



**Business Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
July 6, 2023**

Commission Members Present: David Anderson, Kizzy Bradford (present at 5:09p.m.), Coty Dunten, Gwendolyn Hooker (present at 4:34p.m.), 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 4:30pm. Willcutt conducted the roll call. A motion was made to excuse Bradford and Hooker's absences.

Motion by Anderson

Support by Dunten

Motion approved

President Griffin asked that an additional agenda item be added under VIII. New Business, a. Bylaws. Dunten moved approval of the meeting agenda and the additional agenda item.

Motion by Dunten

Support by Anderson

Motion approved

Approve Minutes of the June 15, 2023 Meeting

Griffin asked for approval of the meeting minutes from June 15, 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

2015 Millage Funding Request Presentation

Sarah Cain of Kalamazoo Housing Advocates (KHA) presented her organization's proposal for removing barriers to housing. She distributed a packet of information to those present. Cain explained that she has been in the housing community for 15 years and sees the biggest problem to solving housing issues is recidivism back into homelessness. In order to define the work that KHA does, clients were asked what the major issues in retaining their housing are. From that information, KHA defined a strategic plan for their work that includes:

- Support
- Educate



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- Advocate

KHA also wants to work with landlords to find out what will make them confident and comfortable renting to someone. Currently KHA is working with two landlords (Lukeman Group and Jakobsen Management Company) on defining a contract that would include a financial safety net for the landlord and support of clients.

Cain went on to give examples of some successes and how people need support. She also reviewed the values that KHA's work follows including Dignity, Love and Housing as a human right; KHA wants to work towards a place where there is housing for everybody.

Cain reviewed and explained the collaborations that have been established and that were listed in the handout provided. She clarified that the plan for each individual and family is derived from the family and what they think they need. She went on to say that there are small niches of people that she wants to work with to help attain housing such as those subject to a lifetime sex offender registry.

A description of how Cain advocates was summarized in the handout, but she went on to explain that KHA wants to be the organization that does the hands-on work such as calling Housing Resources, Inc., churches, and the like to assist clients. In addition to assisting clients, KHA wants to have funds available to landlords so that they can assure landlords that if something happens (i.e., the client falls behind in rent or has damages), then KHA can provide financial safety. In this way landlords will know they will not be out a lot of money and they feel supported.

One of the handouts included a crisis process that Cain reviewed and that KHA works to prevent. She went on to share a story about how she helped a client with clutter and helped them retain their housing.

There were other points Cain highlighted that were contained in the handout. First, she does not believe that workshops help clients; rather the work needs to take place on a one-on-one basis and be tailored to the family's needs. Second, she is interested in creating a workplace where staff wants to work and is retained. Finally, Cain wants to be involved in discussion in the community to create housing change.

Hooker asked about Cain's involvement with Fair Housing. Cain stated that she does not have a connection to this organization, but it is on her list. Hooker will help with this connection. Hooker went on to ask in the community support section of the handout why Cain specifically called out the Northside Neighborhood as a focus. Cain stated that this was done because gun violence is high in the Northside, we know that the Northside is BIPOC and underserved and wants to put in the work in this neighborhood. There is a lot to do so that people feel safe and supported without gentrifying the area.



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Hooker went on to ask what plans are in place to support people with criminal backgrounds. Cain stated that this work falls into the advocacy she is doing with landlords and that she is working within the Kalamazoo Defender office.

Griffin asked how clients would access KHA's services. Cain stated that right now they receive referrals from Integrated Services of Kalamazoo (ISK), Adult Protective Services, and Kalamazoo Defender. She went on to say that within a month KHA expects to launch and that may make referrals overwhelming. If that is the case, then KHA may only accept referrals with a voucher and assist them with their housing needs.

Dunten stated that the funding that is being awarded is to serve families with children, but Cain has discussed individuals in her presentation. Cain stated that they mostly assist individuals, but when working with families they will assess the entire family including the children's needs.

Reports

Financial Reports

Willcutt summarized the June 2023 Financial Reports that were distributed prior to the meeting. She noted that Subsidy-FUSE costs include routine expenses and the quarterly water/sewer bill. Bethany House costs include those for a replacement water heater that failed. Millage-Housing expenses for the month included legal costs in addition to regular, monthly expenses. Finally, Willcutt noted that ISK has been billed for the cost of the replacement air conditioner. There was a motion to accept the June 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 reported that on July 1, 2023, there was a fire in the garage at this location. No one was injured and the home remained occupied as the fire marshal stated that it was safe. Precautions were taking by the fire department to check for the fire spreading by opening up the ceiling in the house. Photos of the damage were included with the packet. Because this building is owned by Integrated Services of Kalamazoo, it is that organization that will make the insurance claim and repairs. It is unknown as to what started the fire and could have been fireworks, lightning or some other source.

FUSE

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



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Portage Condominium

Willcutt stated that the eviction is scheduled to occur tomorrow, Friday, July 7, 2023. It is not expected that the resident will be present.

Willcutt had distributed the revised condominium rules and regulation prior to the meeting noting that those portions highlighted contain the changes. Discussion regarding the revised rules and regulations took place. Dunten advised voting no because the same fair housing issues remain in the current version. She recommended sending a letter to accompany the ballot that points out the fair housing issues. Dunten motioned to vote in opposition to the revised rules and send in a letter with the ballot.

Motion by Dunten

Support by Hooker

Anderson asked that permission be granted for a signatory. Dunten revised the motion to give permission to Griffin to sign the letter and ballot.

Motion by Dunten

Support by Hooker

Motion approved

Old Business

Veterans Homeless Initiative – Common Area Furniture

Willcutt did not have any further updates and expects the delivery to occur in August as planned.

2015 Millage

Griffin stated that there is more work to do regarding transitional housing. In regard to removing barriers to housing, she thanked both ISK and KHA for their presentations. Griffin has concerns about how the funding opportunity was shared since there were only two organizations that applied. Griffin has checked with several organizations, and they were not aware of this opportunity. She knows that it was emailed directly to some organizations, but is not confident that this was shared widely, understanding that it still probably would not reach everyone.

Hooker knows that there was a press release and knows that it did not come to her directly. However, Hooker is leaning towards the fact that, based on the epidemic of homelessness, we need to get the money in use so that people get the help they need. Hooker suggests splitting the \$200,000 between the two organizations.

Anderson told what he knew about the notification process, but stated that he would not participate in the discussion or voting since his employer, ISK, was seeking funding.

Griffin asked for thoughts around the distribution of funding. Hooker asked ISK's representative who was present (Rosaline Adams) if it was a new position that was being created. Adams stated that it was not a new position, rather that Brandon Mion does this work and will assist families with first months rent and deposit.

Hooker motioned to split the \$200,000 between both organizations.



*Motion by Hooker
Support by Bradford*

Discussion took place. Griffin does not want to hold up the decision, but wants it to be on the record that she is not comfortable with the notification process.

Dunten asked if the organizations can go forward with their projects with half the funding. Cain stated that she will accept whatever is decided, although KHA did not get many of the grants they applied for. Adams stated that ISK will be happy with whatever they receive. A board member of KHA spoke as well.

Dunten stated that the organizations should amend the number of families served and how that will be affected with the reduction in funds.

Willcutt asked for permission to speak. She clarified that funding can only be used to assist families with school-aged children. Griffin asked Cain if this will be an issue for KHA as the organization normally helps individuals. Cain stated that she was not aware of the restricted use of the funds, but stated that KHA would hire someone to do just this work and use an accountant to keep the funds separated.

Hooker likes the idea of amending the proposals and would like to see both organizations receive the funds. Dunten is more comfortable funding ISK in full, especially when the RFP clearly stated the use of the funds. Griffin is uncomfortable funding this project at this time when this is new information for KHA. Griffin would like to see the proposals amended for the reduction in funding as well as sustainability.

Hooker tabled the motion on the floor to allow ISK and KHA to resubmit their proposals and then resume the discussion on August 3, 2023.

*Motion by Hooker
Support by Bradford*

*Roll call vote:
Dunten – Yes
Anderson – Abstain
Griffin – Yes
Hooker – Yes
Bradford - Yes
Motion passed*

Willcutt will find out from Director Balkema how to reopen the Amplifund applications and will notify ISK and KHA.



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Sale of Portage Condominium

Willcutt stated that the listing documents have been received and all have been signed except for the disclosure statement. Willcutt will complete the disclosure statement tomorrow when she visits the site for the eviction and then Griffin will sign.

New Business

Bylaws

In follow-up to last month's discussion regarding Bradford's seat, Griffin looked at the KCPHC Bylaws and does not find clarity; she wants clarity as to how to proceed. Anderson stated that the state statute allows a public housing commission to be formed. The presence of public housing in a community is an assumption made by the statute and thus requires that one seat be occupied by a resident of public housing, but that seems to be all of what the state says. He went on to say that the KCPHC doesn't make decisions about adding or removing members. Could we ask the county attorney? Is any subsidy good? Only a voucher holder? Maybe the county attorney can take a look at the statute and provide an opinion.

Dunten does not think we should penalize someone for improving their income; living in subsidized housing is a lifetime experience. Hooker agreed with Dunten's comments and went on to say that the bylaws basically state that experience is what counts.

Rey asked Anderson how it worked in the past? Is the person supposed to self-report when they no longer receive housing assistance?

Anderson stated that he did not think the KCPHC had such an incident before except for the immediate predecessor who resigned. In terms of history, the KCPHC has recognized the need, but have not been in this situation before.

Bradford said if it is a policy, then there is no issue. It is just how it was handled. She would like to finish out her term, but if the policy is that she has to step down then she will resign. Dunten thinks that counsel's advice should be sought, and the discussion should be tabled.

Monteze Morales stepped to the podium in her role as secondary liaison between the KCPHC and the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners. She stated that the legal team at the county has had discussion on this topic and could not find anything in the bylaws that spoke to the situation. Anderson stated that past legal counsel, specifically Tom Canny, said the county should provide legal advice to the KCPHC since it is a component unit, but it depends on who is counsel at the county. Morales stated that counsel gave an opinion based on the bylaws, but not based on the state statute.

Griffin wants to be clear and that people should not be penalized. Anderson stated that the legislative act is the Housing Act of 1933 that is the authorizing authority. This Act was referenced when the KCPHC was created at the county level. Rey will seek advice from counsel on this matter.



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Public Comment on Agenda and Non-Agenda Items

Meg Bauer noted that she is an attorney and informed the group that MCL 125.654 is the statute that was referenced in earlier conversations. She went on to say that the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners has the discretion to remove someone, and the statute is enlightening some of what it lays out. As a citizen, she is glad to see the KCPHC address how this came about.

Bauer stated that she also had concerns about how the proposed Millage funding opportunity was distributed, so she is happy to see this addressed as well.

Commissioner Member Comments

Bradford stated that there is a scam that includes someone coming to a home and stating they have a work order to see if the house is occupied. This happened to Bradford at her parents' home. When she questioned the person, she could not get answers about who he worked for. After asking repeatedly, the man got a paper from his car that stated Guardian Asset Management. When she looked up this company, she learned that they take over your property and the deed and they have been doing this all over Michigan. He also asked if he could take photos of the property and when asked for his identification, he refused. Bradford wanted to make everyone aware of this.

Dunten reminded those present that the National Night Out will take place on August 1, 2023.

Meeting Adjourned: 6:16pm

Submitted by: Lisa Willcutt