

Missoula Housing Authority Board

Regular Board Meeting
Wednesday, July 20, 2022

-MINUTES-

Members Present: Kaia Peterson, Collin Bangs, Jack Richards (via phone), Teigan Avery, Kila Shields (via phone), Sheena Comer Winterer Members

Absent: Erma Mack-Wilkes

Staff Present: Lori Davidson, Jim McGrath, Mary Melton, Sam Oliver, Adam Ragsdale

Guests Present: Ryan Sudbury

- I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm.
- II. Attendance: See above
- III. III. Approval of Minutes: Regular Board Meeting – June 15, 2022
1st: Bangs
2nd: Avery
None opposed, motion passes.
- IV. IV. Commissioner Comments/Conflict of Interest Disclosure:
None
- V. V. Public Comments on items not on the Agenda:
None
- VI. VI. Action Items: Public Hearing for the Annual Plan:

Davidson: Opened it (annual plan) up for comments have been advertised on the website and in the paper. If public was interested and had comments there was the opportunity to give us those. They can always give us written comments as well. Haven't seen any of those. We can go ahead and close the public comment period and move on to the resolution.

Peterson: Any commissioner comments on the Annual Plan. We will close the public hearing on the annual plan.

Resolution #1137:

Davidson: the first resolution is the approval by the board of the Annual Plan so we can submit it to HUD. We can close the comment period and move on to the resolution.

Peterson: Do I hear a motion to approve the annual plan?

1st: Avery

2nd: Richards

None opposed: motion passes

Resolution #1138 Personnel Policy:

Davidson: I sent out the final revisions about a week ago. Hopefully you've had the chance to view those final tweaks. We'd like to put this in place right away. There are some nice provisions in there that we would like to start to implement. If anyone has any questions or comments this is your opportunity.

Peterson: Can you speak at all about what the biggest changes have been to the agency through the personnel policy?

Davidson: One of the main reasons we did the revisions was because there were things like social media policy and boilerplate Fair Housing things and federal law that needed to be included in our personnel policy that weren't in it before.

Ragsdale: Bringing things current. There were a number of things that were outdated. Also some things that weren't in there as well like a whistleblower policy and nursing moms policy. Of course the pay policy was a big one adding in performance based pay.

Davidson: In performance based pay—the overview of the way we're going to do it is in the policy, but the actual procedure isn't in the policy because that might change. There will still be a Cost Of Living (COLA) increase—and this year we're trying to budget in an 11% increase because we know that Social Security is planning on a 10.6% increase. Where we can go from that is we have developed criteria for each department—some of it is standard criteria. For example, for property management a certain percentage of vacancy and certain percentage of rents collected; for maintenance a certain of work orders to be completed, work orders that took too long or weren't closed out. Those things we can measure. There's always been some really good Section 8 provisions from the SEMAP. We start with those as a baseline. There are some more subjective criteria based on employees evaluations and performance over a period of time. We start at the 11%. If they not under-performing well, we could decrease the amount of the COLA. If someone is over-performing, doing very well, we could increase the amount of the COLA. We're also implementing longevity pay. Especially in this time, we are trying to incentivize people to stay with us. And to acknowledge people who are staying. Those are the two pieces that have the most impact to the agency. We're trying to budget them in.

Peterson: Did you get input on this plan on anyone from outside the organization?

Ragsdale: I worked with Ryan, but also worked with other Housing Authorities both in-state and out-of-state. Wealth of knowledge through the SHRM website and colleagues in the community who know a lot more than I do and we share information.

(Richards and Shields were having issues hearing over the phone so dropped off)

Comer-Winterer: You said you hoping to build it into the budget and hoping for the best. How does that work when you offer it out and then you hope you can afford it?

Davidson: That's why we haven't built in a specific COLA in the policy. It will change from year-to-year. We plug in the wages and try to budget around that. We've seen increases in the rent in the properties, especially in the Section 8 vouchers.

Peterson: My only thought is to have an employment lawyer or consultant look at the policy—just to see if there's anything else that jumps out at them. I'm comfortable moving forward.

Motion:

1st Avery

2nd Bangs

Opposed: none—motion passes

Resolution #1139: Approval of Changes in Section 8 Administrative Plan

McGrath: Payment standards. There is something called Fair Market Rents set by HUD based on 30 year old census data, so they're very seldom what market rents are. But we have a range that we can adjust them ranging from 90% to 110%. So we typically put them a little higher. Last year we had 2 exceptions from HUD to raise them even higher because the market was way above what we were allowed to pay. One of the reasons was the success rate because we weren't able to lease all of the vouchers. We were able to get a waiver for exception to payment standards to go up to 120%. Rents tend to be volatile. But the Fair Market Rents go down, we may be forced to decrease the payment standard which is a hardship on those applicants and participants. It may be possible to lose the waiver when the new FMR's come out. If we have to lower our payment standards, that won't go into effect until the 2nd year, but people who are entering new leases are whatever we have to set it at. HOTMA (reform of Section 8) gave us the ability to never drop the payment standards and we can keep existing tenants where they're at as long as the tenant doesn't move. That gives protection beyond the 2nd year. Seems like we might as well look at that. Doesn't help people who have to move, and doesn't help people coming off the waitlist, but wanting to not have to scramble in the case this does happen. HUD is looking at redoing the FMR methodology this year—but we don't know what that will do. Looking at other sources of data—market data—3 different sources—which I don't know can happen in Missoula because we don't have that many sources; but looking at more recent data.

Winter-Comerer: What's a PBV?

McGrath: PBV vouchers are tenant based vouchers are attached to a unit. PBV's are long-term contracts. PBV's are beneficial to tenants in this market. There is a relationship between those rents and FMR's. We are capped at any increases we can ask for. For instance, MHA Homes has those higher rents and they won't go down.

Davidson: And those increased rents from mhahome funds are unrestricted so we can use them in a variety of ways including the ability to implement some of these new things in the personnel policy.

McGrath: this is a change to policy. We just have in our policy the old way of doing it.

Motion:

1st Comer-Winterer

2nd Bangs

Opposed: none—motion passes

VII. Staff Reports:

a. COVID-19 update

Nothing new there. Not changing anything but hope to have a system for hybrid meetings.

b. Public Housing final close-out

Ryan Sudbury hasn't heard back from HUD regarding the format for the close-out letter required by HUD.

Sudbury: Format right now is a template for RAD conversion as opposed to the Voluntary Conversion. I think the timing is going to be there regardless. If they approve this or give us another one that's similar to this one for the Voluntary Conversion program. They're taking time to review it; approval should be quick as we can check all the boxes.

c. Villagio Update

What's new at Villagio? Things are moving along well. All the internal stuff in the A building is moving it's way up the floors. Sam is setting up some morning tours (better for the contractors/construction) to include Board members and city and county officials. Lori will set up dates for those and send out a Doodle poll on availability.

d. Trinity update

Also moving along well. Exterior painting is happening on the Mullan site. A property manager has been hired. Sites will have differing color schemes:

Permanent Supportive Housing: blue and gray

Mullan site: yellow and gray

Cooley site: green and gray

e. Speedway and 819 Stoddard

No updates. MHA hopes to create a position for media specialist/grant writer combination which we are hoping to hire by October. MHA has been working with Bonfire on updating and streamlining the MHA website. Peterson offered some job descriptions for similar positions.

f. *Strategic Planning:*

Peterson: Succession: A couple of things we have an updated job description for Executive Director. I didn't make significant changes, but changed some of the language to say "oversee" as opposed to "do, do, do". Serve as Secretary to the Board change to MHA Governance and Communications. We talked about the internal hiring process. If we do an external process, we'll want to take another look at this.

Davidson: You want to have staff involved and make a recommendation. MHA Leadership Team talked about the best way to include line staff in the interview process. It was decided to have 2 people from each department to be on a committee. They would develop questions relevant to the ED interview process and give a written recommendation for the interview, under Adam Ragsdale's supervision.

It was decided to bullet point the education and experience adding "or equivalent level of experience".

Peterson: Next thing. We decided we would open the position in-house. Aiming to have a recommendation to the Board by the September 21st meeting, which is tight, but I still think we should stick to that timeline in case we don't have an internal candidate we're losing our timeline. It's important for staff to have engagement in the manner you described. What's the deadline for applications and the interviews.

Comer-Winterer: if the internal posting goes out mid-August is 2 weeks enough time for internal candidates?

Ragsdale: I think internal candidates know about this and are dusting off resumes and think about that stuff. 2 weeks should be plenty of time.

Peterson: I would propose we open the application process August 15th and close August 26th. Adam, you and I can connect on the timeline and how we want to conduct our portion of the interviews.

Peterson: As you were talking about the employee process, were there any metrics you were looking at as an organization?

Davidson: It's based on metrics per department as opposed to each employee. Something like maintain a vacancy rate of no more than 5% or take no more than 10 days to complete a work order. Set a baseline of standardized basic metrics.

McGrath: it's what we care about anyway. Individually, how people are contributing to the overall goals of the agency. Very measurable.

Davidson: we can put the metrics into a final review of the document and send them to you (the Board). If we go to a performance based salary model, we have to have some metrics in place.

Meeting with the city:

Peterson: We had an initial meeting with the city. Ricky Henderson was in that meeting. Any reflections or feedback back to the board?

Comer-Winterer: It was a good reconnection and it felt like the first step, but I'm curious what the follow-through plan is.

Davidson: Emily Harris-Shears has a task force that's working on housing displacement and wanted to get together with our staff things that they have been hearing from other people and ways that we can partner with the city to address those issues. That's not board participation, but that is one way staff we can start getting more interaction with the city. Not sure what she has in mind, but very excited to find out.

Sudbury: The city has a lot of irons in the fire, especially in the CPI because they are trying to do so much. Good to remind them of MHA's presence and work.

Peterson: I did reach out to Heidi West to get the Housing Authority on the agenda for the Housing Committee. She suggested September because they are tied up with budget meetings right now. Bring a list of questions and answers for an educational opportunity. How many vouchers do we have, what types? We can bring what information we would like to share.

Meeting adjourned at 6:37 pm