

Laredo Housing Authority  
Regular Board of Commissioners Meeting  
Zoom Video Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86956693699?pwd=ZTEhNGk5MEdDRUdCb0h0b3RERE04QT09>

Call in Number: 1-346-248-7799

Webinar ID: [869 5669 3699](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86956693699)

LHA Board Room  
2000 San Francisco Ave.  
Laredo, Texas 78040  
Friday, August 26, 2022  
12:00 P.M.

**Board of Commissioners**

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

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

***The Board of Commissioners will convene for a Board meeting for discussion on the following matters (NOTE: A quorum of the Board will be physically present at this location, but up to two other Commissioners may attend by videoconferencing, as permitted by Tex. Gov't Code Section 551.127)***

**A-22-R-7**

**Minutes**

**August 26, 2022**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Jose L. Ceballos called the meeting to order at 12:07 p.m.

**2. INVOCATION PRAYER**

Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman led them in prayer: "Please bow your heads, Dear Heavenly Father we ask that you hear our prayers, thank you for this beautiful day in which we gather to do our work bless us and guide us that our decisions are the correct ones as they affect many residents in our community. We pray for all who are in danger through conflicts around the globe. We pray that you protect everyone in the paths of natural disasters. We pray that you bless and heal all the homeless, the senior citizens and the disabled persons. We pray that you protect all of our active-duty military and our veterans. We pray that you protect our children as they return to school and participate in their extracurricular activities. We pray that you protect our government employees throughout our county. And lastly but not least, we thank you whole hardily for all the blessings you bestow on us In Jesus name we pray. Amen."

Chairman Ceballos thanked Ms. Freeman for that very nice prayer.

**3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairman Jose L. Ceballos led them in the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **4. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM**

Chairman Ceballos thanked everyone that was present as well as joining via zoom.

Chairman Ceballos asked Mrs. Gaona to proceed with roll call. Mrs. Gaona mentioned that Commissioner Dr. Marisela Rodríguez Tijerina and Commissioner Anita Guerra were in route to the meeting and will be joining the meeting in a few minutes.

Chairman Ceballos stated that they have a quorum.

##### **Commissioners Present**

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

##### **Commissioners Absent**

##### **Staff Present**

Mary Gaona, Executive Director  
Jennifer Barrientos, Director of Finance  
Bulmaro Cruz, Director of Construction Projects  
Melissa Ortiz, Director of Section 8  
Roberto Peña, Director of IT  
Raquel Aguilar, Assistant Director of Housing Management  
Alejandro Jimenez, Assistant Director of IT  
Valeria Cabello, Procurement Officer  
Jessica Martinez, Director of Planning & Community Services (zoom)  
Christy Ramos, Administrative Assistant  
Sonia Flores, Senior Accountant  
Sara Vicharrelli, Leasing Specialist (zoom)  
Maria Hernandez, Property Manager (zoom)  
Veronica Alcala, Assistant Property Manager (zoom)  
Melinda Gavilanes, Property Manager (zoom)  
Elsa Rodriguez, Clerk (zoom)  
Maria Hernandez, Property Manager (zoom)  
Maria Serrano, Assistant Property Manager (zoom)  
Jose Hernandez, Property Manager (zoom)  
San Juana Valero, Assistant Property Manager (zoom)  
Laura Villalobos, Property Manager (zoom)  
Denise Guzman, Property Manager (zoom)  
Doug A. Poneck, Attorney  
Ricardo De Anda, Attorney

##### **Others Present**

Rene Gonzalez, Garza/Gonzalez & Associates  
Rosie Rios – Carlos Richter  
Maria Medel – Ana Maria Lozano  
Rosa Ochoa – Meadow Acres  
Violeta Ortiz – Colonia Guadalupe

Chairman Ceballos thanked everybody for making the time to be here and Rene and Doug for making the trip as well, appreciate you all driving down from San Antonio.

Chairman Ceballos stated that Commissioner Guerra has joined the meeting at 12:37 p.m. for the record.

## **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 comments.

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

Chairman Ceballos stated that there were no disclosures.

## **7. PRESENTATION BY CENTRAL RESIDENT COUNCIL**

Chairman Ceballos pregunto, hay alguien de la Mesa central para hacer comentarios.

Ms. Rosie Ríos comentó -buenos días, después de ya mucho tiempo de no verlos me da mucho gusto verlos que todos están bien y la información que tenemos para esta junta es que ya están establecidas todas las mesas de las colonias, alguna incompleta con uno o dos miembros que nos faltan pero ya estamos trabajando en eso, se abrió también la oportunidad para que los residentes pudieran tener los garage sales, no pudieron lograr el tiempo gratuito que dio la ciudad por el clima pero la siguiente semana lo hicieron, y tenemos también ya el proceso de volver a integrar los programas de After School, queremos lograr que tengamos más niños y estamos trabajando también en hacer las invitaciones a los padres para las nuevas propuestas que tiene Jessica sobre establecer comentarios sobre prevención de crímenes, maltrato de niños y todo eso, está planeado para el mes de septiembre, esperemos que podamos tener buena respuesta de los residentes y estamos trabajando en todo lo que se ha podido hacer hasta este tiempo y esperamos seguir haciéndolo y contar con el apoyo de los residentes sobre todo que es lo importante. Rosie Ríos dio las Gracias por parte de la mesa central. Chairman Ceballos comentó, Muchas gracias. No sé si, ya tenía tiempo que no la veíamos verdad. Hemos discutido, le quería dar nada más un rapidito de lo viene en cuestión de Colonia Guadalupe estamos en planeamiento o planificación para empezar planes de reconstrucción aquí, no sabemos si va a ser reconstrucción completa o va a ser reconstrucción parcial, pero es el planeamiento probablemente para mesas futuras. Aquí los residentes van a ser algo importante empezar ya a platicar. Ms. Rosie Ríos comenta que, si esto va a quedar contemplado en el plan de 5 años y ya tuvieron las juntas en todas las colonias, ya se distribuimos los flyers para recibir la información de los residentes, cuáles son las propuestas que ellos que ven más necesarias, este y también habíamos hablado ya en la junta anterior que usted nos había dicho un comentario de aquí la Colonia Guadalupe terminar lo que está planeado y si se va

a hacer una nueva planeación. ¿Es lo que está usted ahorita diciendo? Chairman Ceballos respondió. Si, lo mas reciente lo va a cubrir Mary en su presentación, pero se vamos a identificar o ya identificaron ellos un edificio que tiene que 3 apartamentos y vamos a ver si podemos hacer lo que no hicimos en Russel Terrace, una reconstrucción de ese edificio que tenga sentido que nos cueste mas tumbar y volverlo a hacer, así que vamos a hacer un plan piloto para ese edificio, porque se ha intentado anteriormente reconstruir o planificar y hay reacción de la comunidad, no nada mas de la que vive aquí, sino del resto de la ciudad que no les ha parecido, entonces se va a tratar de crear participación de los residentes. Si nos dicen los arquitectos que se puede reconstruir les van a dar luz verde para que lo hagan y para que la gente pueda ir a ver y ya se sientan más a gusto, porque va a ver incomodidad como se vivio en Russel Terrace que se cambian de un lugar por un tiempo y luego regresan y eso es bien difícil y mucho trabajo que ya se vivió, pero aquí no hay otra forma de hacerlo, no vamos a construir otro desarrollo y luego cambiarlos, no va a ser así. Entonces le informo a usted como líder, cuando reciba preguntas de las personas que viven aquí en Guadalupe, les pueda explicar que se va a planificar y si el plan piloto demuestra que es muy costoso, ese trabajo de reconstruir la misma vivienda, se va a tener que hacer nuevo y hay que buscar los fondos. La dificultad cuando se está haciendo la planificación de 5 años es que el residente nos esta viendo de que estamos diciendo -no vamos a invertir más dinero con el plan de que se va a reconstruir y dicen -pues cuándo?, si no lo reconstruimos, lo que paso en Russell Terrace que ya no le metían dinero, se decaía, estamos en esa situación aquí, que ya no le queríamos meter mas dinero a algo que se va a quizás reconstruir, le informa a usted porque yo se que a la hora de las juntas le van a hacer esas preguntas. Ms. Rosie Ríos comenta que, si se pusieran a ver que todas las cosas que, porque tienen una historia, no se pueden destruir, pues no avanzaríamos, en ninguna parte del mundo avanzaríamos, entonces lo importante es ir con la modernidad en todos los aspectos. Chairman Ceballos confirma, que ese mensaje es muy importante que se los de a sus mesas directivas porque a veces la resistencia es del residente, a veces, no siempre o de los vecinos que no quieren. Ms. Rosie Ríos comenta, que les provoca ansiedad de tenerse que mover, de tener que cambiar y regresar, Rosie Ríos recuerda que hace muchos años cuando se construyó lo del metro, se le dijo a cada residente que si se quería ir o quieres un bono para que te muevas, entonces mucha gente acepto un bono de 4 mil o 5 mil dólares y compro un pedacito, engancho algo y se fue. Entonces algunas veces pudiera ser algo así en esta situación. Aunque pues es una colonia muy grande, es la más grande de Laredo, pero si realmente ya tiene mucha inversión desde que Rosie Ríos recuerda, 1 millón para esto y 500 mil para el otro y a lo mejor ya es impropcedente lo que está pasando, pero ustedes son los que tiene la batuta. Chairman Ceballos responde, que ellos van a llegar en un punto que van a salir, probablemente algunos o todos, entonces es importante que todos estén informados el personal y ustedes para que sepan, Chairman Ceballos quiere empezar el planeamiento. Ms. Rosie Ríos complementa que el proyecto este aceptado, porque ya viene el cambio político y aquí se mueve así, sale el Mayor y sale todo el mundo que estuvo con el Mayor y entra el otro y realmente no debiera de ser así, porque el bienestar de la comunidad es primero que el bienestar de cada una de las personas. Chairman Ceballos comenta, primero vamos a cambiar nosotros que la política en este pueblo, no nada más en este pueblo, en el país, eso lo estamos aprendiendo que desafortunadamente los políticos no son la estabilidad, esa es la realidad, Chairman Ceballos lo platica para que Rosie Ríos comprenda lo que están tratando de hacer

al finalizar de sus servicios aquí y que lo comparta con la gente nueva que está entrando en las mesas, para que ellos entiendan. Chairman Ceballos continua que se va a hacer un plan y lo otro que le estaba platicando a Mrs. Gaona es la infraestructura que tienen aquí no nada más es el edificio, en Russell Terrace era más nuevo, es de los 50s, 60s y 70s, aquí las líneas de agua y drenaje van a estar más viejas, entonces aparte de reconstruir los edificios, esta reconstruir las líneas de agua y ese es un costo que nosotros no hemos contemplado y ahora como está la situación en la ciudad, Chairman Ceballos hace la pregunta usted cree que lo van a contemplar?, no tienen ni para lo que ya identificaron, esa es la realidad. Ms. Rosie Ríos comenta, identificada estaba como desde hace 10 años y se quedó parado, esperemos que el que entre, entre con más ganas de servirle a la comunidad y no a los intereses económicos de la ciudad, porque aquí realmente así se ha movido, aquí y en todo el mundo, me apoya fulano de tal y por ahí me voy. Chairman Ceballos responde, que bueno que entiende eso porque esa es la realidad, para mí yo pienso que sería más factible reconstruirlo lo que esta, basado a la situación que tiene la ciudad, porque para meter líneas nuevas estamos hablando de una cantidad de millones para las 200 unidades que tenemos aquí, pero ese tema probablemente va a seguir viniendo a la mesa directiva cada 2 meses para darle actualización, hasta que entre otro grupo o hasta que se le dé seguimiento, pero tratar de informar para que el planeamiento no se pierda. Ms. Rosie Ríos complementa, y tratar de sacar los fondos aprobados para que antes de que otra cosa suceda pues quede el proyecto ya aprobado, eso sería lo ideal. Chairman Ceballos comenta, bueno las finanzas ese es otro proyecto en sí, porque tenemos que escoger. El proyecto tiene reservas igual como tenía Russell Terrace, pero la realidad es que hay una sola manera de utilizar las reservas; si reconstruimos, es más difícil utilizar las reservas, tenemos que sacarlos de Public Housing para utilizar las reservas y eso es más complicado. No estamos ahí todavía, porque le van a preguntar con el planeamiento, ya se los preguntaron, los 300 mil que tenían para lo de la electricidad de Guadalupe y los 400 que venían, todo eso y se están haciendo esos ajustes. Ms. Rosie Ríos comenta, pero se había informado que se iba a hacer transferencias, de un fondo a otro para lo más necesario. Si a lo mejor hace falta que tuviéramos una junta con todos los representantes de las colonias y que usted estuviera con nosotros y si alguno de los comisionados tiene un tiempo, que es precioso para ustedes, yo sé que es bien importante su trato también y venir aquí a las juntas es un correr, pero que bueno sería poder informarlo así en general y directo de usted. Chairman Ceballos confirma, si lo hacemos más adelante ya que estemos. Ms. Rosie Ríos continua, lo hacemos más interesante, mas importante porque van a decir -quien es Rosie?, ¿Rosie que?, mejor lo oímos de usted. Chairman Ceballos confirma, si lo hacemos, el plan piloto del edificio ya está por hacerse, se va a autorizar para poder llevar a cabo ese ejemplar y si el arquitecto dice -No, no nos va a salir, pues ahí le paramos y se tiene que hacer demolición, pero eso es lo que sigue, Thank you Mrs. Ríos, estamos al pendiente.

## **8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A.** Approval of Minutes for Board of Commissioners meeting on May 20, 2022.
- B.** Approval of Minutes for Board of Commissioners meeting on July 29, 2022.

**Commissioner Dr. Marisela Rodriguez Tijerina moved to approve the minutes for the Board of Commissioners meeting on May 20, 2022 and July 29, 2022 as presented.**

**Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

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

- A.** Executive Director's Overall Status report, including status of completed project opening ceremonies, plaques, leasing admissions into Los Balcones Apartments, and status of campus renovation activities.
- B.** Resident Services and Afterschool Center status report, including afterschool enrollment and individual center programmatic information.
- C.** Follow-up presentation on the proposed public housing safety and security program, changes to oversight and implementation, and resources proposed to be allocated/budgeted, and proposed changes to Admissions Policy.

Chairman Ceballos stated, that there is more information that I asked Mary to put in, to bring in, some of it is going to be rather quick. I think they prepared that in advance, so it's in your packets. But I will let Mary lead us through that. And then when we get to item 9C Mary, we may want to bring it in, if you want to bring it in when we do item 10B roll it together so its all related. Go ahead Mary.

Ms. Gaona stated, for our Public Housing, our PIC score was at 99.73% and our lease up is currently at 98.95%. For Section 8 we have a PIC score of 104.06%, our HAP utilization is at 103.10%, and our lease up is at 99.30%. For our emergency housing vouchers, of the 85 allocated, we have 75 families that have already been housed, 1 that was pending an inspection, and 9 vouchers that are issued but are still searching. For our Rapid Rehousing Program, we've got 9 households that are assisted and that is our max. Here you have our leasing comparison, we did drop 1 unit here at Colonia Guadalupe which we were holding for one handicap tenant but they are not going to utilize it so we have gone ahead and made it available to lease. Other than that, we have basically stayed the same. Our average is at 99.11% for the year. Chairman Ceballos asked, Mary when we take the units off-line, these three units, do they come off the stats. Do you tell HUD so they can take it off? Ms. Gaona replied, yes. I did do the one unit that I had advised you about, the one with the resident that one is off-line. So, once we take them off-line it does not affect our utilization. The Rapid Rehousing, we have covered that already but we do have our FY2021 grant through January 2023 and we were awarded the FY2022 through 2024, and we will need to apply for the new grant for the next year. For our Emergency Housing Vouchers, I already covered that. This is our Building A; the first floor is already furnished. Chairman Ceballos stated, so I was explaining to Mr. Gonzalez earlier how we created private spaces. I don't think that Doug has walked in there yet but we took our open concept and created partitions using glass to create at least some private space where people don't so, if someone is sick doesn't promote an illness in the building. So, this was a COVID funded renovation. I hope that the staff is pleased with it. These get a little bit of privacy in case someone is sick and doesn't know it, at least not in the immediate space. Got us an upgrade, we were talking about COVID monies coming into

cities and entities and this is how we used ours. The entry became touchless so you walk in and the doors are now automatic, they used to be all handles, so those are some improvements. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza stated, I like the windows and doors because you can see what's going on. Chairman Ceballos stated, that was part of the idea to. Go ahead Mary. Ms. Gaona stated, this is the conference room downstairs, that is the second-floor staff has already started to move up to the second floor. Our maintenance shop, we have started that. The pouring of the concrete has already passed inspection so the pouring should begin hopefully Monday or Tuesday. So, we will see that a little different. We have gone through most of our regular items, I know you have the statistics in your regular report but we can roll that in with 10C. Chairman Ceballos stated, do you want to do the ceremonies since you have that up? Ms. Gaona responded, yes. Chairman Ceballos stated, so Mary, one thing I assumed is that we needed to have a ceremony at Balcones, but is that necessary? Is the city expecting us to have a ceremony? Ms. Gaona responded; they have asked if we are going to have one. Tina has asked. Chairman Ceballos stated, okay. Ms. Gaona stated, we have proposed September 20<sup>th</sup> to do that. Chairman Ceballos asked, and you anticipate leasing in that month or after the ceremony? Ms. Gaona replied, after the ceremony. We have already met with several of the committees, we want to start already getting the waiting list ready for the beginning of September and then already have the committee meeting, we have already talked to Bethany House to get them processed. My goal is to have them housed by October 1<sup>st</sup>. Chairman Ceballos stated, so I guess for the Board is to see if these dates work, right? And of course, the Ana Maria Lozano, that building is in operation already so it is just a formality of having a ceremony since we are rededicating it to Ana Maria Lozano. Does that work for everybody? Commissioner Dr. Marisela Rodriguez-Tijerina stated that September 26, would not work for her but that is okay. Chairman Ceballos stated, I mean we are setting the dates so we can find a date that works. Do you have a date? We can work with you on a date, you don't have to decide right now. The Balcones plaque is here. The Lozano plaques are here, right? Ms. Gaona responded, yes. Balcones arrived this week and Russell Terrace is expected to arrive late September. Chairman Ceballos asked, and we did the revisions that Dr. Garza prepared? Ms. Gaona replied, yes. Chairman Ceballos replied, perfect. You know because of COVID we never did a Russell Terrace ceremony either. That's why I am saying, I don't want to add more work to our team. We did get some money from the D.D. Hachar Trust and I did say we would have a ceremony, but they have not inquired about it obviously it was right in the middle of COVID. Commissioner Anita Guerra asked, Chairman, how do you feel about it? Chairman Ceballos replied, I think we should do something for them like we did at the other BiblioTech which is to memorialize it, it is in the plaque already. So, we took care of them in the plaque. I think we will be okay. The building has been in operation now for a year and a half since then so I think we will be alright. Commissioner Anita Guerra stated, and for the scheduling, I guess we would just need to work with Dr. Tijerina or Dr. Garza. Chairman Ceballos replied, I think we are covered. If we can tweak the date to work with Dr. Rodriguez-Tijerina, that would be great for Ana Maria Lozano. That is a little more because it involves the Lozano family so we need to coordinate with them. The other one is strictly ourselves and the city government for that the City of Laredo. Any comments or anything else on these Mary? Ms. Gaona replied, only that we are waiting for the mayor to get back to us on his availability for those two dates.

Dr. Maricela Rodriguez-Tijerina stated, that September 30, 2022 worked. Ms. Gaona stated, on the next slide, the leasing for Los Balcones. We will begin the applications on the 5<sup>th</sup>. I know we do have in our policies that two units are set aside for veterans so we are trying to see if we can get those two applicants. Chairman Ceballos replied, you have all our policies on it, we set the rents, with all the subsidy and all of that. Ms. Gaona replied, yes, that is where we have the two units for veterans and two units for students. So, on the next slide we have the campus renovations. Chairman Ceballos asked, is it yes, you said two units, right? Yes, two units with a total of four students max. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza stated, one and one, right? Chairman Ceballos replied, its two units of mixed, one for males and one for females. Ms. Gaona stated, on the campus renovations activities, you can see we are still missing a couple of areas so we do have the manifold installation which is scheduled for Monday, the plumber came by last week but he is finishing some work elsewhere but should be here on Monday. The grading, we are pending to receive the, we did separate the staking and the leveling so we are waiting for those quotes, the deadline is on Tuesday but hopefully Valeria will get something before that. On the irrigation system for that area, it has already been awarded as soon as the leveling is done, we will do the grading and then do that. The flag pole is also ready for installation as soon as the grading is complete. The light fixtures will be installed as soon as the flag poles go up. And for Parking Lot C, the work is scheduled to begin on August 31<sup>st</sup> and they have indicated that they are going to start with the sidewalks and the canopy footings and then they will finish up with the parking lot. Chairman Ceballos stated, so the Parking Lot C is the one that is back here. Very good. Are we missing anything or is that it. Ms. Gaona stated, that is all on item A we have another presentation on item B.

Chairman Ceballos asked, are all our center open? Ms. Gaona replied we don't have staff at Ana Maria Lozano right now, so that is the only one not open. These are the afterschool program enrollments. I was asking Ms. Rios because I felt the twenty wasn't that many but maybe it is for the size. At Carlos Richter we only have twelve and at South Laredo we have seventeen. Some of the families are still cautious about sending the kids. Commissioner Dr. Marisela Rodriguez-Tijerina stated, just out of curiosity what are the ages for those after school programs. Ms. Gaona responded; I think they start at five to eighteen. Commissioner Dr. Marisela Rodriguez-Tijerina replied, and on average they range that much. Attorney Ricardo DeAnda asked, who supervises them? Ms. Gaona replied, the Resident Services Coordinators and the BiblioTech Technicians. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza stated, the number two can be what it is right now because don't forget right away the pressure of assessments. They have after school tutoring programs and things like that and of course I know both districts get out at different times. I think UISD gets out like at 2:45 or something like that and they start at 7:45 I believe. This is elementary, high school gets out much later. So that is another thing that the schedules throw things off as to the number of students going and participating in these events. Ms. Gaona stated, these are some of the activities that Ms. Rios touched on that are scheduled and some that are pending for the resident services or that have already occurred. Chairman Ceballos replied, so you are getting the resident service program reconstituted-organized right. Ms. Gaona responded, yes. And we are still struggling to fill those couple of positions but we continue to try to get them filled. Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman



asked, will that information be passed down to some of the Resident Councils? Ms. Gaona stated, yes. Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman asked, in a timely manner because we had a major issue with the meeting and garage sale information especially at Russell Terrace. Ms. Gaona replied, I will speak to the staff about that. This is the calendar for BiblioTech. Chairman Ceballos asked, and this is only where we have BiblioTech. Ms. Gaona replied, yes. We are trying to see if we can transition and use some of this is on Public Housing Centers but some of the children still want to come in and do the games. Chairman Ceballos said, still in the old model. Ms. Gaona replied, yes. They tell the staff that they are tired of school but we still try to push it. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza stated, you know one of the big fuses I had about Casa Verde was of course the implemented ESL and yet I don't see ESL on there and I think that it is important. Chairman Ceballos stated, on the calendar. Ms. Gaona replied, I know we did discuss it at our Resident Council meetings with the parents and Jessica got names of interested individuals at the different meetings and she was going to start working on setting up the class. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza asked, when are these meetings? Ms. Gaona responded; they are usually throughout the day. Some are held in the morning and some in the evening or afternoon. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza asked, like any day of the week. Ms. Gaona responded, yes, she will schedule it during the last meeting. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza asked, like on a Monday, could I attend that meeting. Ms. Gaona responded, yes, we can send it out as soon as she schedules it. I know for most of the Resident Councils she trying to get them on the same date and time every month like the second Tuesday of every month at three o'clock. As soon as those are set with the Resident Councils, we can send it out to the Board and any time you want to attend you can. Commissioner Dr. Marisela Rodriguez-Tijerina stated, I would like to add maybe like some, that is why I was asking about the ages, because in 8<sup>th</sup> grade they need to pick an endorsement. So, understanding career navigation I know that it is early on but the law says they have to pick an endorsement and a lot of students are very indecisive on what they want to major on so I think exploring different careers and what those careers lead to because sometimes it could be as simple as a certificate and not a four year or a two year, some of those certificates can be very short term you know like truck driving for example that gives a lot of great job opportunities so understanding careers is also important cause that may provide some motivation. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza stated, you probably also have speakers that can come speak to them. Chairman Caballos asked, is that something that, do you have a team that can come out on a schedule if there.

Commissioner Dr. Marisela Rodriguez-Tijerina replied, absolutely. We have tools that also help to identify what their interests may be and how to link it to higher ed. Chairman Caballos stated, I know Jessica is on right, I am sure she will follow up. Any other comments? Do you have any questions or comments for Mary? Mary, thanks for that added work in covering those items. I appreciate that.

Chairman Ceballos stated, your next item is item 9C, if it is okay with you all we can roll it in with item 10B and bring that up and you can cover it I think it relates to that.

## **10. ACTION ITEM**

**Chairman Ceballos made a motion to move up item 10A.**

**Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza seconded the motion.  
Motion passed unanimously.**

- A. Presentation and possible action related to the Housing Authority of the City of Laredo Audited Financial Statements for Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2021, by Garza/Gonzalez & Associates. This item may be discussed in Executive Session pursuant to Section 551.071, consultation with attorney and Section 551.074, personnel matters.

Chairman Ceballos stated, we have the representative from our auditing firm Rene Gonzalez here. This item may be discussed in Executive Session pursuant to Section 551.071, consultation with attorney and Section 551.074, personnel matters. I don't anticipate that, just based on reading the report but if we do need to go into executive, that item is listed as such. Go ahead Rene. Mr. Rene Gonzalez stated, Mr. Chairman thank you very much for having us here. Commissioners, happy to be here this afternoon to present the audit report that we completed for the year ending March 31, 2021. The report should be in your packet, you should have three documents one that you got today. The first one is the large report that comprise of the audit report with everything that is required to be submitted to HUD on a timely basis. In addition to that you will have a second report that we call comments on the audit report. Which is our way to communicate to you how the audit went and or if there were any issues or recommendations that sort of thing. And then the last document that you should have gotten this morning, is the audit summary that I am going to concentrate on which summarizes both reports. The conduct of audit report and the financial statements and audit report itself. So, if I may, I'll go through that and then I will be able to respond to any questions that commissioners may have. First of all is to share with you that we began this particular audit back in July 2021, we come in and do what we call interim work. So, our auditors come in and review your programs, your internal controls, your systems in place, that sort of thing and then we come back in October to look at your financial activities so that we can determine how to prepare and submit this particular report. Management provided us with updated trial balances from January 2022 to May 2022. We were able to complete the report in the data collection form that goes to the Federal Government prior to the due date of June 30, 2022, that was the extended deadline that you had because of all the other issues that happened before. So, you did meet the deadline in reporting this. You did submit an unaudited REAC submission which is required to be done before the audit is submitted and completed. And that was approved in March of 2022 that is prepared by your staff. And like I said we did submit the REAC submission and the audit report that is here. On the audit summary, on page 1, I wanted to share with you that the report that we are, and that is the reason you hire us, to review the financial activity and put the report together and then determine whether it meets the requirements of the feds and the requirements of the financial statements. So, we rendered an unmodified opinion, meaning a clean opinion, meaning that we feel that all the data is fairly presented in all material respects and in addition because you do administer federal funds, we are also required to give you an audit report with internal controls and compliance. I am happy to report to you that you have no material weaknesses, no significant deficiencies that we had to report and only (1) matter that we report to you on the separate management letter. So very

positive for the organization, for management. I do want to also emphasize that we had full cooperation from your management. We were not able to prepare the report without the full cooperation from your staff. We had full cooperation in that regard, there was no restrictions that were imposed on us as the auditors. In some cases, some clients do restrict us from looking at certain information and in this case, that did not occur. Very positive from your staff as well. We did test the major programs, that are on page 1 of the audit summary. Section 8 of course, the vouchers and in addition to that we had to test some COVID funding that was included in that particular year. We had \$116K of COVID testing we had to do and an addition \$384K in Public Housing. You are considered for the first time as low-risk auditee, very positive. You were not considered low risk in the past, because of issues that had come up and I am happy to report again that they have been addressed. Management has addressed all those findings and recommendations that were in the past so you have qualified as a low-risk auditee. So that is very positive. The last point on page 1 is that there is an audit completed and submitted to REAC submission and to the clearinghouse and we did that timely, along with your staff by June 20, 2022, which is timely. On the second page, I am not going to go through all that information but that is a summary of the numbers that are on this report. In the larger report, as you know, the first few pages' kind of summarize all the activity of the housing authority the later pages behind that are details of everything that is summarized in the front. This is an additional summary for you that is easier to read where it gives you what we call the balance sheet, the statement of net position showing your assets and just looking at total assets, between 20 and 21 we do a comparison there your asserts increased by \$1.6M dollars between 20 and 21. And broken down the bulk of that of course being your cash and cash equivalents. Liabilities increased by only \$476K dollars so you have at the end of 2021 the audit report period a total net position of \$34.1M. A very healthy situation for the district. On page three, is the statement of revenue and expenditures. In the operations during the 21 period, and again we compare that to 2020 again, the last column showing increases or decreases between years 2020 and 2021. And so, you generated \$19.2M dollars in revenues, you had operating expenses of \$18.1M dollars so you increased your fund balance if I may, your net position by \$1.1M dollars between the years 2020 to 2021. Again, a very positive situation for the housing authority. The last page of my summary deals with the report on the conduct of the audit. And here in the past we've told you basically the number of issues that we've raised, all those have been addressed by management. We are happy to report that there are no deficiencies in the audit. As I've shared with you, we have no restrictions, we had full cooperation, and no disagreements with management. In addition to that, we have one comment that is HUD granted, not significant, but that we had to propose a number of audit adjustments, that management excepted, to include in the audit report to make it fairly presented. And other than that, I want to thank the staff for their cooperation. We work closely with your staff in that regard. And we are ready to respond to any questions that the Commissioners may have. Chairman Ceballos asked, do you also prepare our tax returns as part of your contract? Mr. Rene Gonzalez stated, no, we do not. I believe you have a separate entity that does that. Chairman Ceballos asked, who is doing that for us on the non-profits? Ms. Gaona replied, the management company. Their auditors, Katopody. Jennifer Barrientos for the record, for the Housing Authority we do not have tax return but for the non-profits it is the other auditor that we have

contracted with the management company. Mr. Ceballos replied, I guess I was asking for our subsidiary non-profits not the partnerships. Are we not required to file tax return on those? Mr. Rene Gonzalez stated, no there are no tax returns that would be required on those. Chairman Ceballos replied, okay good. Mr. Rene Gonzalez stated, as a governmental entity that is part of your operations, those numbers are included in here as well. They are summarized in the back by each entity. Chairman Ceballos replied, thank you, I don't have any questions. Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman stated, I don't have any questions, I do have a comment, thank you for a job well done. Mr. Rene Gonzalez stated, appreciate that, we try. From our prospective it is about getting the cooperation from management and on getting a lot of the stuff, we are very happy that we had no major recommendations. Chairman Ceballos stated, also thank our staff for all the work you do in collaborating with the firm. Appreciate that as well. Mary, any comments from you. Ms. Gaona stated, just that we did go through I guess a trying basis on the new system so, we are very grateful to Jason also for working with us to solve the issues that we were having with the system. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza asked, so, is this where then item number 3 other matters we proposed a number of audit adjustments, is that because of the new system then? Ms. Gaona replied, some of that was related to that. Mr. Rene Gonzalez stated, part of it is that, the other thing is that you just converted to a new system and it takes effort on how you transfer all the activity. And Jason Hyde is the audit manager on this audit, so he works very closely with your staff. Chairman Ceballos stated, thank you very much for your presentation and for making the trip down, we really appreciate that.

**Chairman Ceballos made a motion to approve the audit for the record for the fiscal year ending March 31,2021.**

**Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman seconded the motion.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**Chairman Ceballos made a motion to take items 10B and 10C into executive session and then reconvene with any action on both. We will be consulting with our attorney with both items as authorized by Section 551.071.**

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

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**Chairman Ceballos stated that we will go into executive session at 1:35 p.m. with our Executive Director, our Attorneys, and the Board.**

- B.** Presentation and possible action to authorize the proposed budget and renewal of contracts with the off-duty Laredo Police Department officers for the purpose of providing onsite safety and security services, under the "community-policing" philosophy and approach, at LHA-owned housing developments, effective September 9, 2022 through September 8, 2023.

Chairman Ceballos stated, as back ground, this item was brought to the Board last month as it related to an incident that occurred on-site having to do with, I guess someone that had been committing some thefts in the neighborhood and finally ending up in one of the Public Housing units and was arrested and it kind of caught prime media because he was the crime stoppers person of the week. So that and a prior case in April of this year that related to human trafficking. So anyway, Dr.

Garza, Mary, and I met with the leading police department officer, he is actually a Lieutenant now and we kind of talked through what they are doing and how we could improve. I did talk to one of the deputy chiefs as well and he gave me some input, which was essentially the things we were already discussing and talking about. Well two main things which was link yourselves to Crime Stoppers and potentially even because I said what if we fund a special initiative and if you all look at the statistics for Russell Terrace and Guadalupe this month in your report there is the bigger theft issues are there in those two projects like eighteen to twenty reports. The second was screening, doing additional screening with the tenants. We always here that from the police department sounds like a punt like hey you all screen your people right. In this case, it wasn't a tenant, it was somebody that was coming to hide. So, this item is here. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra asked, a friend of theirs? Chairman Ceballos replied, I am not sure, I really don't know maybe Mary can give us the background but ultimately for me is that the Board puts something in place that can be if we do the same thing which is these officers go out in the evening and patrol at their whim wherever they think they should be. What I am trying not to say is that these are random acts of crime that occur across the city. The fact that they are happening in Public Housing doesn't mean that our communities are more unsafe. I want to make that clear but we are also investing very little money less than \$30,000 dollars a year in these officers that are helping with security. I think we out to invest more and I think we will have greater success. Where I think we can do more is to activate our residents. I think and that is with the resident activity information that I wanted Mary to share I also wanted you all to see that there is that movement and because of COVID that kind of had been dormant right. But now we can activate that and I am glad Ms. Rios is here because ultimately, we can't be patrolling twenty-four hours a day. The residents have to take care of their communities as well. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza stated, I am glad you made that point, cause right away when that happened someone said now you all are harboring criminals in housing. Chairman Ceballos responded, it caught on like quickly, we all got text about it. That is the background information that I wanted to share. I don't want to ever, this is very true, I use to say it about Russell Terrace. The conditions of Public Housing are very often socially and physically better than the neighborhoods where Public Housing is. But at the same time when I realized we are only investing twenty some thousand dollars and we expect them to patrol everything its not going to happen. The Crime Stoppers thing, I think it is a very good thing, Mary had it on the presentation they are willing to come the chief said we are willing to bring the Crime Stoppers to make a presentation to the Resident Councils. I think that would be good and we can put up signs so that people understand your walking here and doing stuff, you are going to get reported. Do we want to put money there? I think we do; you get an extra two-hundred fifty bucks if someone is actually committing a crime in a Public Housing site and you call in and they get busted you are going to get extra two-hundred fifty bucks. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra asked, and it is anonymous so there is no way they can trace it back to you, they are not suppose to. Chairman Ceballos responded, yes, so I asked that. I have never used it so I really do not know the dynamics but we did ask the officer and he explained it to us. It is pretty private and there is no way because they don't handle the calls here. So, if you call no one here is going to answer. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra stated, it's an eight hundred number and they keep it very unanimous but the thing is I think the residents might be afraid to

report cause of retaliation but the system is set up so that it's anonymous and they are safe and they get that money. Chairman Ceballos stated, my fear was really like there maybe instances where I feel like I am overreacting and I may be. But I also think when, the case in April where they are harboring undocumented against their will, not harboring where they almost are keeping them hostage, to me that takes a lot that means a lot of people look the other way and are fearful of reporting it. And that is a big problem and that is not the only case. We have had other chatter that has come to me about that occurrence so I do not think we should sit idle. I think it's an opportunity to focus on it and maybe we still have random instances but at least you know we are responsive at our level. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra stated, I don't think you can ever get rid of crime but you can kind of move it out of an area like displace it from the areas which Public Housing should be safer for our residents. I feel like if there is more vigilance and cooperation between the citizens, it's an admirable goal. Chairman Ceballos asked, what do you think Dr. Rodriguez? Commissioner Marisela Rodriguez-Tijerina stated, well I just think it comes with awareness. Like when Title IX Boise the awareness of that and the anonymous. People may not be aware of there is not going to be retaliation and how this is important to speak up whenever you come across something like that. Chairman Ceballos asked, Ms. Freeman do you have any thoughts, you are at Russell Terrace? Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman stated, I have several comments. First of all, that is a very good program the Crime Stoppers program. I think if people really weren't afraid of using it that a lot of the areas could get cleaned up. Another one is that we still have the neighborhood watch signs still up, why can't we restart that program? Chairman Ceballos replied, you can. Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman stated, and we need to get the residents to sit down and read what they signed when they came on board in Public Housing and in anyone of the colonias. Where it says that they are liable and responsible for anything that their visitors do. Because you have people coming in and have a party and invite a lot of people and their guest are the ones that are causing the issues. Especially over there at Russell Terrace, so they need to be aware of it so they can tell them okay calm down because they are going to call the cops and its going to be on me and not on you. Chairman Ceballos stated, that was the rationale for me like the attorneys are like you already have that you can already take care of this issue. I know Ricardo said it and Doug probably agree with that but I wanted there to be some like hey you are going to give them a pink sheet that they are going to sign and it says we have a zero-tolerance policy by the way. It's not like on page seven of the lease its like right here, we are showing it to you. If you harbor anybody or if you are involved in transporting, which is the addition that Ricardo made last week. Make sure that it included transporting because if you are driving people, we don't want you here either. So, I think if we have an addendum, more work for the staff, you have a zero-tolerance policy addendum that clearly states that reminder if you are involved in any of these types of issues you will be, you can't be here. I don't know if they would qualify for a grievance but anyway that was my rationale to let it be something separate. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra stated, a different color and that they get a copy of that and a copy of all their lease agreement but at least a copy of that. Chairman Ceballos stated, we haven't let Mary chime in. Ms. Gaona stated, we did a presentation on what I think we would want to increase the hours to. Like you said, they currently only have sixteen hours a week. For 2020, we spent twenty-three thousand, for 2021 we spent twenty

thousand, and for 2022 we currently have spent eleven thousand. They are putting in an average of seven hundred to eight hundred hours. Chairman Ceballos asked, can you open that? It's more my compulsion and not that I can't see it. The OCD, you too. Ms. Gaona stated, what we were thinking is that we would do four hours everyday our proposed expense would be forty-three thousand. Chairman Ceballos asked so Mary who would be supervising this because this is part of the thing? Ms. Gaona responded, on the top we put a liaison and if we include salary and benefits for the Liasson it would be like seventy-one thousand. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra asked, and is this a peace officer or not? Chairman Ceballos stated, that is a good question, what are you proposing? Ms. Gaona stated, that is what we were thinking of that we would propose it as a retired peace officer because we called Nelrod who does our job descriptions to see what we can get but they were asking us if we wanted them to be armed or unarmed so that is something I wanted to discuss here. Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez-Tijerina asked, is this something that needs to go into executive? Chairman Ceballos stated, I don't think so. Doug? Attorney Doug Poneck stated, no not just if you are talking about whether to do something like this or not. This is all public information. Chairman Ceballos stated, to me Mary, in my head I am thinking of a retired former chief, there are people out there that have retired that can come and actually part of what is happening is that we don't speak the same language as the officers right. So, all we do is to tell them this time go by Carlos Richter and then work this street but the advantage of having a former officer or even an existing officer that works for us. Is that they have those back channels so that they can call. You are in the law enforcement field so they can call people that are real time informed as apposed to a staff member that is just an administrator but that is a decision the Board needs to make, I guess. In my head I had not considered employing an officer. I had considered contracting someone that has or is a law enforcement official or that background.

Commissioner Anita L. Guerra stated, I was just going to say that I think a retired is better because if they have a full-time job how are they going to do a full time here and a full-time job in law enforcement. So, if you contract hem you don't have to worry about most of the fringe benefits or any of the fringe benefits, I think. Because law enforcement in Laredo is kind of high end but that is fine that is no problem. Chairman Ceballos stated, the officer that is the lead he was supposed to be that in-between but he is an active Lieutenant with the police department so he is busy and he is really not budgeting hours for him as much as he probably should to do the programming because he doesn't see himself in that role. I think somebody that could say okay guys lets look its forty cases between Russell Terrace what do we do where do we want to go. Do we want to go to a resident council meeting, do we want to walk two days a week instead of being in a car every night you know. To me, I would lean more to a retired person that's an official but I could go either way its not a deal breaker for me to hire an administrator either. Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez-Tijerina stated, I think we have to be clear on what the intent of this person is the liability also and at what point cause crime may not just be in that situation it may spill over to another boundary right so communication also that is why I am saying also, I think. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza stated, I was thinking that too for example as a retired police officer, what privileges do I have now or what rights do I have as an active police officer. My certifications like some of them are for life and some of them are not. Once they expire, I have to go back and renew them. So, a police officer, someone who has retired, would

they have to have their gun training for sure obviously, not that we plan to use it, but that is where I am coming from. Chairman Ceballos asked, the peace officer certification is a permanent certification, right? Commissioner Anita L. Guerra replied, yes, it's not a lot it's like forty hours every two years. The master peace officer is forty hours whenever, it's not a lot but they have to qualify. The retired fire arm is not my expertise. Chairman Ceballos stated, but your point is a good one. We are not, in my head in my thought process, we are not asking this person to be the patroller. We are asking him to be the coordinator. I do not want him like walking around with a hand gun and patrolling. We want him to be able to talk to this other team that are actually officers and coordinate what they should be doing. Should they be walking, should they be door knocking, should they be at night increasing their night shift or reducing the night shift for morning. That is where I think the staff isn't necessarily trained to be able to create that. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra replied, I think that can be part of it but also, they can be working with the residents. Not to be surveillance but like law enforcement presence so there is the peace of mind. I just think that they can do both but I do understand that he has to do management leadership and the liaison with the contract that we have right. But also do a little bit of the prevention like be the face of law enforcement for the, but I understand that is a lot for one person. Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman stated, let me make sure I am understanding you. You're saying that the person in charge of that program or department could be a retired officer that has a very good knowledge of law enforcement like the changes in the law as they are changing. But then the other people under him like these four officers right here they are active duty. Chairman Ceballos responded, yes, well they are off duty officers, working on their off hours. And we have an agreement with the police department, they lend us a vehicle that we gas up. It is a collaborative and it is only one vehicle. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra asked, so they take turns with that one vehicle? Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman stated, but they do their rounds so are we suppose to contact them or 911 or the direct number. Chairman Ceballos replied, the director ultimately decides what they do while they are working for us, the director is. Which is the gap I am trying to fill because Mary has a lot on her plate so to say you manage them and you create their schedules is like no. It's like let's get someone that can help Mary create the strategy. Okay, we are going to hit this theft and we are going to take care of that. We had some domestic issues before; I think last year we were seeing that. It would essentially be Mary directing this retired officer or administration person or whatever we decide we hire. Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez-Tijerina stated, why don't we just have a consultant and then get LPD to organize all that and we supplement that collaborative agreement to where we take, I don't know I am just worried about the responsibility, the liabilities. Attorney Doug Poneck stated, maybe the way to see it from what I hear from the Chairman. Is if Mary had the time to focus on this, she would be dealing with the officers and saying we have these needs what do we do, what are we doing about these needs. Then the officers rely on their certification and police training and so forth. And do what they think they should do as the external contractor. The staff is not directing them how to do their police work but just basically coordinating saying we had these complaints, what can we do about those things? But since Mary does not have the time, you would create a position or something for someone who has training and experience and who would have a sophisticated communication with the law enforcement folks that are still



ultimately going to exercise their own discretion and judgement under their biases and so forth but you will have a better grasp-oversight or communication liaison relationship with a knowledgeable person in that position that would have the knowledge and time. And so forth. Chairman Ceballos stated, yah. Ms. Gaona stated, like on the Russell Terrace cases that we talked about right now. The report that we get from the police department says that there has been and I can tell you that it has been one unit-one household but it does not have a police report number so there is no way I can get a police report to find out what really happened at that unit. Yes, it's on the calls and it's recorded in the stats that we get but we can't get a police report to know exactly what happened. So, this individual would be able to contact them and try to get more information or okay this is how we are going to handle this or how we are going to approach this situation. To be able to see exactly what is happening. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra asked, so why can't we get that police report? Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman stated, because it wasn't made. They don't right up a report unless there is any action taken by PD at that moment. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra asked, so what do they do? Do they just go and claim that there was a call. Chairman Ceballos responded, I guess the call log serves as that no report. The other point that I want to clarify so the reason we haven't in the past we've made a decision not to go and expand the police department efforts because we will lose the officers to other traffic. So, if we say okay let's agree to give them seventy thousand dollars to patrol Russell Terrace and Guadalupe further, we won't see the benefit from it because they will get calls and go so this is the alternative. Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman stated, but if the off the clock Laredo police officers and they are off the clock. We have seen so many times in these last two years where people that are working a second job and they think they are covered by the law because they are a peace officer get arrested like at Walmart and gas stations and things like that for an incident. That they were involved in because they were trying to stop somebody from breaking the law. What liability would we have as his employer as a contracted employee. How bad could it look if something actually happened like that. God forbid with one of the officers that we use. Commissioner Dr. Rodriguez-Tijerina stated, that was my question earlier. Chairman Ceballos asked, do you want to entertain responding to that Doug? Attorney Doug Poneck replied, no. I think it is a complicated situation sir. Probably one that if you want to go down that road then we should do a closed session but it's not easily answered. There are going to be issues about who is responsible and all that which would be on a case by case and it depends. Chairman Ceballos stated, it's not any different than any other contractor that on our paid time is doing stuff. I may be wrong. Attorney Doug Poneck replied, I think that is right but you know to say that whoever wishes to sue for example won't look at everyone in the picture. Attorney Ricardo DeAnda stated, but there is a degree of separation it's a contractor appose to an employee. Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman asked, and would we have an invisible wall if they're on a foot chase going through the units and the person just happens to cross the street towards K Tarver across Plum and or Springfield. Do they stop there or do they use their law enforcement training and continue to chase until back up arrives. Attorney Ricardo DeAnda stated, so that is one of the reasons we use the police officers, because they are trained and so it does provide some defense in a worst-case scenario and also as peace officers, they understand whatever duty they may have in respect to hot pursuit and so

forth. Chairman Ceballos stated, alright, so it is 1:20 we have another few items. Today I have time to work this through in executive session if the board has time or we can bring it back. Do you all have time today? We can do the other items and leave that one pending for executive. Everyone replied, we have time. So, if it is okay, we will let Mary finish the presentation and then we will leave it pending and finish the rest of the meeting and then take that one at the end and see if we can work through the legalities of it. Are you finished? Ms. Gaona responded, just to present different options to the Board if we do the four hours for six days or the four hours for five days and or four hours for four days the way we have it right now. Chairman Ceballos stated, which that would be a decision for the person administering it and for you over how that is run. Ms. Gaona responded, yes and then we would come back with a budget amendment for that. Chairman Ceballos asked, so what would be the amount that you would dedicate to this individual law enforcement and or civilian? Ms. Gaona responded, seventy-one thousand for the individual and we were thinking of the thirty-seven thousand for the four hours for six days. Chairman Ceballos stated, so the coordination would cost us more that the actual patrol. Ms. Gaona replied, yes. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra asked, as a salaried employee? Ms. Gaona replied, yes, as a salaried employee not contracted. Commissioner Anita L. Guerra stated, I think if you want to accomplish that leadership management that they are going to have to be some kind of law enforcement not civilian. Chairman Ceballos asked, is there anything else we want to discuss in public before we move on from this item. Okay, we will not take any action on this item and let's move on to the other items and finish those.

**I am going to attempt to make a motion in clarifying this action is to reflect that the Housing Authority does not have a law enforcement department per say but is interested in continuing to implement this safety and security services with the intent of providing a safe place to live for our tenants. We are going to authorize a budget for the director as presented and requiring at her request that she hire a staff person for the role of administering this program and preferably a person that has a background in the law enforcement field or security field or safety field that suits the need of overseeing this program. That is one part of the motion, the second is to ask our attorneys to write up language that reflects how this program will be implemented in terms of safety and to make all contracts with existing subcontractors and future ones subject to those same delineated safety rolls or safety performance measure. I think that is generally how we discussed this could roll out. That is the motion in two areas. Is there a second?**

**Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman seconded the motion.**

**Chairman Ceballos asked if there were any other wishes from the Board and or any comments from the Attorneys. Attorney Doug Poneck stated, since we had this discussion in closed session, I don't think we need to have the discussion in open session. But those comments will be reflected in the work we do going forward.**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

- C. Discussion and possible action to approve amendments to the Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Administrative Plan, including extending the reach of the zero-tolerance policy to prohibit subsidized housing for individuals who engage or support human trafficking

activities, and disqualify landlords who engage or support human trafficking from participating under the HCV program.

Chairman Ceballos stated, Mary, we had left one item pending there was some discussion we didn't have a finality on. Ms. Gaona replied, just on the lease whether we could change the lease or not and also, we wanted to know the number of years or the complete ban if that was allowed or not. We have discussed it back and forth and I know Nelrod stated that we can't do a complete ban that you can do a number of years right but that we can't do a lifetime ban like the other two that are federal regulations. We did find a chart that's being used and we wanted you to consider looking at it. Their human trafficking on here and that had the seven years. Chairman Ceballos asked, this is 10C, it is on here? Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio Garza replied, no it's right there. Ms. Gaona stated, currently we do have the three years and even the staff asked because we are in the process of updating our Public Housing ACOP, so we do have three years so we wanted to consider changing it to at least within five. The average, most housing authorities, have from three to five or seven. Chairman Ceballos replied, I would want to, I was like wanting a permanent ban for human trafficking. Commissioner Anita Guerra replied, but I think that's not allowed? Chairman Ceballos said, you are like didn't you hear her say that. Well, that's why I said I wanted a permanent ban but if its seven years or as permissible by law then that is enough for me. And then the other thing in the policy, is to create by policy to have the agency create an addendum to the lease that explicitly reminds them that these criminal offenses listed, you would be subject to this ban of seven years or higher as permitted by law including human trafficking. Are you all okay with that? Attorney Doug Poneck asked, do you want add this to the closed session as well? Chairman Ceballos responded, alright. Any additional comments on this one? The thing is, what I wanted to say publicly for us in the room, is like if you don't make it hard enough, you are going to have people that are potentially hurting others, putting them in containers and shipping them and then come get federal assistance. It's like there is no good in that. If you are doing that you should not be allowed to come and get a subsidy and if you're transporting them, you too as well. We should keep a log of those people anyway those are my comments. No action on this item. We will be taking it into executive session and I will announce that when we get to it.

**Chairman Ceballos stated, I am going to ask our Attorney Doug Poneck to read out the edit, this item was deliberated on last meeting and further in executive session today to read the last edit to that policy. Attorney Doug Poneck stated, so at the end of it, I would ask that the motion be made to approve the changed policy language but to also authorize staff and the lawyers to make any other tweaks to make sure they need to be caught that where else they need to be caught that reflect these changes in any other parts of the policy and perhaps to also authorize as well adding the grid somewhere in the policy that outline the various offences that may lead to consequences as was discussed in closed session with modifications that have been articulated. So the changes as you said last Board meeting you were provided with proposed changes to policy language the crime by household members paragraph under chapter two of the HCV Admin Plan defined crime by household members to read "the members of the household may not engage in drug related criminal activity or violent criminal activity any**

crime involving human trafficking or other criminal activity that threatens the health, safety or right to peaceful enjoyment of other residents and persons including those residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises. So, before it said the members of the household may not engage in any of those things. Now we added members of the household may not engage or knowingly permit a guest of the household to engage in those things that I just enumerated. That way those who come into the property as a guest of the household, the household members have to be careful of and not permit knowingly even a guest to engage in these activities and or will be subject to the consequences of being evicted. In addition to that we expanded the definition of human trafficking originally it was human trafficking means any criminal activity that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts. The coercion can be subtle or overt, physical or psychological, and in the case of a minor, exploitation for commercial sex is human trafficking, regardless of whether any form of force, fraud, or coercion was used. That's the definition, at least part of the description that was provided by the DOJ, the Department of Justice, but it didn't go far enough so we added the following sentence. Human trafficking also included the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. And then the last change is that we had previously talked about the length of the termination of the HAP contract and the original language said the PHA will permanently cease to issue any HAP contract to the owner or any persons or parties acting on behalf of the owner. Now the language will read the PHA will permanently cease to issue any HAP contract to the owner or any persons or parties acting on behalf of the owner for seven or more years as permitted by law. Chairman Ceballos said, okay. Attorney Doug Poneck said, so those are the three edits to this particular policy that was provided to the Board the last time. But then I would ask that the Board further authorize that staff and the lawyers make whatever other tweaks that are consistent with this to any other portions of the HCV Admin Plan and also, we are asking that you approve the ACOP changes which is needing these modifications because they are managerially described and to authorize staff to develop the chart that was discussed in closed session to reflect in a simple to read fashion what the consequences are for certain kinds of criminal and or other activities.

Chairman Ceballos said I will make that motion. He said I want to make sure we handle your administrative request. Ms. Gaona said, yes, to change in the policy from three to seven. Chairman Ceballos amended the motion to include that.

Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza seconded the motion.

Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman asked, the ban what about the guests coming back into housing? Can they come to visit in housing or after the seven years? Attorney Doug Poneck said, so can the guests of the household come to visit. Resident Commissioner Gloria Freeman said, if they have been arrested? Attorney Doug Poneck said, so, the way that it is written is anyone who has been convicted of that would face the same situation. Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman replied, okay. Chairman Ceballos said, I think her question is if somebody outside of housing has a case, correct me if I am wrong Ms. Freeman, if somebody has had some kind of engagement with that and is going through the process can they come and visit. I think the answer is yes, they can come visit but

they can't actively be engaging in that. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio Garza asked, is that what you are asking? Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman said, no my scenario is I got arrested, I was tried, they gave me four years, the ban is seven years, my wife is still in housing, because she didn't know anything about it, can I go and stay with her? Attorney Doug Poneck said, no, I don't think that you are permitted. Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman replied, okay. Chairman Ceballos said, so in this case it would be seven years or more if the law allows it. Attorney Doug Poneck said, there is nothing in here that makes that exception or carves out that scenario. Chairman Ceballos said, in my head, that is by design because you want people to have that conversation. If you get involved in that, it is going to split our family. It is going to kick us out and we won't be able to reapply potentially forever even though that might not be entirely permissible right now. Any other questions or comments? Jennifer, go ahead. Jennifer Barrientos for the record, so, I just wanted to see what the lawyer thinks I think this is part of our significant amendment because we are changing the admissions and occupancy so it has to go through a comment period. Chairman Ceballos replied, I think we are all fine with that however it needs to be posted. Attorney Doug Poneck said, it is usually the 30-day comment period. Chairman Ceballos replied, noted that there be that 45-day posting requirement.  
**Motion passed unanimously.**

- D. Discussion and possible action to adopt an increase to the micro-purchasing threshold from \$2,000 to \$5,000 as recommended by staff.

Chairman Ceballos stated, so the reason I asked Mary to include the policy is because, you handed us the policy and they highlighted page six, I didn't think \$5,000 was enough. I wondered if we should go higher with one the way the policy reads "To the greatest extent feasible, and to promote completion, small purchases should be distributed among qualified sources. Quotations for small purchases, or quotes, may be obtained orally" that's the piece that I don't like, they should all be obtained in writing, we shouldn't be doing anything orally. But I would consider going higher than \$5,000 because I know with construction, how much of a hardship it is to get bids especially in today's day. So, unless you disagree where you think it's dangerous to go higher than \$5,000, then that is fine but I wanted to go a little higher. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio Garza asked, how much do you recommend? Chairman Ceballos stated, well in my head, \$10,000 with the amount of construction that we have going on it is a lot of work to get two or three bids for even five, I would go to ten thousand which is what the OMB circular you distributed in the packet says is acceptable. I guess entities can go even higher they have to solicit it. So as an example, you are trying to order some sort of equipment and it just sets for delays right. Now I know why it was at \$2,000 right. I understand that when we started here that was part of what we did to set some controls but that's my opinion. Attorney Doug Poneck stated, I was just wondering whether we are confusing the \$2,000 to \$5,000 issue for the small purchase threshold to begin with because the \$2,000 is for these things called micro purchases and what I understand from the request is to change that number onto \$5,000. So, there's small purchases for any amounts above the petty cash ceiling but not exceeding \$50,000 the agency may use small purchase procedures. Within that paragraph, you start talking about and by the way there are these really small

purchases and we are going to call those micro purchases and those are things that are less than \$2,000 dollars and for that you only need to get one quote and if I read this thing correctly, discussion and possible action to increase the micro-purchasing threshold from \$2,000 to \$5,000. So, there is still up to \$50,000 that you can still use small purchases procedures which I think is the issue you are describing. But what they are really getting at is for these micro purchases where they are so small do, we really even have to do the traditional small purchase procedure. Can we just be permitted to get one quote for those very small purchases. Am I understanding that correctly Mary? Ms. Gaona responded, yes, but if we can do the \$10,000 for that it falls under the same. Attorney Doug Poneck stated, you would want to go now from the \$2,000 to \$10,000, is that what you are saying now. Ms. Gaona replied, yes. Attorney Doug Poneck stated, but basically make it understandable that it's only for the micro-purchases that you are talking about, right? Chairman Ceballos responded, yes. Attorney Doug Poneck stated, I am trying to understand what you are trying to say. Chairman Ceballos replied, I think we are saying the same thing. They fall within the small purchase competitive requirement except now if you fall within if I make the motion and it passes, if you would go up to \$10,000 you can get one quote and you are good but not oral, written. Attorney Doug Poneck stated, so just so you understand, you still have small purchases that are even higher than that up to \$50,000. Chairman Ceballos replied, yes, I understand that. Any thoughts? Vice-Chairman Sergio Garza stated, my head hurts. Chairman Ceballos stated, the staff really needs to chime in. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio Garza stated, \$50,000 then \$10,000. Attorney Doug Poneck stated, so the micro purchase is like for the small purchases you would have to get three bids or have a more ample completion but these policies traditionally say, you know what if it is really small, do we have to go through all that. If its under \$2,000, can we just call one person and get a number over the phone and use that instead of going through this elaborate process. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio Garza stated, but we are saying that we don't want it over the phone, we want it written. Attorney Doug Poneck stated, correct. Commissioner Anita Guerra stated, it does not take that long to write an email. Chairman Ceballos stated, well, that is a good point, an email doesn't cut it, it has to be a quote. Quote is a technical term. So, the caution here is, you can get a buddy to come do a service. Come do a training and I'll pay you \$9,999 dollars. Commissioner Anita Guerra mentioned, and ninety-nine cents. Chairman Ceballos said, so that is the cautionary tale. That is why it is so low; it was \$2,000 dollars. That is why we kept it so low as a control. So, maybe it is just for construction? I don't know, I want to hear like from Mary and maybe Jennifer for the Board to hear. Is it problematic? So, think you don't have this Board anymore, is it problematic to leave that policy behind? Jennifer Barrientos for the record. So, we are struggling to get the quotes at \$2,000, so we do call the vendors and they are no, we call several times it's not only one time and we don't get the quotes. So, we do want to raise it from the \$2,000 because we have to get three quotes. Anything over two thousand, we get three quotes. So, we do want to raise that; we had asked for the \$5,000 but the \$10,000 is much better but like you say is it reasonable. We do the independent cost estimate to say this work is going to cost us \$4,000 dollars, so if we know someone is coming in at \$9,000, we know that that is not reasonable. So, we would then try to get another quote. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza replied, so what you are trying to say is that there are not three people bidding at this time, there is only one, so we would have to accept that one. Jennifer responded, if it is

reasonable, yes. Ms. Gaona responded, yes, if not we would have to wait because in the times we are dealing with. I am going to submit a quote and it's going to be good for only two days. And, after waiting for Mr. Ceballos to submit his quote, and I've been calling him and he won't submit it so I already lost this quote because I can't use it anymore so now, I have to go out to him again and ask him again. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza replied, ask him again. Ms. Gaona stated, because Mr. Ceballos never submitted his quote. Chairman Ceballos asked, why did you use me as that bad example? Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza replied, because she knows you can take it. Ms. Gaona stated, so \$2,000 is challenging. Chairman Ceballos asked, so is \$10,000 risky? There is some hesitation so we can just go with what you asked for and be safe. Doug is knotting his head. Ms. Barrientos replied, I would recommend the \$5,000 and if we see that we are still struggling, we will bring it back. Chairman Ceballos replied, okay. So, it's good that the auditor is present so that he hears that we actually deliberate over items. Attorney Doug Poneck said, he said he has to amend the report. Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman asked, so what Jennifer is recommending is, Chairman Ceballos said, to stick to the \$2,000 to \$5,000 to see how that works. Yes, with written quotes.

**Chairman Ceballos made a motion that we adopt this amendment to the policy increasing the micro-purchasing threshold from \$2,000 to \$5,000 as recommended by our staff but to also amend section 5.2 to describe that that can only be achieved by with formal technical written quotes not emails or anything else. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza and Resident Commissioner Gloria Ann Freeman seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.**

- E. Consideration to authorize a travel request of staff and/or Board for the Texas Homeless Network Conference in Austin, Texas on September 28-30, 2022.

**Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio D. Garza moves to approve. Commissioner Dr. Marisela Rodriguez-Tijerina seconded the motion.**

Commissioner Dr. Marisela Rodriguez-Tijerina stated that we had just agreed on September 30<sup>th</sup> to be the opening so we need to redo that because the people attending the conference will not be available for the opening. Vice-Chairman Dr. Sergio Garza asked, will it affect the BiblioTech? Ms. Gaona stated that Jessica and herself were planning on attending. Commissioner Rodriguez-Tijerina said we will just work on another date. Chairman Ceballos said that he may also have something on the 30<sup>th</sup>. So just work with us on another date. The temperature should be better as we get into October if we need to push it.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

## **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**

**No action was taken in Executive Session and it is 2:45 p.m.**

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

**Chairman Ceballos moved to adjourn the meeting.  
Commissioner Anita L. Guerra seconded the motion.  
Motion passed unanimously.**

**Meeting adjourned at 2:57 p.m.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jose L. Ceballos, Board Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Gaona, Executive Director