

HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF CLAY COUNTY
Regular and Annual Meeting of February 16, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Cecil Johnson and Mike Martin attended in person. Les Bakke and Tia Braseth attended via Zoom.

STAFF PRESENT:

Dara Lee and Sheila Laney.

9:30 A.M. REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

AGENDA:

A motion was made by Commissioner Bakke to approve the agenda. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Commissioner Bakke made a motion to open the Public Hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martin and carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING CHANGES TO THE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN:

On December 23, 2020, the below public notice appeared in the Forum:

The Clay County HRA will hold a public meeting to allow public review and comment on its Annual Plan and proposed changes to its policies, including the Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Plan and its Family Self-Sufficiency Action Plan. The public hearing shall take place on Tuesday, February 16, 2021, at 9:35 a.m. via Zoom or at the Clay County HRA, 116 Center Ave E, Dilworth, MN.

All interested parties, including HRA tenants and recipients of Housing Choice Vouchers and other housing assistance, are encouraged to attend. Written comments also will be accepted. The proposed changes and plans are available for review at the HRA office by appointment, 116 Center Ave E, Dilworth, MN. Individuals with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations to access services. Interpreter services will be made available for anyone making the request. Please call (218) 233-8883 if you would like to attend the meeting in-person or via Zoom; or to schedule an appointment to review the information; or to request services or accommodations.



No comments from the public were received.

Commissioner Bakke made a motion to close the Public Hearing. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

MINUTES FROM JANUARY 19, 2021 REGULAR MEETING:

A motion was made by Commissioner Martin to approve the January 19, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Bakke seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

OATH OF OFFICE:

The Oath of Office was taken by new Commissioner Tia Braseth.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:

None

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN PROPOSED CHANGES TO PREFERENCES & HOMEOWNERSHIP:

Preferences

Since 2018, the HRA has been awarded 177 new Mainstream Vouchers under the Housing Choice Voucher Program. The first award was for 28 vouchers and required specific preference language for those vouchers. All these vouchers have been filled in accordance with that language.

HUD has indicated we can now simplify the preference to include only the basic criteria, which is that a household contain a disabled member age 18-61. As such, staff recommends eliminating the detailed 1-point preference and adding the following 3-point preference:

The PHA will offer a three (3) point preference to households who live in Clay County, Minnesota, who have a disabled family member who has attained at least 18 and not more than 61 years of age. This is a limited preference for 10 households at any time.

In 2020, the HRA began administering the Foster Youth to Independence Housing Choice Vouchers. The HRA has been awarded 4 vouchers and 2 youth have used these vouchers. Staff believes it is best practice to add the following preference for these youth:

The PHA will offer an eight (8) point preference to households who have been referred by the Public Child Welfare Agency (Clay County Social Services), who has attained at least 18 and not more than 24 years of age; left foster care or will leave foster care within 90 days, in accordance with a transition plan described in section 475 (5)(H) of the Social Security Act; and is homeless or is at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older.

Homeownership

The HRA has operated a successful Housing Choice Voucher homeownership program since 2008. Staff is recommending one modification to the program. The policy is currently that all households who do not contain a disabled or elderly member must be enrolled in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. Staff recommends that it be amended to state they must be enrolled in the Family Self-Sufficient Program **for a minimum of one year.**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bakke to adopt the Housing Choice Voucher changes listed above. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS VACANCIES-TENANT REPRESENTATIVE
& PERSON WHO HAS EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS
REPRESENTATIVE:**

Due to the death of Commissioner John Wilkie, the HRA Board of Commissioners no longer has a tenant representative or a formerly homeless representative. Federal law requires that at least one of our members receive assistance through our Housing Choice Voucher program and that at least one commissioner has experienced homelessness. The same person may fill both roles. By law, the HRA Board consists of 5 to 7 members.

We currently have 600 households participating in our Housing Choice Voucher program. In the past, we have done a mailing to all households requesting that interested individuals complete an application form. People can apply to serve on our Resident Advisory Board (RAB) or Board of Commissioners. Our RAB is down to four members as well.

After applications are received, Commissioners and/or staff have interviewed interested applicants. Once interviews are complete, the group makes a recommendation to the Clay County HRA Board who then makes a recommendation to the Clay County Board of Commissioners.

The board can choose to follow this process or select a different process for filling the remaining term of Commissioner Wilkie. This term expires on 1/31/2022. Any one appointed to fill this term will be eligible to be appointed to three additional five-year terms.

The Board wanted to send letters and the application to our current 600 Housing Choice Voucher households. In addition, the Board wanted to place advertisements in local newspapers. This would be done as soon as possible with a return deadline of 30 days. Commissioner Bakke and Commissioner Martin volunteered to review the applications received.

A motion to proceed with the above process to fill vacancies on the HRA Board was made by Commissioner Bakke and seconded by Commissioner Braseth. It carried unanimously.

Commissioner Bakke made a motion to adjourn the Regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martin and carried unanimously.

Chair Johnson called the Annual meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

BOARD OFFICERS FOR 2021:

The HRA by-laws require that no person serve in the role of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson or Secretary for more than two consecutive years. All the listed officers have served a one-year term.

The following slate of officers was proposed:

1. Chair – Cecil Johnson;
2. Vice Chair – Les Bakke;
3. Treasurer – Mike Martin;
4. Secretary – Tia Braseth

There are 2-year term limits for all officer positions except the Treasurer. The by-laws were available for review.

Commissioner Martin made a motion to approve the above slate of officers. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bakke and carried unanimously.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES & TIMES:

Board meetings for the coming year are scheduled to be held on the following dates:

February 16, 2021
March 16, 2021
April 20, 2021
May 18, 2021
June 15, 2021
July 20, 2021 (*tentative – may be cancelled*)
August 17, 2021
September 21, 2021
October 19, 2021
November 16, 2021
December 21, 2021
January 18, 2022

Meetings are currently held at 9:30 a.m. on the third Tuesday of each month. This can be changed if the Board so desires by amending the by-laws.

The Board decided to continue meeting at the current time and day of the month.

LOCATION OF AGENCY BANK ACCOUNTS:

The HRA currently has checking accounts, savings accounts, and loans (office building, Fieldcrest Townhomes) located at Bell State Bank & Trust and Northwestern State Bank.

The location of Certificates of Deposit is based upon the best available rate at a financial institution located in Clay County at the time of the deposit. A minimum of 3 -5 bank rates are compared prior to making the deposit.

The checking and savings accounts are located at the two banks which have branches in Dilworth. Both locations are convenient and accessible to the HRA offices. The HRA has very positive working relationships with both institutions.

Staff recommends that no changes be made to the location of the bank accounts at this time but that it be re-evaluated if terms, service or other conditions change significantly.

A motion was made by Commissioner Martin to continue using the current locations for agency bank accounts. Commissioner Braseth seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

ARTICLE IV. SECTION 1 of the HRA by-laws allows the Chairperson with the consent of the Commissioners to delegate authority to the Executive Director to execute all documents, contracts and instruments on behalf of the Authority.

ARTICLE IV. SECTION 2 of the HRA by-laws allows the Secretary to delegate authority to the Executive Director to maintain and keep records and the Seal of the Authority.

ARTICLE VI. SECTION 3 of the HRA by-laws allows the Chairperson to designate a petty cash fund, not to exceed \$100 to be maintained by the Executive Director and disbursed by the Executive Director without prior approval of the Commissioners.

The Board of Commissioners recommended that this be done each year at the Annual Meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bakke to approve delegation of authority to the Executive Director. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martin and carried unanimously.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF CONDUCTING BUSINESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH CORE VALUES AND ETHICAL STANDARDS & CONFLICT DISCLOSURE:

HUD requires that every grant recipient have a plan in place to make sure that all Board members and staff are aware of our code of conduct. The Board has adopted the “Conducting Business in Accordance with Core Values and Ethical Standards” as its code of conduct.

Staff has informed HUD that the Board will review the code of conduct at each annual meeting.

The Code of Conduct was distributed and the two forms needing signatures were signed and returned by all Board members.

TREASURER’S REPORT:

The financials for November and December 2020 were discussed. The Director of Administration is out of the office for her mandatory 80 hours off so the analysis of cash reserves will not occur until the March meeting. The December 2020 General and Housing Supports financials also will be available at that time.

Overall for 2020, projects performed remarkably well. We had increased costs and decreased rent payments due to covid-19, but we also received additional funding for the Housing Choice Voucher, Houge Estates, Houge Estates Service Coordinator, Fieldcrest Townhomes, Agassiz Apartments and Housing Supports programs.

We have ended both the Rental Rehabilitation and the Public Housing programs. We were able to basically break even on both programs. We stopped charging costs to rental rehabilitation in May 2020. The 2020 profit is equal to the prior year losses.

Gateway Gardens experienced a \$20,000 casualty loss in 2020 due to a tenant flooding a unit on the 4th floor that drained all the way through the building. The HRA deductible is \$20,000. We will be requesting bids for property insurance in 2021 and hope to reduce the deductible to \$5000-\$10,000.

Fieldcrest was once again plagued with low rents and high maintenance costs. These issues should be rectified with the new rent contract at significantly increased rates, and the rehabilitation funding we have been selected to receive.

Homeless to Housed had very high staffing costs in 2020 due to the need to increase the number of households served from 29 to 70 and the time needed to train a new employee to administer the program. We are now serving 72 households so these costs should level out and the revenue increase. We are paid based upon the number of households served each month.

Housing Stabilization Services has experienced typical high start up costs. We did not realize how long it would take for Minnesota DHS to approve and/or deny our payment requests for this program so income has been extremely slow to come in. We have now generated about \$4300 for consultation services with another \$2200 in claims pending. Also, we have just started billing for transition and sustaining services so hope to significantly increase income in 2021.

Housing Choice Voucher and Housing Supports both performed extremely well primarily due to the additional covid-19 funding received for these programs.

Commissioner Bakke made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Braseth and carried unanimously.

PROJECT UPDATES:

Director Lee provided project updates.

Houge Estates

As of February 1, there are six vacant units. One has been re-rented. Applications are being processed. There are 63 households on the waiting list. The waiting list is currently open.

Community spaces remain closed, and Daily Bread is still suspended. Staff is making plans to re-start Daily Bread deliveries with individually bagged deliveries to each unit. A Housing Success Specialist and a Service Coordinator each do portions of the Houge Estates Service Coordinator role. At least one person is on-site Monday through Friday. Our two Housing Success Specialists and our Service Coordinator are housed here.

Vaccinations from Walgreens for Covid-19 were available on February 1. Walgreens is returning March 1 to give the second vaccination for those vaccinated on February 1 and to give the initial vaccination to residents and staff who did not receive it. Walgreens will return at the end of March. Once enough tenants are vaccinated, we will re-open the community room.

Agassiz Apartments

As of February 1, there is one vacant unit which is re-rented for mid-February. No additional move-out notices have been received. There are 9 applicants on the waiting list.

Vaccinations from Walgreens for Covid-19 are available to Agassiz residents at the Houge Estates clinic times.

Clay County Affordable Housing, LLC

As of February 1, we have four vacant units in Hawley. One has been re-rented for mid-February and one for April 1. Staff continues to encourage applicants and is advertising to fill the remaining two units.

Residents of these units receive a preference for a Housing Choice Voucher if they are eligible for a 3 or 4-bedroom voucher.

Boyer Apartments

As of February 1, there are no vacant units. There is one move-out for the end of February. There are 12 households on the waiting list. The waiting list is only open for 2-bedroom units. Residents of Boyer Apartments receive a preference for a Housing Choice Voucher if their family size fits the available unit.

Fieldcrest Townhomes

As of February 1, there are 4 vacant units and 2 additional move-outs scheduled for the end of February. There are 113 households on the waiting list which is now closed. We will not be filling units until the rehab is complete unless we have an excess number of empty units.

The City of Moorhead recommended approximately \$70,000 in funding for sidewalk repairs and approximately \$40,000 in funding to install Wi-Fi at the development using CDBG funding. However, there is not sufficient cash revenue for the city to start these projects now. Improvements will occur as funding allows.

The project has been approved for \$1M in funding through the FHLB of Des Moines and over \$7M from Minnesota Housing. Intake meetings have not been scheduled yet, but staff is meeting with the architects.

Gateway Gardens

As of February 1, there is one vacant unit due to a death. A tenant has been identified for the unit.

Three staff are officed at Gateway Gardens but are primarily working remotely. CCRI and GSSC, a private security company, each provide 12 hours of staffing per day. CCRI staff is in the process of transitioning to Housing Stabilization Services through Medical Assistance. The HRA is conducting the Housing Stabilization Consultations.

Housing Choice Vouchers

As of February 1, 2021, there are a total of 600 households of a possible 700 leased from the HRA Housing Choice Voucher program; and 3 households leased from other housing authorities that we are administering with another one searching. All households on the waiting list have been contacted to begin the voucher issuance process.

Of the 600 vouchers currently leased, 434 out of 455 regular vouchers are under lease; 24 out of 24 Tenant Protection Vouchers are under lease; 2 out of 4 FYI vouchers are under lease; 11 out of 40 VASH vouchers are under lease. We have issued 5 regular and one VASH vouchers. We are working with 17 more households to issue a regular voucher and waiting for one more VASH referral. We were awarded 25 new VASH vouchers effective 1/1/2021, but the majority are intended to be used in the Bemidji area since we lack demand.

We have been approved for 4 Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative vouchers so far. Two youth have leased units for February 1. It is likely that HUD will take back the two vouchers that have not been used.

129 out of 177 Mainstream vouchers are under lease. We issued 26 Mainstream vouchers and are working with 8 additional households. 149 of these vouchers have been made available to us by HUD in the past year. All applicants who are eligible for a Mainstream voucher have been pulled from the waiting list.

We have 36 individuals enrolled in our Family Self-Sufficiency program. We have had 45 FSS participants in the past 12 months. Staff is working with additional households to enroll them in the program. We can serve up to 50 households on the FSS program under our current Action Plan.

Since our Mainstream Voucher program is not full (129 out of 177 filled and 34 more that are being processed for a total of 163), the Board approved opening the waiting list for households who live in Clay County and contain a disabled member. The waiting list is open from February 4 to February 28, 2021. Applications received will be placed into a random drawing on March 8 for the order they will be placed on the waiting list under that preference. Up to 500 applicants will be placed on the waiting list. Fewer than 50 applications have been received in the first week.

Prairie Horizons Townhomes

As of February 1, there are no vacant units. There is one move-out scheduled for the end of February. The vacancy will be filled through the coordinated entry process. Both an HRA and a CCRI staff person are officed at the site and provide supports to both Prairie Horizons Townhomes developments and other HRA Cares scattered-site participants.

HRA Cares

We are authorized to serve 64 households with these funds. We are currently serving 58 households. Of the 58, 16 are at Prairie Horizons Townhomes; 2 are at Bright Sky Apartments; and 40 are in scattered-site units in Clay, Otter Tail, Wilkin, and Douglas Counties, and in Fargo. There are 25 singles and 33 families being served. Staff is accepting additional households to get back up to the 64 households. Referrals have been slow due to partner agency staffing issues.

We only are accepting applications through the Coordinated Access Referral and Entry System (CARES). Those with the highest needs (acuity levels) who meet program eligibility requirements will be accepted.

Homeless to Housed Rental Assistance

We are serving 72 of our authorized 70 households. We are over leased due to being under leased during the first portion of the grant term. There are 25 singles and 47 families currently being served. The grant targets families and youth-headed households. Leased households are from Clay, Wilkin, Traverse and Douglas Counties. There are 15 households still searching for units.

The coordinated entry system shifted its priority during the Covid-19 emergency to households residing outside or in shelters.

Homework Starts with Home

We continue to operate 2 MHFA Homework Starts with Home programs, one which includes philanthropic funding.

As of February 1, 55 are leased; 5 have located units and are waiting to move in; 16 households are searching for units; and 12 applications are being processed. CAPLP has identified an additional 21 potential referrals. Households are from Clay, Douglas, Becker, Wilkin, Wadena, and Otter Tail Counties.

Housing Supports (formerly GRH) in Scattered-Site Units

As of February 1, a total of 139 households are being served by the Housing Supports program. There are 121 households leased in the scattered-site Housing Supports program – 8 with the HRA (1 of these is shared with Summit); 27 with CAPLP; 8 with the Presentation Partners in Housing; 11 with LMHC; 12 with Dorothy Day/Churches United; 7 with Metro Behavioral Health; 1 with Solutions; 2 with the Lotus Center; and 44 with Summit Guidance (of these 1 is shared with the HRA). In addition, CCRI serves 18 Housing Supports clients at Gateway Gardens and two in scattered-site locations.

13 additional households are searching for units. Staff met with partner agencies in January to discuss the upcoming changes to the program.

Minnesota DHS Community Infrastructure Grant

The HRA now has a 0.5 HRS and a 0.03 project manager. There are 2.5 FTE outreach workers through the CAP agencies. CAPLP and WCMCA have hired dedicated outreach workers. Mahube-Otwa is spreading the duties across several staff.

The grant ends on 6/30/2021. We have no information regarding potential renewal yet, but funding was included in the Governor's budget request.

All agencies are actively preparing to enroll in the new Medicaid-billable Housing Stabilization Services. CAPLP and the HRA are the only entities that have been approved to date.

Minnesota DHS Housing Stabilization Services

The HRA was approved to provide Housing Stabilization Services – both Housing Consultation and Transition & Sustaining Services effective July 2020. Six staff are currently trained on one or more Housing Stabilization Services roles.

Staff began Housing Consultations in 2020. We have 2 staff members providing consultations. We have had 25 consultations approved by DHS and 13 more that are submitted with pending approval. We have begun billing for transition and sustaining services. We have four staff members who will provide billable Transition & Sustaining Services under the HSS program as a part of their job.

Owner-Occupied Rehab Program

Sabin

DEED awarded the City of Sabin SCDP funds to rehabilitate 10 homes. Seven projects are complete; and one is in construction. One project is having its scope of work developed. There is funding available for two remaining homes.

Other DEED- CDBG

The HRA staff applied for funding on behalf of the City of Dilworth for 2021 CDBG funding to DEED through the Small Cities Development Program. We have received letters of interest from 53 homeowners and 8 commercial property owners. We applied for over \$800,000 on behalf of Dilworth to rehabilitate 21 owner-occupied homes and 5 businesses. DEED has invited us to submit a full application for this funding. The pre-application was deemed “competitive” and is likely to be funded. DEED has agreed to allow us to increase the number of commercial buildings to 7 since more applications were received after the preliminary proposal was received. There will be a public hearing regarding the application on February 22, 2021.

The City of Barnesville contacted the HRA about administering some repaid DEED funds. We have agreed to do so and are billing Barnesville for all costs incurred in administering those funds. Currently working with one commercial property owner on a roofing project.

RLP

There are 8 applicants who are interested and being processed. Five applicants have been slow to respond/provide required information. One with emergency repair issues is under construction. One appears to be over income, but final eligibility is being determined.

HPG

The HRA received a Rural Development grant through the Housing Preservation Grant program. It has primarily been used as match for the Barnesville and Sabin projects. There are \$5621 in funds remaining which have been committed to a Sabin homeowner. We received a one-year extension so funds must be spent by 9/28/2021.

Rental Rehab Program

Only one project (Rothsay) is outstanding. It has an exterior stairway remaining. Due to lack of material availability for entry stairs, this work needs to wait until spring to complete. MN Housing has granted the extension. We will close out the program once this project is complete. All 2021 expenses are being paid by the General account.

OTHER:

1. Staff Updates: In early December the agency hired three temporary employees and three interns. Of these, two were done at the end of January and one will be done at the end of February.
2. Changes to Covid Protocols: Beginning April 1, 2021, all staff will be required to work in person in the office. Tentatively, we will open the doors to the public July 1, 2021. We will allow the paying out of comp time provision to expire on 3/31/2021 as well as the home office incentive to those that worked from home.

Minutes
February 16, 2021
Clay County HRA

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 a.m. by Commissioner Johnson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Braseth and carried unanimously.

 3/16/2021

Les Bakke, Secretary

Date