mile One, which is another party that joined the tiny home build using a different system so, they will see a different tiny home that is not the Housing Authority which is great to see that somebody has a passion for that and they are learning from it too, to be building in a different kind of method so, they will get to see that too.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they are hosting the Summit in that spirit and that obviously there is an agenda, but mentioned that however they may feel, if they want to be part of it, even with driving the questions about what they just discussed about Colonia Guadalupe, the inner city and this disinvestment and stated that the gentleman that is coming would like to do more research in Laredo and has done research in Dallas, Houston and San Antonio, a triangle which he has been focusing on and calls the buildings "Cities of Opportunity" and based on their conversation, Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he is very interested and suggests that they may want to spend some time with him and said that they are trying to create a meeting with him and maybe if he is up to it, maybe to dinner the night before so, they will keep them posted and stated that the gentleman is relatively an

academic that is reaching out, branching out, and has never been to this part of the Border and thinks that it would be him whom they would spend sometime researching our community and our living space.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that he wanted to remind them that they are the host even though there are a lot of names there, the agency's resources here have afforded this meet up and stated that he wishes they would have 180 people like they were planning, but COVID policies kind of tripped that up a little bit and mentioned that they were anticipating it because they were seeing a spike and were thinking that if they hit that spike and they would have to curtail it and it did not feel good so, it was not the spike, it was the policy and stated that of course, they adopt policies too for what they think is best so, they understand that and there is nothing wrong with that and just that at the momentum they had built up to get 100 some people and hearing himself talk now, maybe it was not that logical to do so and hopes that maybe they will have more spacing than they originally planned and said that there will be less people, but it is ok.

Chairman Ceballos mentioned that the other piece is that they are going to read the HR&A summary in the back cover of that booklet and it will be very striking to them, given today's meeting and what they talked about leasing.

Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona if she had anything else to add, Ms. Barrientos on the Summit or Mrs. Martinez anything on her side. Mrs. Martinez said that they may also mention that they are also invited to mixer after the summit at La Posada. Chairman Ceballos confirmed and stated that it will be at La Posada and said that if he wants to have dinner the day before and they all feel that they want to do that, they can also try to arrange it and mentioned that he wants to have some pre-meetings. Mrs. Martinez mentioned that he would be open to whatever itinerary they are willing to work with. Commissioner Ms. Guerra stated that it would be nice. Chairman Ceballos mentioned that they had two zoom calls with him and stated that he is very pleasant and very approachable and it will be enjoyable to have discussions with him. Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona if there was anything else. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that all were welcome to go see the tiny home at Laredo College and go help during the weekend, that they will be there.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE

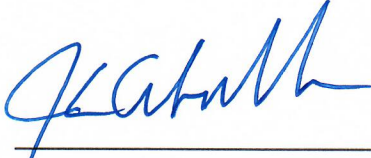
The Board of Commissioners for the Housing Authority of the City of Laredo reserve the right to adjourn into Executive Session at any time during the course of this meeting to discuss any of the matters listed on the posted agenda, above, as authorized by the Texas Government Code, including Sections 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).

12. ACTION ON ANY EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEM

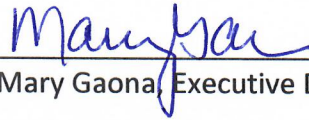
13. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Ceballos moved to adjourn the meeting.
Vice-Chairman Dr. Garza seconded the motion.
Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.



Jose L. Ceballos, Chairman



Mary Gaona, Executive Director