

WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY
MARCH 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 Tasha N. Reddic
Commissioner Fred S. Wescott

Absent: Commissioner Mustafa Abdall
Commissioner Ronald E. Ballard
Commissioner Danielle J.A. Potter

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.

Public Hearing

A motion to open a Public Hearing on revisions to the FY2020 Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Plan and on revisions to the FY2020 Annual Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy was made by Commissioner Wescott and that motion was seconded by Commissioner Reddic. The motion to open the Public Hearing was approved by a unanimous roll call vote of the four (4) Commissioners present, with none against and three (3) Commissioners absent. The Public Hearing commenced at 5:31 p.m. Executive Director Alan Zais noted that notice of the Public Hearing had been given and that no one had commented on the proposed revisions (which address the Earned Income Verification Process) and that no one was present from the public. A motion to close the Public Hearing was made by Vice-Chairman Conard and that motion was seconded by Commissioner Reddic. The motion to Close the Public Hearing was approved by a unanimous roll call vote of the four (4) Commissioners present, with none against and three (3) Commissioners absent. The Public Hearing closed at 5:33 p.m.

Introduction of Guests

Executive Director Alan Zais introduced Heidi Pezall, an HR business partner with ADP TotalSource.

Changes to Agenda

Attorney Jim Pirages asked that Items X(A) and X(B) 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 in order to allow for the temporary suspension of a by-law provision and to allow Ms. Pezall to make her presentation. 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 March 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 four (4) Commissioners present with none against and three (3) Commissioners absent.

Heidi Pezall then introduced herself as a representative from ADP TotalSource and noted that she had been working with Alan and with Finance Director Vickie Huwe regarding health insurance issues. She noted that the renewal of the current insurance plan is very expensive as the costs of health insurance continue to increase. She noted that while she is not a licensed insurance agent, she is a consultant to ADP customers on insurance issues. She said that she had evaluated all of the options and her recommendation was to look at including health insurance options that allow for the current money that the WCHA spends to be used differently. She noted that instead of the money going to premiums, she was looking at alternate plans for savings and that some of those plans involve offering a Health Savings Account (HSA) as an option to cover out-of-pocket expenses. She said that the allowance of an HSA would provide an opportunity for the WCHA to save money on premiums.

Ms. Pezall then “shared” her screen with a presentation of extensive data regarding the plan options that she has identified as being available to the WCHA for health insurance coverage applicable to its employees. She noted that the current plan costs annually are \$112,561.44 of which employer contributions cover \$78,463.08 and employee contributions cover \$34,098.36. She said that the

WCHA's contributions cover 71% of the costs which is approximately the average percentage of employer contributions in the market. She noted, however, that the WCHA's plans are "richer" than the majority of other client plans. She said the twelve (12) employees are currently in the Aetna EPO with no deductible and six (6) employees are in the Aetna EPO with a \$3,000 deductible. She said that the current plan on renewal would be increased by \$38,486.76 with an overall cost of \$151,045.20.

Vice-Chairman Conard noted the reference in the materials to the offering of a long-term disability (LTD) Plan and asked if such a plan is still recommended. Ms. Pezall noted that LTD Plans are regularly in place but that she is starting to see fewer short-term disability (STD) plans.

Ms. Pezall went on to note that she was looking at alternate plans and had identified certain alternate high deductible health plans (HDHP) and HSA's. She said that HSA's allow more money to go to employees to offset the increased cost of the HDHP.

Commissioner Reddic asked questions about whether any of the options Ms. Pezall had evaluated involved any sort of wellness component. Ms. Pezall said that that is not something that any of their plans include but that many employers are looking at some sort of wellness incentive as part of their health programs.

Ms. Pezall then went on to discuss a variety of plans reflected in the materials that she was showing on the screen. She said that some of the plans offer higher deductibles in order to reduce the cost of insurance along with an HSA (which also allows the money to roll over from year to year). She said that long term did not think it was wise for the WCHA to continue to offer four (4) different plans but noted the negative employee reactions that sometime arise from reducing options; therefore, she suggested that a gradual reduction in the number of plans be evaluated. She noted that most people value a plan that takes the least amount of money out of their paychecks -- so the emphasis is on lower premiums and giving them money (through an HSA) in case something bad happens. She said the combination of the HSA and the lower premiums helps to offset the costs of the increase in deductibles.

Executive Director Alan Zais noted that this is an issue that was not going to be voted on at this month's meeting but would be considered at the April meeting. Alan suggested that a sub-committee of the Board be formed to evaluate this issue prior to the next meeting and Chairman Getty agreed with the formation of an *ad hoc* committee to evaluate this issue. Ms. Pezall left the meeting at 6:14 p.m.

Commissioner Reddic asked whether plans had been evaluated other than those available through ADP. Alan noted that they had looked at options through their previous broker and that these options all resulted in additional costs. Vice-Chairman Conard asked if the employees could live with the options involved in the ADP proposals and directed that question to Alan, Deb, Vickie, and Kristin (all employees who were present for this meeting). Deb indicated that she is covered by "employee only" coverage and that the proposed plans would work out better for her. Vickie Huwe noted that a couple of the plans could be cheaper and that this is something that the committee needs to evaluate. Chairman Getty noted that whatever option is selected may be a "bitter pill" and Vice-Chairman Conard noted that she was concerned about the impact of the

different plans on the employees. It was agreed that a committee would be formed to evaluate and make recommendations on this issue at the next meeting.

Public Comments

Alan noted that both he and Vickie Huwe were present on site at the WCHA's offices and that no one was present from the public to make comments.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Alan Zais referred the Board to his written report that had accompanied the Board packet. He asked if there were any questions. Chairman Getty noted that she was proud of the WCHA and the coverage that was recently given to the HOPE VI program through newspaper articles and related photos.

Alan noted that the WCHA is currently evaluating implementing a higher standard for the Section 8 reimbursement and that he will have additional information on this topic at next month's meeting. He also said that the WCHA has been busy with the emergency rental program for which Winnebago County received funds and that is being administered by the City of Rockford Human Services Department. He said that much of his time has been involved with the emergency rental program and he considered it an honor that Winnebago County had asked the WCHA to assist with this program (which helps pay for rent and utilities for those affected by COVID 19).

Consent Agenda

Chairman Getty noted that there were eight (8) items on the Consent Agenda. A motion to approve the eight (8) resolutions on the Consent Agenda was made by Vice-Chairman Conard and that motion was seconded by Commissioner Wescott. Chairman Getty then went through each item on the proposed consent agenda to ask if anyone had any questions or comments. With regard to Item H (the selection of a new auditor), Alan asked Finance Director Vickie Huwe to comment. Vickie noted that every five (5) years the WCHA is required to issue a request for proposals (RFP) for auditing services. She noted that the current auditor did not bid this year inasmuch as the auditor is downsizing his operations and planning on retiring. She said that the WCHA had, therefore, reached out to other housing authorities and identified other potential bidders from which WCHA has received three (3) bids. The recommended auditor noted on the Consent Agenda, Rector, Reeder & Lofton, P.C., is from the State of Georgia. Alan indicated that because of the complexity of the WCHA's programs and the multiple entities with which it is affiliated, it was difficult to obtain interested bidders. The Rector firm is the same auditor performing services for the housing authorities in Springfield and Peoria. Vickie added that of the three (3) bids received, two (2) were from Georgia and one (1) was from Chicago (which she indicated was the most expensive).

The motion to approve the items on the Consent Agenda was approved by unanimous roll call vote of the four (4) Commissioners present with none against and three (3) Commissioners absent.

Financial Report

Finance Director Vickie Huwe noted that the financial statements were included in the Board packet. She asked if there were any questions, and none were asked.

Old Business

None

Commissioner Comments

Vice Chairman Conard noted that the classes offered through NAHRO are likely to be available by the end of March.

Executive Session

A motion to go into Executive Session pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21) for "[d]iscussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed under this Act, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06" and pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) to consider the "appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity" was made by Commissioner Wescott; that motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman Conard. The motion to go into Executive Session was approved by unanimous roll call vote of the four (4) Commissioners present with none against and three (3) Commissioners absent. The Executive Session commenced at 6:29 p.m.

A motion to come out of Executive Session was made by Commissioner Wescott and seconded by Commissioner Reddic. The motion to come out of Executive Session was approved by unanimous roll call vote of the four (4) Commissioners present with none against and three (3) Commissioners absent. The Executive Session ended at 6:46 p.m.

Action Taken from Executive Session

A motion was made by Commissioner Wescott and seconded by Vice-Chairman Conard to not make available for public inspection the minutes of the Executive Sessions of the meetings held on July 21, 2011, March 14, 2018, April 19, 2018 and September 18, 2018. That motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote of all four (4) Commissioners present with none against and three (3) Commissioners absent.

The Board was also asked if it could return to the "New Business" section of the Agenda. The consensus of the Board was to allow that request. A discussion of a proposal for a non-monetary award to employees in light of WCHA's current inability to grant a general wage increase. Alan noted that the WCHA's staff will be returning to regular duty (and no longer working from home) as of April 5, 2021. He is recommending to the Board that from that date until August 31, 2021, the staff be allowed to work from home on Friday mornings and be given Friday afternoons off. This would apply to all employees except for custodians and maintenance employees for which

Alan was recommending a one-time lump sum bonus of \$250.00 for custodians and \$500.00 for maintenance employees. He also recommended the continuation of the “Performance Day” award that the WCHA has made available to its employees for the last several years. A motion to approve this recommendation was made by Vice-Chairman Conard and seconded by Commissioner Wescott. That motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote of the four (4) Commissioners present with none against and three (3) Commissioners absent.

Action taken from Executive Session

None

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Reddic and that motion was seconded by Commissioner Wescott. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote of the four (4) Commissioners present with none against and three (3) Commissioners absent. The meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle J. A. Potter, Recording Secretary