

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS OF THE CHARLOTTESVILLE REDEVELOPMENT AND
HOUSING AUTHORITY**

August 22, 2011

The Board of Commissioners of the Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority (hereinafter “CRHA” or the “Housing Authority”) met in Regular Session at 7:00 PM on August 22, 2011 in Council Chambers at City Hall.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Bob Stevens called the meeting of the Board to order at 7:00 PM on August 22, 2011.

II. ROLL CALL OF COMMISSIONERS

Present:

Ms. Sherri Clarke, Commissioner
Ms. Joy Johnson, Commissioner
Mr. Hosea Mitchell, Chair
Mr. Dave Norris, Commissioner
Mr. Bob Stevens, Vice Chair
Mr. Keith Woodard, Commissioner

Absent:

Ms. Claudette Green, Commissioner

Staff Present:

Mr. Randy Bickers, Executive Director
Ms. Robin Munson, Finance Director
Ms. Amy Kilroy, Redevelopment Director
Ms. Deetra West, Administrative Assistant
Ms. Allyson Manson-Davies, Legal Attorney

III. MOMENT OF SILENCE

Commissioner Stevens called for a moment of silence.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD JULY 25, 2011.**

Commissioner Stevens made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Norris. The minutes were approved.

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HELD JULY 25, 2011.**

Commissioner Stevens made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Woodard. The minutes were approved.

VI. COMMENTS FROM CHAIR

Commissioner Mitchell opened the meeting by talking about the positive direction the agency is going in. Under the leadership of Executive Director Randy Bickers, the agency has passed REAC inspections for three consecutive years, Section 8 SEMAP scores are good and have maintained that status, the vacancy rate and utility costs have come down, the agency is a smaller and more efficient working agency, and the agency is moving closer to HUD's Asset Management model. The model will help staff receive more resources to provide better services to residents. CRHA has a Master Plan in place and an MOU with the City that will continue to give momentum to the redevelopment process. An added incentive to this process is that the Mayor is now the Chair of the Redevelopment Committee which will keep this process moving along.

Commissioner Mitchell stated there are three important things that must happen to keep the agency's momentum going. The agency needs to select a replacement Executive Director for Mr. Bickers who will be leaving at the end of the year. The new executive director needs to be in place by January 1st and he would like to see some overlap between Mr. Bickers and the new director. The second important thing is that the agency needs to continue with and pick up the momentum with the redevelopment process. Redevelopment will solve many of the problems the agency faces. If done right, it will allow the agency to make reinvestments and generate revenue so that the agency will be less reliant on HUD. Lastly, the agency needs to collectively engage in an open, candid, direct dialogue based on trust and respect between the Board, staff, and residents.

VII. PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD-KRISTEN SZAKOS

Ms. Kristen Szakos, a member of the City of Promise Steering Committee, Dialogue on Race Action Team for the Promise Neighborhood, and a member of City Council began updating the Board on the direction of the program. Ms. Szakos stated the City of Promise was formed from many different ideas and came from many different directions to bring about positive change in the City of Charlottesville neighborhoods. She talked about three areas in which she was personally involved with; closing the achievement gap in Charlottesville, Dialogue on Race Promise Neighborhood Action team, and the City of Promise Neighborhood Steering Committee.

Based on statics provided by Ms. Atkins, Charlottesville City School Superintendent, black children and poor children in Charlottesville do not score as well on state tests, do not participate in honors level classes, do not graduate at the same rate as white and affluent children, and white graduates are twice as likely to go to college. Achievement gaps were not just seen in races but across economic lines as well. African-American children in the City are five times as likely as a white childen to be poor and one and a half times as likely to live in neighborhoods where almost everyone is low income. She noted that Charlottesville's poverty level is over 25% and the area's largest employer, UVA, keeps wages low with hundreds of jobs that pay sub-living wages with no room for advancement. A recent national study found children living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty are likely to be downwardly mobile to grow up to have lower standards of living than their parents.

While working for the Obama campaign and on her own campaign, Ms. Szakos learned that the majority of residents living in low income neighborhoods wanted to see change in housing, jobs, and closing achievement gaps. Hearing this, she started learning more about the Harlem Children Zone model. The Harlem Children Zone is a program in Harlem where neighborhoods came together with program providers and businesses to create continuous services for kids from birth through college. The model was so successful that the Obama administration has secured funding to encourage communities to create a Promise Neighborhood that modeled the Harlem Children Zone program. She decided to then contact about 25 non-profit directors, school officials, city staff, faith organizations, and community groups like CRHA and PHAR to ask if they wanted to collectively apply for a \$500K one year planning grant. The grant was well written but Charlottesville was not chosen because it was not far enough in its planning stages and HUD officials encouraged the group to focus on a small neighborhood rather than the entire city.

A Promise Neighborhood Steering Committee was formed to continue with the work of bringing change. Because of troubled educational performance, the committee decided to focus on Westhaven, 10th and Page, and the Starr Hill neighborhoods. The committee has been working hard toward its' goal and has received a state funded grant of \$60K a year for four years, written other grants, will be hiring an Executive Director in September, and will begin writing another \$500K federal planning grant in two weeks.

Ms. Szakos stated the new planning year starts now and involves interviewing parents and kids, developing relationships between residents and providers, recruitment of residents to work as trained paid interviewers, creating a parent counsel and youth counsel, and having significant resident participation on the governing board. If residents decide they do not want the program in their neighborhood, the program will be pulled. The committee is not looking to replace services in the community but simply to support and help to grow what works, improve the services that need improvement, and bring services that are missing.

The Dialogue on Race Action Team has come up with a monthly spades tournament to build relationships in the community between the residents, program directors and city officials. In the tournament, residents are paired up with directors and officials to work as a team and trust each other in order to win the game. Ms. Szakos invited the Board to come out and play in a tournament or to attend the City of Promise Steering committee. The next committee meeting will meet Monday, September 12th at 1:00pm in the Westhaven Community Center. The next Spades tournament has yet to be determined as they are trying to coordinate everyones schedule.

VIII. RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

There were no questions from the previous meeting

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Adrienne Ward-Johnson, a Crescent Hall resident, stated a lot of money was spent to repair the elevators at Crescent Hall; however, they still continue to go down at least once a week. When the power goes out the elevators also go out and while she appreciates the presence of Mr. Bickers and Ms. Lockley on site during these times, it is still hard for

residents to get upstairs to their units. She would like to see the elevators totally repaired and suggested that a new installation may need to take place.

Shymora Cooper, 713 6th Street SE, stated recently there was a shooting in her neighborhood around 4:30pm while her children were outside playing. Residents called the police and they responded 30 minutes after the phone calls were made to 911. She feels that neither CRHA staff nor the City Police Department seems to take the safety of residents seriously. She would like to know why the Police Substation in the 6th Street Community is not being used properly.

Emily Dreyfus, on behalf of PHAR Board of Directors, stated she supports the comments made by the prior two speakers. Issues of safety in terms of violence and safety are very important and crucial to all residents. She stated she appreciated the emphasis of dialogue that the CRHA Chair talked about at the beginning of the meeting. She added the PHAR Board had not had an opportunity to discuss their concerns of the new organization plans regarding the impact of customer service that may come about with the new changes.

Mary Carey, Crescent Hall residents, stated the elevators have broken down several times since she has moved in the building. She feels the Board does not respect the residents of Crescent Hall. Residents have complained of elevators breaking down constantly and residents have also complained of staff being disrespectful to residents. Residents need appliances replaced and staff takes several months to complete work orders. She hopes the change that is being discussed is for the better.

Connie Rosenbaum, Crescent Hall resident, stated she was one of the residents that were stuck in the elevator. She stated she lived in public housing several years ago and the staff at that time made sure residents received what they asked for. Crescent Hall residents have asked for new refrigerators, new stoves, and new bathroom floors and have not received them. Staff also talks to residents in a disrespectful manner. She stated it seems like the more residents speak up the more trouble they may get in with management. She stated Ms. Lockley is one of the sorriest property managers that the agency has had and she thinks she's better than everybody else.

Deirdre Gilmore, 613 Hinton Avenue, stated she had questions about The Promise Neighborhood but those questions were answered by Kristen Szakos. She stated she had not heard anything about the program and as the Chair of PHAR she was not approached by anyone to take part in the program. She stated that she stopped by one of the spades tournament nights but did not stay because she does not play spades. While at the tournament she did not see long time community members such as Holly Edwards or Joy Johnson. Ms. Gilmore stated that she wants to meet with Ms. Szakos because she would like the opportunity to learn more about the program.

X. **REPORTS**

A. **Police Report**

The police did not attend the meeting.

B. Items Requiring Board Action

1. Resolution #1293 Authorizing the Executive Directors to Enter a Partnership with Community Housing Partners

Mr. Bickers stated Community Housing Partners (CHP) has approached the housing authority to assume 21% ownership in their organization to increase the amount of tax credits and bond financing they can receive to perform an extensive upgrade to both the interior and exterior of their property, Blue Ridge Commons Apartments. Due to an IRS regulation concerning identity of interest, CHP must find a partner and would like CRHA to be that partner. Mr. Bickers stated he supports entering into a partnership with CHP because he sees it as way to be a partner with another group that is trying to do what CRHA is trying to accomplish. Ms. Davies stated she drafted the resolution to reflect the conversations that have been taking place between CRHA and CHP. After a review of the legal documents, Ms. Davies reported that it appears there would be no financial or legal risk to CRHA to enter into this partnership.

Mr. John Bolton, CHP, stated an initial 120 day written notice of construction was sent to residents of the Blue Ridge Commons apartments as part of their notification process. As the time gets closer to perform the rehab, there will be meetings set at a variety of times to accommodate resident schedules. At the meetings will be the architecture firm, construction staff, resident services coordinators, and the property management to answer questions that residents may have. The rehab will bring jobs to the area and Mr. Bolton stated the company tries to hire locally as much as possible and that anyone will be able to enter a bid during the process. Details of the relocation plan are still being decided upon but CHP is planning no more than a 30 day relocation process. Once the relocation plan has been finalized Blue Ridge Commons Management will present it to its residents.

Commissioner Norris made a motion to approve Resolution #1293, seconded by Commissioner Stevens.

AYES

Commissioner Clarke
Commissioner Johnson
Commissioner Mitchell
Commissioner Norris
Commissioner Stevens

NAYES

ABSTAIN

Commissioner Woodard

Resolution #1293 passes.

C. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Bickers stated the elevators are a continuing problem for the agency and staff is not ignoring the issue. There was a substantial rebuild of one of the elevators and that was completed a few months ago. Most of the problems being seen now are due to the electricity going off in the building because of thunderstorms and unfortunately this is the season that storms will come frequently. The CRHA maintenance staff is much better equipped to get the elevators back up and running. There was one incident in which the

elevators went into what the vendor calls “wildcat mode” which made one elevator shut down and the other elevator was constantly running up and down stopping at random floors. Staff was on site all night and was able to recall the elevator and help residents onto the elevator and get them to their desired floors. He stated staff is not ignoring the residents’ concerns and he hears the frustrations and staff is frustrated as well. The vendor response to the latest outage at Crescent Hall is that the outage has burnt the computer panel that runs the elevators. Staff is struggling to get the problems fixed but has to rely on the experts to fix the problem as members of staff are not certified elevator technicians. CRHA does have a third party inspector that will come out and inspect the elevators once the vendor has reported that it had successfully completed the repair. Commissioner Clarke asked if there was a generation system at Crescent Hall. Mr. Bickers stated there is a generation system in place that does kick on and bring the lights back up but the elevators will still go off line. If elevators are down a lengthy amount of time staff will be called out and a staff member will be on each floor and or 911 would be called at which point the fire department will come out to help the residents. Commissioner Norris stated that he hears the frustration in Mr. Bickers’ voice but this has been a long ongoing issue and he feels that if it were any other company like Woodard Properties, UVA, and another downtown business the vendor would have taken this more serious. He thinks staff is taking it serious and is doing what it can but he thinks the vendor is stringing the agency along and that in itself is frustrating. He likes to think that there is a way to put pressure on the vendor to not repair it but to fix the problems. Mr. Bickers stated he’s been talking to Ms. Davies and that the next step is a possible lawsuit. The Board shared their concerns that the agency is being strung along and that the break downs have gone on too many years. The elevator break downs poses as a safety threat to residents and is a potential lawsuit for the agency. The Board urged Mr. Bickers to discuss a possible legal strategy with Ms. Davies.

Mr. Bickers stated it was very unfortunate that a staff member’s name was thrown out in an extremely negative way. In the spirit of a civil and respectful dialogue, he asked that everyone try not to single out or make personally attacks on staff while on camera as it is very hurtful to staff when that happens. He stated that if negative opinions want to be expressed about him that would be fine because he was present at the meeting or a call can be placed to him to voice a complaint on staff. To do so in a public manner is harsh because the person is not present to defend themselves and he found that to be very disturbing.

Mr. Bickers then went into his report, stating that reporting rates for both the Public Housing and Section 8 programs continue to be good. As of July, the number of vacant units is up one to 14 total vacant units which represents a vacancy rate of 3.72%. He stated that there is not a lot of activity in the procurement area because of pending new capital funds that have not been received until a final environmental review is completed. He did note that vacant unit painting and cleaning contracts were rebid this year to see a different level of performance. The bids were received last week and new contract awards will be issued starting September 1st. He reported the July receivables went up a little bit due to 7 evictions. The evictions will cause a spike in the vacancy report but staff is working hard to get those apartments filled.

D. Committee Reports

1. Finance Committee

Mr. Bickers stated David Schultz, Vice President of Development at Community Housing Partners (CHP) discussed the 21% ownership request and to answer any questions or gather feedback from the Board. Ms. Munson presented the financials to the committee. At the present time total expenses are under budget with the exception of a few maintenance costs due to timing of capital funding availability. Some of the repairs that were made had to come out of subsidy operating funds such as water heater repairs. Mr. Bickers stated the committee talked about the federal funding cuts from HUD and how this will impact the agency and the recommendations that were made by Mr. Bickers to help balance the budget.

Commissioner Johnson stated the committee talked about one of the positions that Mr. Bickers recommended to cut and the funding cuts that will affect the clinics. The committee recommended not to make the cut and to use restricted public housing reserve funds to cover the position for a year with thought that the agency will look at other ways to make up the deficit. Commissioner Mitchell stated the thought is to use the reserve funds to cover the running deficit without making the cuts while moving closer to asset management and recover almost \$18K. By not eliminating the position, the agency will be able to receive more funding from HUD as the agency will keep evictions and vacancy numbers down. The agency will also look into a better way of writing off accounts as well.

Commissioner Clarke asked if the reserved funds could have been used to assist residents with rental assistance. Mr. Bickers stated reserve funds can only be used for public housing operations of the agency. Commissioner Stevens stated there will be a capital work session and he invited anyone to come out to the meeting scheduled for September 6, 2011 at 4:00 in the City Hall Basement Conference Room.

The Finance Committee recommended the Board of Commissioners allow CRHA to operate with this deficit through March 31, 2011.

AYES

Commissioner Clarke
Commissioner Johnson
Commissioner Mitchell
Commissioner Norris
Commissioner Stevens
Commissioner Woodard

NAYES

ABSTAIN

The recommendation was approved.

2. Resident Services Committee

Commissioner Johnson stated the committee met and discussed the elevator issues at Crescent Hall, the disrespect that residents feel they are receiving from staff. The Committee would like to discuss in more detail the grievance policy. The committee is

trying to pull together a meeting to discuss the grievance policy and would like Commissioner Mitchell, Ms. Davies, and Mr. Gulotta present. Commissioner Clarke stated that she will not be able to attend the meeting since she does not get out of class until 12:45pm. Commissioner Johnson stated that it was decided to move the meeting time of the committee meeting to 1:00pm to accommodate schedules.

Commissioner Johnson stated residents had questions about the organizational restructuring. She answered as many questions as much as she could without going into too much detail. Mr. Bickers stated that he has not discussed any details of the restructuring with residents or publicly because there are several staff members that this will impact. Mr. Bickers stated that out of respect for the staff involved he will not discuss the plans since final decisions have not been made.

The committee heard complaints from Crescent Hall residents that stoves and refrigerators needed to be replaced. Commissioner Johnson stated she thought those appliances had been replaced. Mr. Bickers stated he also thought that had been replaced but just recently found out that the appliances had been ordered but not replaced.

Commissioner Johnson also stated that she and Ms. Gilmore were approached after the meeting by an elderly resident that expressed some of her concerns. Commissioner Johnson stated that JABA may come in and work with this woman but that she wanted to speak with Mr. Bickers about the information that was passed on to her from the elderly resident.

Commissioner Norris stated that he was concerned to hear Ms. Cooper's comment that shots were fired during the day while children were outside playing. He would like to see what the agency could do to help increase police presence at the substation. Commissioner Mitchell stated he too was concerned and was also disappointed that the police was not present at tonight's meeting. Commissioner Norris stated he appreciated Commissioner Mitchell's opening remarks and that it is setting the right tone for the Board and the agency for the coming year. He added he appreciated his emphasis on respect and to have Commissioner Johnson's report that it is a priority for residents as well. He stated that the respect goes both ways and that it is not just for housing authority staff, management, and commissioners being respectful to residents but it also has to come from residents as well. He hopes the agency will make some progress.

3. Redevelopment Committee

Commissioner Mitchell stated Commissioner Norris is now heading up the committee. Commissioner Norris stated a meeting was set up with Mr. Bickers, staff, and Commissioner Mitchell to discuss the next steps.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Johnson asked for an update on a relocation plan. Commissioner Stevens stated he asked for staff and city staff to come up with a plan to start communications with developers and for a sample relocation plan at the last redevelopment meeting. Mr. Bickers stated that he believes the first draft of a relocation plan will be presented in September. Commissioner Mitchell stated he wanted to leave that alone until

Commissioner Norris will be able to settle in as the Chair of the Redevelopment Committee.

Commissioner Clarke announced that she has a new son-in-law and she wanted to publically congratulate her daughter and her husband.

Commissioner Norris thanked Commissioner Johnson and her team for a successful Westhaven Community Day and for bringing it all together.

XII. COMMITTEE MEETING DATE CHECK-IN

Redevelopment Committee Meeting – meets 2nd Wednesday of the month
The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 14, 2011.

Resident Services Committee Meeting- meets 2nd Thursday of the month
Next meeting will be September 8, 2011 at 1:00pm in the Crescent Hall Community Room.

Finance Committee Meeting – meets 3rd Wednesday of the month
Next meeting will be September 21, 2011 at 4:30pm, in Basement Conference Room City Hall.

Regular Board Meeting – meets 4th Monday of the month
Next meeting September 26, 2011 at 7pm, in Council Chambers

XIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Annette Wilcox, 1400 Monticello Road, wants to know if redevelopment means renovation. She would like to visit other renovated public housing sites.

Connie Rosenbaum, Crescent Hall resident, stated that she has lived in public housing in Wytheville, VA and those units are much better than CRHA's. She stated Westhaven and Crescent Hall communities are the last to receive any upgrades. She also feels that the older she gets the less things are being done. She feels like staff and the Board are not listening to the needs of the residents.

Edith Goode, 305 Second Street, stated there is always a police report but there are never police officers to give the report. It's her feeling that even when police officers are present it seems that they are not the ones that generated the report. She stated she doesn't see the value in the report.

Mary Carey, Crescent Hall resident, stated the 6th Street substation needs to be occupied by police officers. She suggested that City Council be made aware of the concerns of the absence of police. She stated she has seen disrespect at Crescent Hall from staff. She feels that the elevator maintenance vendor is not respecting the Executive Director or CRHA staff. She stated she feels it is a good idea that Blue Ridge Commons is allowing the Section 3 policy to help give residents jobs and this will help residents.

Shymora Cooper, 6th Street SE, stated customers want excellent customer service. Residents want to be heard and residents would like for staff to acknowledge resident issues and try to create a solution to help residents.

Deirdre Gilmore, 613 Hinton Avenue, stated a lot of times people come in from the outside and tell residents what should happen in the neighborhoods but residents know what they want. Ms. Gilmore stated she heard the statistics about how children are failing in school and many times the blame is placed on the parents. Some parents are working two and three jobs just to make ends meet. If the Promise Neighborhood program wants to send a positive message to the community, they should hire a resident as a coordinator. There are residents that are qualified but are always overlooked. She stated that Holly Edwards has been active in the community working in the clinics for over 10 years and also Joy Johnson has been a part of to the neighborhood for many years and did not know much about the program.

Commissioner Stevens stated that the City of Charlottesville and CRHA have passed a strong Section 3 policy two months ago.

XIV. **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Mitchell stated there are three things that the agency needs to focus on. The first is to replace the Executive Director by the end of the calendar year in order to accomplish all the things residents want to happen. The second is moving redevelopment along. Redevelopment will hurt but it will solve many of the issues that were heard in the public comments sessions tonight. The third is practicing an open respectful dialogue on an organizational level not as a personal staff or Board attack. The Board and Mr. Bickers will listen and he hopes the residents will give them the opportunity to talk back.

Commissioner Johnson stated that resident participation needs to be increased. There has been some participation but it needs to be improved. She stated she has reached out to HUD to seek help with guidance on this issue and on Section 3 implementation. She added that while on Facebook she saw comments from a teacher that called the Westhaven Community “the projects”. Commissioner Johnson stated the individual said that the children refer to the community as such and that it is also politically correct. Commissioner Johnson stated the term offended her and other residents of the community

Commissioner Johnson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Stevens. The meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.