



Business Board of Directors Meeting Minutes June 15, 2023

Commission Members Present: David Anderson, Kizzy Bradford (Present at 5:05p.m.), Coty Dunten, Gwendolyn Hooker, and Patrese Griffin

Commission Members Absent: None

Kalamazoo County Commissioner Present: Tami Rey

Kalamazoo County Housing Director Present: None

Administrative Service Provider and Recording Secretary Present: Lisa Willcutt

Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at the Kalamazoo County Building, Board Chambers, 201 West Kalamazoo Avenue by President Griffin at 4:33pm. Willcutt conducted the roll call. All were present except for Commissioner Bradford. President Griffin asked that an additional agenda item be added under VII. New Business, c. Commissioner Bradford comments. Anderson moved approval of the meeting agenda and the additional agenda item.

Motion by Anderson

Support by Dunten

Motion approved

Approve Minutes of the April 6, 2023 Meeting

Griffin asked for approval of the meeting minutes from April 6, 2023. The minutes were approved as submitted.

Motion by Dunten

Support by Anderson

Motion approved

Public Comment on Agenda Items and Non-Agenda Items

None

Reports

Financial Reports

Willcutt summarized the April and May 2023 Financial Reports that were distributed prior to the meeting. Beginning with the April report, she noted that FUSE expenses were higher due to the installation of a replacement gutter and new kitchen faucet in addition to regular monthly expenses. Bethany House expenses exceed the budget for the month at year-to-date, but the monthly overage results from plumbing repairs, replacement of a room of ceiling tile to eliminate staining and securing a floor joist. The Millage – Housing expense resulted from management and association fees. Finally, Willcutt noted that costs for the Veterans Homeless Initiative were higher as the costs for the first quarter Integrated Services of Kalamazoo (ISK) costs for support services were paid. However, ISK costs are within budget for the year.



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Willcutt went on to describe variances contained in the May 2023 report stating that FUSE costs exceeded budgeted figures due to a replacement window, clothes dryer repair and the installation of keypad locks throughout. Bethany House costs were within budget for the month, but costs included repairing a leak in the basement by installing a downspout and making modifications to a basement window. Millage – Housing costs were over budget as a result of legal fees for an eviction, as well as an additional condominium assessment in addition to the regular association fees. During the month costs in Veterans Homeless Initiative include a repair to the stove, the downpayment on the furniture, spring landscaping clean-up, and application fees paid from the grant.

There was a motion to accept the April Financial Reports.

Motion by Anderson

Support by Dunten

Motion approved

There was a motion to accept the May Financial Reports.

Motion by Anderson

Support by Dunten

Motion approved

Bethany House

Willcutt reported that there were no additional updates that had not already been covered during the financial report.

Veterans Initiative

Willcutt noted that the air conditioning unit that serves the building failed. The unit was replaced as soon as it could be, although it was longer than normal due to numerous air conditioning failures throughout the county. Anderson asked if it was the responsibility of the KCPHC to pay for the replacement. Willcutt stated she would check the lease to confirm.

FUSE

Willcutt did not have any additional updates that had not been covered during the financial report.

Portage Condominium

Willcutt stated that there was an additional assessment levied by the condominium association. The first installment was due June 1, 2023 and was paid. The second installment is due August 1, 2023 and will be paid by that due date unless the sale of the condominium makes this unnecessary. Willcutt pointed out the letter sent to all condominium owners that was included in the packet and noted there have not been additional communications. Finally, she informed the group that the tenant has had their telephone disconnected and could not be reached. The writ of eviction is expected to be posted soon.



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Old Business

Veterans Homeless Initiative – Common Area Furniture

As Jamie Few was unable to attend, Willcutt provided the following update Few had provided to her:

- The cost totaled \$10,693.75 to include \$9,018.75 for furniture, \$1,175.00 installation, and \$500.00 freight estimate (this could increase or decrease as it depends on current mileage rates and diesel fuel prices).
- A check was cut for the 50% deposit of \$5,346.88 on May 12, 2023.
- Estimated delivery is scheduled for August 10, 2023.

Willcutt noted that the final cost will be far less than what was approved because the vendor is veteran friendly. The Commission wondered how to pass on their thanks.

2015 Millage

Griffin stated that there was nothing new to discuss regarding purchasing housing. However, she said that she was concerned that the opportunity to apply for funding to remove barriers to housing did not reach everyone it should have. She wants to be sure that all organizations get an equitable opportunity to apply. As representatives from ISK were present, Griffin asked who invited them to speak to the KCPHC. Brandon Mion of ISK stated that he was asked to come and speak by Erica Patton who is in the housing department at ISK. Griffin asked if there was any opposition to inviting Kalamazoo Housing Advocates (KHA) to speak at the July meeting. Hooker stated that she would like to hear KHA and would like to hear from ISK as well. Griffin asked if ISK would present and they agreed.

Brandon Mion works as a homeless navigator in the schools as well as assisting with the family shelter. He noted that his parents both suffered from Substance Use Disorder. In his work he helps families find stable housing. He has a case load of 24 families of which 20 are doubled-up, two are in shelter, and two are living outdoors. Of the 24 families, 21 are employed. Mion relayed stories about the doubled-up families that he has worked with. He also noted that 14% of the families he works with do not qualify for a Homeless Preference Voucher. Mion closed by stating that he would like to see Kalamazoo do something to help these families.

Rosalind Adams of ISK stated that she is the family shelter supervisor and wants to advocate for those families who are doubled-up. She went on to say that these are working families who are frustrated and they call to ask her if they should quit their jobs to see if that could increase the help that they are eligible for; these are families that want to pay their own rent and have permanent housing.

Robin Greymountain stated that she is the Homeless Liaison for Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS). She stated that the families that seek out her help are living in hotels, shelters, may be unsheltered or doubled-up. If the family is doubled-up, there is a questionnaire that the family completes to ensure that it is temporary and not permanent housing; 70-75% of KPS students that qualify as being homeless are doubled-up. Families are first referred to Housing Resources, Inc. (HRI). If HRI cannot assist them then Greymountain looks to see how to remove barriers.



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However, obstacles may be difficult to resolve. For example, families that may be part of the LGBTQ community are not accepted at the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission. Some doubled-up families may not be doubled-up in one place; family members may be split up among more than one household. Greymountain asked if the KCPHC was able to provide assistance to families who are doubled up.

Griffin will reach out to KHA to have them give a presentation at the next meeting.

Sale of Portage Condominium

Anderson stated that after his review he is prepared to engage Lockett-Jones to handle the sale as the commission is lower and he doesn't see any other reason that would disqualify them.

Motion by Anderson

Support by Dunten

Motion approved

New Business

Review and Approval of Accounting Policy

During the audit review it was noted that the KCPHC would like to have an accounting policy. Willcutt stated that she drafted the proposed policy that was approved by Director Balkema and distributed prior to the meeting. Anderson moved approval of the policy as submitted.

Motion by Anderson

Support by Hooker

Motion approved

Budget Adjustments

Willcutt explained that it is necessary for the KCPHC to keep a balanced budget. Due to the fact that more is now known about the income and expenses for the year, Willcutt proposed a revised budget, which was distributed prior to the meeting. She went on to explain the various changes that were noted in red type on the Annual Budget and the Notes. After some discussion, Anderson moved approval of the revised budget.

Motion by Anderson

Support by Dunten

Motion approved

Commissioner Bradford

Bradford began by stating that she has learned that her seat on the KCPHC has been brought up for discussion. She stated that she feels harassed and that the matter was not brought up in the right way. Bradford explained that she initially contacted Director Balkema to ask her to look into a situation where the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) had accused her of fraud. Following that, in May, Balkema contacted Bradford and asked her about her intentions for her seat. Bradford never discussed her income with Balkema and is not sure why her income is being discussed.



Bradford stated that Balkema told her to send a letter of resignation to the KCPHC. Bradford is fighting the fraud charges and is also receiving conflicting information from MSHDA. Bradford stated that she felt Balkema's actions in asking her to resign from the KCPHC were out of order.

Griffin thanked Bradford for her bravery in sharing this publicly.

Anderson stated that what occurred was entirely inappropriate. He went on to say that when one is in public office, there are things that will come up, but this is difficult as it was a county employee. Anderson stated that there should be a communication to Balkema advising her to cease.

Dunten stated that there is a problem with the amount of access Balkema has as a county employee. A written communication may need to go to others in the organization. She went on to say that she was sorry and that she will support whatever Bradford feels is the right avenue to pursue.

Bradford stated that she understands that her seat on the KCPHC is tied to her receipt of a housing assistance voucher. However, for Balkema to repeatedly call her and email her when she did not answer her calls seemed like harassment. Bradford said that if she needed to resign then she would have expected the call to come from the Chair or Vice Chair.

Hooker stated that she wants to apologize for all that Bradford is going through. She went on to say that if Bradford no longer needs a housing assistance voucher, then it is the responsibility of the Chair to notify her and feels that it is an abuse of power. She is interested in a letter being sent to the county as well as knowing how the KCPHC determines when someone needs to give up their seat in the future.

Rey wanted to apologize on behalf of Kalamazoo County and is happy to elevate this to administration. Rey also clarified that she is the only liaison between the county and the KCPHC, as someone earlier in the conversation referred to Balkema as a liaison. Rey stated that Balkema has not been appointed by the county and she is not clear as to why Balkema has so much voice in this room.

Anderson explained how the State Housing Act works and the requirement to have someone that lives in public housing on a public housing commission. Due to the fact that there is no public housing in Kalamazoo County, a voucher recipient has normally been appointed to the KCPHC. Anderson went on to say that he would think that a similar situation in the future would be self-disclosed.

Bradford stated that she just received a letter last week that says she no longer has a voucher.

Griffin said that this situation should not have happened in this manner, but that if some closure is reached, it may have been worth it.



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Rey asked Bradford to put the events in writing so that it can be investigated by the county through whatever process is in place. Willcutt suggested photos of the furniture in the house in use by residents who do not object to having their photo taken.

Public Comment on Agenda and Non-Agenda Items

None

Commissioner Member Comments

Dunten asked if it would be appropriate to send a thank you note to the vendor for the heavily discounted furniture.

Hooker reminded those present that Juneteenth is this coming Monday and encouraged everyone to investigate what this holiday is about. She also stated that next week is Bullying Awareness Week and that there are activities associated with this.

Bradford stated that this past Tuesday she was awarded and recognized as the first African American Trustee on the Oshtemo Township Board. She went on to say that Oshtemo will celebrate Juneteenth; all employees will have the day off and a proclamation will be signed.

Griffin stated that the next KCPHC meeting is scheduled for July 6, 2023 and asked those present if they would be in attendance. All confirmed they would be at the meeting. Bradford noted that she would begin a flextime schedule so that she can attend the meeting on time.

Meeting Adjourned: 5:42pm

Submitted by: Lisa Willcutt