



**Kalamazoo County Public Housing Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 4, 2021**

Commission Members Present: David Anderson, David Artley, LaToya Haywood, Evelyn Lewis, and Monteze Morales

Commission Members Absent: None

Kalamazoo County Commissioners Present: Zachary Bauer

LHAF Millage Monitor and Recording Secretary Present: Melanie Gildea and Lisa Willcutt

Call to Order and Approval of Meeting Agenda

The meeting was called to order on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/93676363644?pwd=R01PSEhBQ0p0ejMwWDhqN2JLYzR1UT09> by Artley at 4:31 pm.

Artley requested a change to the agenda under VIII. New Business to include b. Strategic planning meeting with Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners on 2/23/21, and c. Appointing Kalamazoo County Public Housing Commission (PHC) Board members to committees. There was a motion to accept the agenda as amended.

Motion by Lewis

Support by Morales

Motion Approved

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 7, 2021 meeting were approved as submitted.

Motion by Anderson

Support by Morales

Motion approved

Public Comment on Agenda Items: Mary Balkema, Housing Director for Kalamazoo County shared that there will be a special meeting of the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners on February 23, 2021 in order to collect feedback on implementing the new housing millage. She sent out invitations via email. If you cannot attend the meeting, then feedback can be provided directly to Balkema via her email address (mxbalk@kalcounty.com).

Reports

Financial Reports

Willcutt shared that rental income from Bethany House and participant payments at Keystone continue to be received as well as interest income from the Millage. On the expense side, FUSE



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had high utilities during the month for natural gas and electric. Bethany costs were high due to annual property insurance. Willcutt explained that the financial report shows detail on the Millage. This reflects how much was paid to Lockhart Management & Consulting and HRI for staffing at HRI, administrative and housing costs. Balkema asked about the auditing expense and Willcutt explained that these costs consist of a \$200/month payment to Lockhart Management & Consulting to do the books and the balance is paid to the accounting firm for the annual audit. Balkema asked if the PHC was required to comply with the Uniform Budgeting Act. Willcutt will verify with the Kalamazoo County Finance Department per Artley's request.

Motion to accept the January 2021 financial reports by Anderson

Support by Lewis

Motion Approved

LHAF Millage Progress Report

Willcutt detailed the December 2020 report submitted by Housing Resources, Inc. (HRI). The monthly payment to HRI was approximately \$59,000, with most of the funds paid used for direct client assistance. To date the millage has housed 418 families. There are 45 families thus far in year 5 and this continues to increase as some families are just starting the program. The report shows the number of year 4 families housed consistently decreasing as they near the end of their assistance.

One of the questions that came up during the January meeting was how families could afford rent when their income was less or not much greater than the monthly rent. Willcutt has continued to look into this during her monthly meetings with HRI. Willcutt said that some of the reports showed that families were only receiving case management, which in most cases is good; however, there are times where families are cut off from subsidy because they did not meet some requirements. She is waiting for some more feedback from Jacob Beach of HRI. Michelle Davis from HRI was in attendance for the meeting. She shared that the process involves an allocation recertification for funding when a family is nearing the end of financial assistance. Davis explained this "step-down" to help the family transition from receiving subsidy rather than just cut them off completely. This takes place over a 3–6-month period.

Motion to accept HRI report by Haywood

Support by Lewis

Motion Approved

Bethany House

Willcutt did not have any updates on Bethany House.



Old Business

LGBTQ+ Initiative/116 Fellows

Artley shared an update of the house at 116 Fellows along with a drawing of the kitchen area. The kitchen has been remodeled with new cabinets. There is plenty of workspace in the house. He added that the garage did not come down. The cost is in line with what Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services had estimated. The target is for CARES to be ready to operate this transitional housing program by April.

Year 4 Millage Evaluation Report

Artley shared that he included HRI's plan with the agenda for today's meeting. The intent, as requested by HRI, is to have a meeting with follow-up discussion. The meeting is scheduled for February 11, 2021 at 10:30am. Willcutt, Artley, Morales, Davis, and Bauer will attend this meeting via Zoom.

New Business

FOIA Policy

Last fall, the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners updated the FOIA (Freedom of Information Act Policy) for the County. In the past, any FOIA requests were fulfilled by the County, however the current advice from the County is that the PHC should have its own policy and coordinator. Artley said that the PHC has only received a few requests for information since 2016; however, there is currently a request pending. The request is for agendas, board minutes, and board packets from 2002 to present. Fortunately, Lockhart Management & Consulting has all of these items from 2016 to present. Artley and Anderson worked together to come up with the items from 2002-2015. Artley thinks they found most of the items needed. Artley is looking for a volunteer to go through the documents to verify the files are complete with the agendas, board minutes, and board packets since 2002. Artley's suggestion is that Willcutt serve as the coordinator and then seek legal counsel for cost estimate. Balkema advised to determine costs for administrative expenses and take the 10-day extension for the FOIA policy. She added that sometimes the requestor will see the cost and then decide they do not want to move forward with the process. Balkema volunteered to change the Kalamazoo County Land Bank policy to become the PHC's FOIA policy. She added that it is very user-friendly and has been reviewed by lawyer. She will send it to Artley once she completes it and then he will send to the Board for approval.

Anderson said there are many moving pieces to this and feels unclear about the path forward. Morales agreed and said she does not feel like she has the knowledge needed to communicate with others on the matter. Artley said a formal motion could be made for Balkema to rewrite the



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FOIA policy for the PHC if the Board does not feel comfortable without a formal motion. Anderson thinks it is fine to get a draft of the FOIA policy rewritten by Balkema but is wondering if it would be beneficial to step back to the beginning and seek legal advice from someone who is fluent in FOIA policies. He added that it would be nice to get that expertise and have a plan moving forward. Anderson said he is comfortable with Balkema starting the draft of the FOIA policy. Anderson stated a motion to obtain legal advice in order to get clarity on questions from the Board related to the FOIA policy at a cost not to exceed \$1,500. Balkema said that a budget amendment must be added to the motion. The fund balance as defined by the 2019 audit can be used to reflect the budget amendment. A motion was made to seek legal counsel and obtain clarification on questions related to FOIA and to authorize the cost of legal advice not to exceed \$1,500 as well as a budget amendment to pay for such costs from the fund balance.

Motion by Anderson

Support by Haywood

Motion Approved

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Michelle Davis stated she wanted to make an observance. She said that if someone from the general public were to attend the meeting, they may be confused about the role of the housing director in correlation to this board. She added that there was quite a bit of interaction with the housing director in this meeting. Davis said that this is not typically the structure within PHC meetings. She just wanted to bring this to the board's attention.

Commissioner Member Comments

Haywood shared that her term ends in February. She filled out the application to reapply for her position, but is not sure if she will be able to see this through. Haywood appreciates everything she has learned and appreciates the board members as well as the county commissioners.

Anderson said that during upcoming meetings within the county there may be enough PHC members to constitute a quorum, it may be beneficial to think carefully about providing input at these meetings. Commissioner Bauer said generally the chairperson should speak to represent a board.

Anderson also said the millage is like threading a needle. Since there are no federal rules, he feels that there is more local control, especially from the Board. The program itself is more people-based and it is important to help as many families as possible.

Morales thinks it would be beneficial to come together collectively as a Board prior to the February 23, 2021 meeting.



Lewis also agrees that the board should get together to discuss things they were satisfied with in the previous millage, as well as provide insight to move forward. She thinks a meeting is necessary so that the Board can use their knowledge and data gathered from previous experience.

Artley agrees that a special meeting is necessary prior to the February 23, 2021 meeting. It will have to be posted. Artley thanked Michelle Davis, Zach Bauer, and Mary Balkema for their contributions to the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

Submitted by: Melanie Gildea