

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY
OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE
OCTOBER 12, 2020

The Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Seattle (“Seattle Housing Authority” or “SHA”) met in Regular Session on October 12, 2020, via teleconference. Board Chair Paul Purcell called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. Kimberly Garrett performed a roll call for Board Commissioners in attendance. Commissioners present and absent were as follows:

Present: Paul Purcell, Chair
Dr. Paula Houston, Vice-chair
Robert Crutchfield
Twyla Minor
Gerald Smiley

Absent: Michael Diaz
Debbie Thiele

Public Comment

None

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Purcell presented the Consent Agenda, which included approval of minutes for the Regular Board Meeting of August 17, 2020; approval of the minutes for the Regular Board Briefing of September 14, 2020; approval of minutes for the Regular Board Meeting of September 21, 2020; approval of the minutes for the Regular Board Briefing of October 5; and, approval of the Expenditure Certification Reports (Authorization to Pay Outstanding Obligations of Salaries and Claims for the Period of August 1 to August 30, 2020, as well as for the Period of September 1 to September 30, 2020.)

Commissioner Crutchfield moved to approve the Consent Agenda and the motion was then seconded by Commissioner Houston. Hearing no questions or comments, Commissioner Purcell called for a vote. The Consent Agenda was approved unanimously among the members of the Board present at that time (4 yes; 0 no).

Regular Agenda

Resolution No. 5195 – SHA MTW Annual Plan

Commissioner Houston moved for consideration of Resolution No. 5195; Commissioner Smiley seconded the motion. Policy & Strategic Initiatives Director Andria Lazaga presented Resolution No. 5195 to the Board and recommended adoption of the resolution.

Executive Director Lofton introduced the topic and handed it over to Ms. Lazaga to give highlights of the 2021 MTW Annual Plan. This annual plan is consistent with previous plans submitted annually, as HUD prescribes the format. We provide a high-level overview of our budget, changes in our housing stock, our MTW activities – any new, and descriptions of any existing activities. We do not have any new activities to report this year, but have proposed a number of updates to implementation to a number of existing activities and strategies to include emergency response and recovery, income and rent certification, eligibility and verification processes, inspections, as well as administration streamlining and updates. We also clarified updates to rent reviews for entirely elderly/disabled adult households (confirming that staff may still conduct required other income verification procedures - such as tax credit requirements - in “off years”, or as otherwise required) and added a new update to SSHP rent policy (allowing for further streamlining of certifications for entirely elderly/disabled adult households without wages, relying on electronic income verification sources for qualifying households and continuing with automatic rent adjustments unless a discrepancy warrants further review.)

The Public Comment period was carried out with no substantive changes made to the plan as a result of the feedback received. Feedback highlights included Capital expenditures, reduced frequency of HCV inspections, project-basing vouchers (wanting confirmation that SHA would not be project-basing vouchers currently being used by tenant-based participants)

Next steps pending Board approval would be submittal of the Plan to HUD by October 18, with expectations of an initial response to the Plan required by HUD by December 31. In the meantime, we are submitting a technical amendment to our existing Plan to provide cushion and carryover to our Emergency provisions in the 2020 MTW Plan, which expires on December 31 to give us leeway in case of any timing issues in extension on that date.

Hearing no further discussion, Commissioner Purcell called for a vote. Resolution No. 5195 was approved unanimously among the members of the Board present at the time (4 yes; 0 no).

Resolution No. 5196 – SHA 2021 Carry-on Budget

Commissioner Crutchfield moved for consideration of Resolution No. 5196; Commissioner Smiley seconded the motion. Executive Director Lofton presented Resolution No. 5196 to the Board and recommended adoption of the resolution.

Mr. Lofton introduced the resolution to the Board to touch on the highlights of the SHA 2021 Carry-on Budget, which was a process unlike those in the past. He explained that this year, SHA approached the budget process similarly to the federal government's "Continuing Resolution" procedure, whereby the authorized expenditure levels for the current year are simply carried forward as the basis for the next year's budget and subsequently replaced by an updated, or adjusted budget for the new-year. Expenditures levels, staffs, and revenues remain the same until such adjustments can be made, the one difference being the Development budget.

The 2021 Development Budget reflects the nature of these projects as one-time, multi-year projects and displays the overall sources and uses of the mixed financings, stage of each project, and the estimated project expenditures. There's no expectation for a need to make adjustments in major projects development budgets. The Tax Credit Properties' Budgets were prepared in the same fashion as the SHA Operating Budget with updated revenues and 2020 expense rolled over to 2021.

Resolution No. 5196 will serve to adopt SHA's 2021 Carry-On Budget, which includes operating, capital, grant and redevelopment expenditures, totaling \$405.7M. The Board will adopt the 2021 Carry-On Budget to remain in effect until the Board is presented and approves the 2021 Adopted Budget, which will then supersede the previous one and become the official SHA budget. We expect this to occur in late 4th quarter of 2020, or early in the 1st quarter of 2021.

Expense Category	CY 2021 Proposed SHA Carry-On Budget
Program Operations and Administrative Exp.	\$104,388,000
Housing Assistance Payments (HAPS)	137,417,000
Grant-Funded Expenses	1,337,600
Operating Budget	\$243,142,600
Capital & Non-Routine Expenses	21,310,000
Opportunity Investments	15,100,000
Redevelopment	126,142,000
Capital Program	\$162,552,000
Total Expenses	\$405,694,600

Hearing no further discussion, Commissioner Purcell called for a vote. Resolution No. 5196 was approved unanimously among the members of the Board present at the time (5 yes; 0 no).

Resolution No. 5197 - Omnibus Executive Authorization Extension

Commissioner Crutchfield moved for consideration of Resolution No. 5197; Commissioner Smiley seconded the motion. Executive Director Lofton presented Resolution No. 5197 to the Board and recommended adoption of the resolution.

Resolution No. 5197 extends the effective date of Resolution 5189 for 180 days or the end of the COVID-19 emergency (whichever occurs first). Resolution No. 5189 was enacted in April, 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitating the need for changes or implementation in programs, staffing, and procedures on short notice due to the constantly changing circumstances which would require such actions. It gave Board authorization for the Executive Director to take any lawful action needed to comply with Federal, State and Local emergency declarations in a timely manner and take administrative actions needed to protect residents and staff. Authorization would end in 180 days from Board approval, or when the Washington State Governor's Office declares end of the emergency, whichever happens first. Resolution No. 5189 is set to expire on approximately October 17, 2020.

Commissioner Purcell thanked Mr. Lofton and his staff, as well as Ms. Yapp and her staff for producing such great work during these challenging times in a pandemic situation. Hearing no further discussion, Commissioner Purcell called for a vote. Resolution No. 5197 was approved unanimously among the members of the Board present at the time (5 yes; 0 no).

HCV Participant & Landlord Outreach

Strategic Advisor Chris Klaeyens, Executive Assistant Geoff Gund, and Acting Central Services Manager Selam Demssie gave a presentation to the Board HCV Participant & Landlord Outreach performed during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the outcomes of this engagement. The presenters provided updates on 3rd Quarter outreach efforts aimed at understanding (1) how COVID-19 operational changes impacted participants and landlords, and (2) whether any changes are needed to HCV's Recovery Plan to eliminate negative impacts.

Since the onset of COVID-19, HCV has undertaken several outreach efforts to comprehend the impacts and challenges facing SHA participants and landlords. These efforts include wellness calls to tenant-based households, a questionnaire for landlords regarding the pandemic, as well as wellness calls to new landlords participating in the HVC program. During this effort to check in on how they were holding up in the pandemic and connect them to services when necessary, they were able to make contact or leave messages with just over 3800 participants. Seventy new landlords were contacted to check in on any challenges they may be facing and to connect them to Housing Counselors for additional assistance, when needed. A Landlord Feedback Survey was emailed out to over 1,100 landlords and housing providers (with a 25% response rate), and a Recovery Plan Participant Survey was emailed and mailed (5,086 and 1000, respectively with a 20% response rate) to participants, as well.

Key participant responses from their survey showed that participants reported being largely able to maintain contact with SHA during COVID-19, with 78% of survey respondents reporting that the SHA office closure due to the pandemic has not delayed them from receiving service; 65% reported that they are able to reach staff "Always" or "Most of the time"; 60% reported that they are able to access SHA forms when needed; and, 83% of participants are able to reach SHA via phone or email.

Key landlord responses from their survey reported that most are pleased with the current level of service from SHA. 65% believe SHA is doing "Very Good" or "Excellent" in meeting their needs; 50% report that SHA is "Extremely" or "Very" responsive to their questions and concerns.

Response themes ran along the lines of minimal service disruptions; appreciated for the continuance of HAP, inspection self-certification, flexibility in increased special review, as well as timely updates on operational & policy changes.

Regarding resident surveys, it was reported that most participants are keeping up with housing costs and stably housed; over 80% not currently behind on rent or utility payments and, 92% say that their unit remains in safe & sanitary condition. However, certain groups are struggling more, as there are higher rates of delinquency reported by persons of color, households with children, as well as LEP households. The survey administered to landlords support these findings. However, challenges still exist, as 22% of participant surveys report that the office closure caused a delay to, or kept them from service, with the rate being higher for the same households listed prior. For landlords, 23% and 12% of respondents feel HCV has done either an "Average" or "Fair/Poor" job at continuing to meet their needs during COVID-19, with common themes of communication delay due to case worker changes, a need for additional support for tenants delinquent with rent or exhibiting behavioral issues, and challenges maintaining repairs in units. Challenges regarding the digital divide were reported on both sides, as well. It was reported that 17% of participant respondents were unable to receive assistance over phone or email, with the rate being higher for households with children, adult only disabled households, and participants of color. Just 54% of landlord respondents utilize the Landlord Portal to access program information, with 63% of them unfamiliar with the Portal, and 78% not having listed a unit online with SHA.

HCV staff are working to take actions in response to the survey results by diversifying their methods of data information and feedback by looking at this via an RSJI lens. As HCV moves through re-opening phases, staff should make sure to be available when needed and explore how to better serve populations expressing barriers to access (i.e. households with children). They have recently reinstated Tenant-Based Landlord trainings to provide information on leasing to voucher participants, Seattle Tenant-Landlord law, as well as how to access the Landlord Portal. HCV will establish a Digital Divide Workgroup to alleviate the barrier for participants that reported being unable to get the help they needed over the phone or email. Staff is also reviewing lobby signage to conduct a gap analysis to determine translation needs and increase language literacy for non-English speaking residents.

Commissioner Purcell thanked HCV for their excellent work, as he appreciated their efforts, and Mr. Lofton concurred.

Executive Director Report

Mr. Lofton encouraged the Board to feel free to contact any of the Cabinet members with any questions they may have about the monthly departmental reports. He also gave a reminder for the Board to submit their characteristics of an executive director for succession planning purposes.

Commissioner Purcell then asked if there were any further questions or comments from staff, or from his colleagues on the Board. Hearing none, it was moved that the October 12, 2020 Regular Session of the Board be adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Secretary-Treasurer