

**WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY
OCTOBER 15, 2020
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Call to Order, Roll Call, Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Wescott 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 Fred S. Wescott Vice Chairman Dina M. Getty Commissioner Ronald E. Ballard Commissioner Alanna D. Conard Commissioner Tasha N. Reddic
Absent:	Commissioner Mustafa Abdall Commissioner Danielle J.A. Potter

Also participating: Deputy Director Deb Alfredson (participating by phone beginning at 5:45 p.m.) and James R. Pirages of the law firm of Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP.

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

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

Introduction of Guests

None.

Changes to Agenda

Attorney Jim Pirages asked that the item under "New Business" be moved to this point of the Agenda to provide an explanation as to why the meeting was being held in this manner and to allow for the temporary suspension of a bylaw 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 bylaw 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 (including, but not limited to, Executive Order 2020-55) issued in March of 2020 and continuing thereafter as well as the 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 bylaws (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 bylaw provision for purposes of the October 15, 2020 meeting was made by Commissioner Conard and that motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Getty. That motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote of the five (5) Commissioners present with none against and two (2) Commissioners absent.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Alan Zais noted that his written report had accompanied the Board packet the Commissioners had previously received.

Alan said that he had learned that day that the Lake County Housing Authority was subject to a ransomware attack. As a result, Finance Director Vickie Huwe is checking with the Winnebago County Housing Authority's (WCHA) IT provider to make sure that the WCHA is protected from such an attack.

Alan also advised the Board that he is in the process of looking for potential new offices for the Authority's Section 8 Program. He advised that he is looking for space in the East State Street corridor near Mulford Road with the possible idea of combining the WCHA's Section 8 offices with the Boone County Housing Authority offices as a way of providing additional space and saving money.

Alan discussed with the Board the Housing Authority of the City of Freeport's (HACF) Parkside Development which currently serves approximately 51 families and, if it proceeds, will result in those families being transferred into the RAD Program. The Parkside Development is in a flood plain and will be demolished if approved. Alan said that the WCHA will administer the Program similar to what it currently does for the HACF's Section 8 Program and much like it does for the Westport Development as well as the Hosmer/Brewster Developments in Freeport. Alan noted the ongoing concerns that he has with the financial issues at the HACF. He advised the Board of some communications with the HACF Director where she has taken some of the comments made by Alan as being threatening to the HACF; Alan said that those comments were not intended to be threatening but, instead, were to keep the WCHA Board advised of developments affecting the WCHA arising from its activities in Freeport. Alan noted that he can foresee the WCHA becoming more involved in the future with operations at the HACF.

Alan discussed the HUD compliance review that was recently completed and was addressed in his written report. He said that the HUD review was very comprehensive and had some observations and findings with regard to the WCHA's operations. Alan went on to explain that the WCHA disagrees with some of the findings and observations; with regard to some of those matters he said

that the WCHA will propose and seek approval of policies but that on other findings and observations the WCHA intends to contest those findings as being inapplicable to the WCHA. Vice Chairman Getty had participated in the compliance review and noted that the HUD personnel conducting the review were very complimentary of the WCHA's operations and very pleased with the WCHA's financial operations. She said that she was very happy with how the compliance review had turned out. Alan added that Finance Director Vickie Huwe had endured the most rigorous part of the recent HUD compliance review.

Consent Agenda

A motion to approve the items on the Consent Agenda was made by Vice Chairman Getty. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Conard. Finance Director Vickie Huwe noted the need to correct the address of the WCHA's offices set forth on the first page of the minutes from September 17, 2020 meeting (changing the address from the incorrect 3621 Delaware Street to the correct address of 3617 Delaware Street). Both Vice Chairman Getty and Commissioner Conard noted that they would amend their motion to include that correction. The item on the Consent Agenda (as amended) was approved by unanimous roll call vote of the five (5) Commissioners present with none against and two (2) Commissioners absent.

Financial Report

Finance Director Vickie Huwe said that her report was contained within the Board packet. She advised that her financial summary page is more detailed in light of the requirements specified by HUD during the course of the recent HUD compliance review. She also advised the Board that there have been three (3) employees added to the WCHA's payroll who were formerly employed by the HACF and who assist at the Hosmer and Brewster Developments. She said that those employees are being incorporated into the WCHA's systems, including the WCHA's email system.

Executive Director Alan Zais advised the Board that there may be structural issues with the Brewster facility in Freeport and that he will keep the Board advised as to any developments in that regard.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Chairman Wescott noted that with regrets he is resigning as Chairperson of the WCHA Board of Commissioners, effective immediately. While he intends to remain as a Commissioner, he stated that due to health issues he must step down from the Chairperson's responsibilities. Chairman Wescott noted that he has had a great time serving in that capacity for the past twenty (20) years and that he is not leaving the Board entirely but only stepping down as Chairperson. Thanks were extended to Chairman Wescott by Commissioners Ballard and Conard as well as by Vice Chairman Getty for his services. Attorney Pirages also thanked Chairman Wescott for his leadership during the past 20 years.

Attorney Pirages advised the Board that the bylaws state that in the event of the resignation of a Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson serves in that capacity until a new Chairperson is elected. The bylaws also provide that an election to fill the vacancy in that position should occur at the next Board meeting and that individual will then serve as Chairperson for the remainder of the unexpired term. Therefore, Attorney Pirages noted that the election of a new Chairperson should occur at the November 2020 meeting.

Executive Session

None.

Action Taken from Executive Session

None.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Vice Chairman Getty and that motion was seconded by Commissioner Conard. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote of all five (5) Commissioners present with none against and two (2) Commissioners absent. The meeting adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alanna D. Conard, Recording Secretary