

**WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY
FEBRUARY 18, 2021
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Call to Order, Roll Call, Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Getty called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. (In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and consistent with Governor Pritzker's Executive Orders and Senate Bill 2135 (that was signed into law and which became effective on June 12, 2020), the meeting was held via video conference and/or telephone conference). Following the call to order, roll call was taken.

The following Board Members participated:

Present:	Chairman Dina M. Getty Vice-Chairman Alanna D. Conard Commissioner Ronald E. Ballard Commissioner Danielle J.A. Potter (arrived at 5:33 p.m.) Commissioner Tasha N. Reddic Commissioner Fred S. Wescott
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Also participating: Deputy Director Deb Alfredson, Director of Voucher Programs Kristin Andrews, and James R. Pirages of AGHL Law.

Executive Director Alan Zais and Finance Director Vickie Huwe also participated via video conference and in-person at the Winnebago County Housing Authority (WCHA) offices at 3617 Delaware Street, Rockford, Illinois, so as to allow for public attendance (if any).

Inasmuch as the meeting was held via video/telephone conference, the Pledge of Allegiance was not recited.

Introduction of Guests

There were no guests in attendance for this meeting.

Changes to Agenda

Attorney Jim Pirages asked that Item X(A) under "New Business" be moved to this point of the Agenda in order to provide an explanation as to why the meeting was being held in this manner and to allow for the temporary suspension of a by-law provision. The consensus of the Board was to allow for this change to the Agenda.

New Business

Attorney Jim Pirages explained the basis for the meeting being held in this manner and requested the temporary suspension of a by-law provision for purposes of this meeting. Attorney Pirages advised the Commissioners that in keeping with Governor Pritzker's Executive Order 2020-07 and

subsequent Executive Orders as well as recently enacted Senate Bill 2135 (which became effective on June 12, 2020), various provisions of the Open Meetings Act (including those requiring the members of the public body to be physically present at each meeting and those limiting remote participation by members of the public body) have been suspended provided certain requirements are met (including the audio recording of the meeting). Attorney Pirages went on to note that the provisions of the WCHA's by-laws (specifically, Article IV, Section 4 which provide that "[t]he physical presence of four (4) Commissioners shall constitute a quorum for purposes of conducting its business...") could also be suspended in keeping with the provisions of the Executive Order. Thereafter, a motion to suspend that by-law provision for purposes of the February 18, 2021 meeting was made by Commissioner Wescott and that motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Conard. That motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote of the six (6) Commissioners present with none against and one (1) Commissioner absent.

Public Comments

None.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Alan Zais referred the Board to his written report that had accompanied the Board packet. However, he drew the Commissioners' attention to a few matters. He noted that with regard to the "Moving to Work" (MTW) program, the WCHA intends to apply for Cohort #4, and, therefore, had sent a Notice of Eligibility to HUD. He also stated that the WCHA has a timetable for that application that was part of the Board packet; he reminded the Board that the focus of Cohort #4 was previously explained at the January 21, 2021 Board Meeting. He went on to state that the WCHA really wishes to be part of Cohort #5 but is applying for Cohort #4 but may later change over to Cohort #5 as appropriate. He also stated that HUD is looking at an "experimental control group" to complement Cohort #4 which, if WCHA becomes part of, will allow it to be exempted from certain HUD regulations.

Alan also cited to the discussion in the Executive Director's Report regarding the rental assistance grant (Alan also discussed this topic at the January 21, 2021 Board meeting) as well as the status of the Marge Gang Homes and Pearl Place initiatives in which Winnebago Homes Association (WHA) is involved. Alan asked the Commissioners if they had any questions or comments regarding the Executive Director's Report. Chairman Getty commented that the Cohort #4 timeline is very clear and well done and confirmed with Alan that the goal is to complete this effort by June (to allow for a cushion before the actual due date of August 2021). Alan also pointed out the Consent Agenda item involving the property management agreement with Champion Park TC-I LP that was previously discussed at the Champion Park Board meeting and that is also being presented to the WCHA Board for consideration.

Alan also reported on the recently-completed HUD Compliance Review, and the WCHA's response to HUD's Compliance Report, a copy of which was submitted in the Board packet. Alan reported that he had received a message from HUD and from that message learned that HUD may want additional language provisions from WCHA on "earned income verification" issues but said that he would report back on this matter at the March 2021 Board meeting. He advised the Board that during a recent call with HUD about HUD's review, the HUD representatives had noted that

WCHA is a very good agency and that they had to “search” for things to identify in the Compliance Report.

Consent Agenda

A motion to approve the four (4) Resolutions on the Consent Agenda was made by Commissioner Wescott. That motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Conard. The items on the Consent Agenda were approved by unanimous roll call vote of the six (6) Commissioners present with none against and one (1) Commissioner absent.

Financial Report

Finance Director Vickie Huwe noted that the financial statements for January were included in the Board packet. She updated the Commissioners on the status of the WCHA’s systems conversion. She noted that the WCHA is working with “M-Files”. While she said originally the WCHA had sought a completely paperless system, she said that some of the HUD requirements make a “wet” signature necessary on some documents. Therefore, she said that these documents will be scanned into the system for storage purposes. She also said that the system will allow for electronic notifications and reminders to staff regarding matters to be addressed or completed. She advised the Board that the training on the M-Files will begin in March with the goal of going “live” with the system on April 1.

Executive Director Alan Zais noted that he had a recent debriefing meeting with Prairie State Legal Services following its “audit” of housing authorities and the housing authorities’ dealings with “English as second language” related issues. Alan commented that the Prairie State representatives had been “blown away” by the WCHA’s new website which allows for the use of 66 different languages. Chairman Getty noted that such a reaction was the goal with the website and Alan indicated he would pass along the Prairie State comments to the Chartwell Agency representatives who had assisted with the website initiative.

Old Business

None

Commissioner Comments

Chairman Getty noted that this item on the agenda had previously existed and that she wanted to reinstate it to allow for the Commissioners to provide any comments, observations, etc. as a regular part of the agenda. She then allowed the Commissioners to provide any comments that they had.

Vice-Chairman Conard noted the information contained in the Executive Director’s Report regarding the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) graduation. She stated that such a program is truly wonderful.

Commissioner Potter said that as a new Commissioner she would like the opportunity - once the COVID 19 pandemic has eased - for a “field trip” to see the WCHA’s locations and to learn what the WCHA oversees and to meet its staff. Chairman Getty that this was an excellent idea; Commissioners Ballard and Reddic agreed that they would welcome such an opportunity.

Commissioner Reddic noted how much she missed face-to-face meetings, that she missed being with all the other Commissioners and looked forward to the time when the face-to-face meetings could again resume.

Commissioner Ballard commented that he was happy to be working with everyone on the Board and was thankful for everyone’s health and well-being.

Commissioner Wescott advised the Board that Winnebago County will be resuming partially live Board meetings in about two weeks, having received approval to proceed in this manner from the Winnebago County Health Department. He said that through this platform, some Winnebago County Board members will be present “live” while some will be participating via Zoom.

Finally, Chairman Getty noted the email that she had previously sent to the Commissioners regarding the Commissioner Certification Program available through NAHRO. She said that Vice-Chairman Conard had already looked at the information and noted some of the preparatory things that the Commissioners must do in order to participate. Chairman Getty also noted that the WCHA has agreed to cover the costs of materials associated with the remote participation in this program.

Executive Session

None.

Action taken from Executive Session

None

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Potter and that motion was seconded by Commissioner Reddic. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote of the six (6) Commissioners present with none against and one (1) Commissioners absent. The meeting adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle J. A. Potter, Recording Secretary