

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF  
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF KANSAS CITY, KANSAS**

Thursday, February 18, 2021  
12:30 p.m.

Held Electronically  
Via Zoom

On the 18th day of February 2021 at 12:30 p.m. the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of Kansas City, Kansas met in special session via Zoom due to the coronavirus pandemic. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Watkins, and upon roll call, the following members of the body were present:

Matthew T. Watkins, Chairman  
\*Rev. Jimmie L. Banks, Vice-Chairman  
Jacques Barber, Commissioner  
Broderick Crawford, Commissioner  
\*Rachel Jefferson, Commissioner  
P. Anne McDonald, Commissioner  
J.D. Rios, Commissioner  
Denise Tomasic, Commissioner  
Linda Warner, Commissioner  
Charles Wilson, Commissioner

ABSENT: Timothy J. Rhodes, Commissioner  
Cardelia Walker, Commissioner

ALSO, PRESENT: Thomas M. Scott, Executive Director/CEO  
Cherrie Escobar, Director of Section 8  
Sharron Davis-Mays, Self-Sufficiency Coordinator  
Jacqueline D. Randle, Executive Services Manager  
Caroline Rogers, Director of Finance  
Anthony J. Shomin, Director of Contract Administration  
Nebyu Tilahun, Assistant Director of Finance  
Kendra Tyler, Asst. Director of Housing Operations-HM

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Chairman Watkins called the meeting to order and roll call was taken.

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Chairman Watkins called for approval of the minutes. Commissioner Rios made the motion to approve the minutes of January 21, 2021. Commissioner McDonald seconded the motion and the following vote was recorded:

AYES: Barber, Crawford, McDonald, Rios, Tomasic, Warner, Watkins. Wilson

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Banks, Jefferson, Rhodes, Walker

ABSTAIN: None

Motion carried.

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## **Executive Director's Report**

- Mr. Scott informed the Board that he met with the Bonner Springs City Council and Mayor for a Q & A session on February 8, 2021 to discuss the Kansas City, Kansas Housing Authority (KCKHA) absorbing the Bonner Springs Housing Authority. Mr. Scott expressed to the KCKHA board that we would not move forward with title work until we have guarantees that Bonner Springs would not withdraw. Mr. Scott noted he was very candid in protecting the agency and the board.
- Mr. Scott met with Dr. Greg Mozier; Kansas City, Kansas Community College, to discuss adding a new college campus on the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and State Avenue which would go down to 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Our current maintenance facility at 624 State Avenue is in that block. Mr. Scott advised that further conversations about this matter would take place in Executive Session. Chairman Watkins then presented a PowerPoint presentation provided by Dr. Mozier and Mr. Scott gave an overview. Commissioner Crawford provided full disclosure, due to his involvement on other boards, that he had a conversation with Dr. Mozier, and he is concerned that the Willa Gill center is in their plan to be replaced without a replacement in mind. He noted that Willa Gill is the primary place that serves the unserved community with meals and without a replacement, Commissioner Crawford noted that he would be in opposition. Commissioner McDonald noted that she volunteers at Willa Gill and was under the assumption there were plans to replace the center in the community. She could not say whether she would be in opposition, but she would be a strong proponent of making sure there was a place to relocate the facility. Chairman Watkins noted he was the Chairman of the Greater Kansas City Homeless Coalition and he works closely with the planning commission; and in full disclosure, he is on the Community College Foundation Board. He noted they will have a community conversation about Willa Gill and the center will not be forgotten. The Frank Williams Center will also go into that conversation. The Chairman expressed that he would be fully engaged in this conversation with other boards that he serves on. Commissioner Crawford expressed that he would be happy to assist in any way he could. Commissioner Barber asked to be kept apprised as this moves forward. Mr. Scott noted that it was not discussed with him that Willa Gill would be disposed of in his conversation with Dr. Mozier. To further clarify, there was discussion

- concerning the local government providing three centers for people to come to receive services.
- Mr. Scott noted that on February 16, 2021; he and Sharron Davis-Mays and HUD's regional staff attended a meeting on the Empowerment Center Summit V held via Zoom.
  - The Housing Authority's total CARES Act funding for Public Housing was \$1.2 Million and to date, we have spent about \$887,000. We have about \$376,000 left which is for operational expenses for the Housing Authority. We spent \$44,000 on office improvements to provide egress for meeting with people during the pandemic and into the future. We spent \$114,000 for Information Technology (IT) upgrades to make a paperless system so residents and staff could meet safely. We spent \$33,500 on sanitation services and \$62,000 in PPE supplies. Some payroll costs were covered. CARES funds cannot be used to help with rent. We went into a rental mortarium in March 2020, and are still in that now and will be, past March of this year. We are working diligently with those attempting to pay rent. There are also considerably less funds for Section 8. We are working with Kansas Housing Resource Corp (KHRC) which is affiliated with the Kansas Eviction Protection Program (KEPP). A few of our residents were helped through this program which expired December 15, 2020. It should be operational again by March 1, 2021. The Emergency Solutions Grant would also help our residents. Mr. Scott suggested that Board members go to the KHRC website to view additional programs which could help our residents. The Economic Opportunity Foundation and Kim Wilson Housing are two of the five agencies listed.
  - Jackie Randle sent a couple of flyers to the Board via email. One is for the CDC hosting the COVID-19 Vaccine and Disease Control Prevention Program which lists its meeting dates from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>. She also sent out a repositioning regional network program available March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1 p.m. Board members will have to use the link the register.
  - Mr. Scott noted he has been fielding several calls for the repositioning of Juniper Gardens. Most of the calls are from organizations in and around Wyandotte County. Mr. Scott explained that he is providing accurate information to cut down on gossip and misrepresentation. Commissioner Warner asked how is the information being received? Mr. Scott noted the information is being received well, but there is some opposition to the removal of Juniper Gardens. It was been a peaceful exchange. Vice-Chairman Banks asked where we stood with the letter that goes out to the community. Mr. Scott noted he was not aware that anything had been done. Commissioner Warner noted that she did not think this was the right direction and that we should take those conversations one at a time as they come to us. Her comments were in response to a conversation she had yesterday with UG Commissioner Bynum who queried her about something she saw on Facebook. Commissioner Warner suggested letting sleeping dogs lie as someone had called our Chairman a liar which is not true. She believes that putting it out there would cause it to blow up. Vice-Chairman

- Banks heartily disagreed. He noted that Juniper Gardens has been an important part of the black community ever since its existence. He noted we need to speak to the whole community, Ms. Bynum's position, notwithstanding. Vice-Chairman Banks continued to disagree most heartily, stating he is a resident there and there are a lot of people who need to know the truth. Commissioner Warner noted that Commissioner Bynum did not have a position, she just called to ask. Chairman Watkins noted that the letter needs to come from the Board, and it should go out in a form that makes sense. Commissioner Rios noted that he would encourage truthful communication. He indicated the post of Facebook has grown and unfortunately a lot of people take Facebook as a news outlet. He noted the growth of the viewing of that post could unnecessarily cause unfounded alarm and misunderstanding. The more we could increase understanding and have constructive dialogue, the better it is for the residents and the community in general. He agrees with getting more information out. Commissioner Warner noted that Chairman Watkins has already responded to the post and she does not want to argue with the public or the Board, so if the Board wants to write a letter they should. However, this is not the way she would go. She thinks it should be one on one conversations with Mr. Scott or Chairman Watkins. Vice-Chairman Banks noted that people are interested in what happens with Juniper Gardens and we owe them a credible response. Chairman Watkins indicated he would put together a committee and get a response out. Vice-Chairman Banks and Commissioner Jefferson asked to be included on that committee.
- Mr. Scott asked that Mr. Shomin give a brief update on the relocation of Juniper Gardens. Mr. Shomin noted there are about 140 folks currently residing at Juniper Gardens. Nine have planned to transfer and another 20 are on a transfer list. Mr. Shomin offered that he contacted HUD regarding our disposition application, and they have not responded back. The last he heard the disposition application is being processed and it should take 60—90 days. He noted there was a relocation meeting this morning with CVR and they have completed about 100 resident surveys. There are about 30 residents that still need to do the survey. Once the surveys are completed, CVR will generate a report. The interviews for the local hire happened last week and CVR hopes to make an offer by the first part of next. The potential new hire is expected to start within a week of the offer. Housing Management has identified eight relocations to public housing units, and we are in the process of bidding the moving services to accomplish those eight relocations. CVR cannot do much of anything else until the disposition application has been approved.
  - Mr. Scott noted that Nebyu Tilahun and Cherrie Escobar have taken the lead on updating the Kansas City, Kansas Housing Authority's website. The Board was given a view of the new website and would be provided with a link after the board meeting to view the website further. Commissioner Rios asked could the communication about Juniper Gardens be placed on the website. Mr. Scott agreed that could be done and placed on our current

website until the new website is available. The information will be placed under public notices. There will also be a distribution list for sending the information out. Vice-Chairman Banks lead a discussion of the tone of the letter and the context in which Juniper Gardens would be mentioned on the website. Commissioner Rios stressed full transparency in our approach with what is going on with Juniper Gardens. While Commissioner Crawford was not opposed to individual meetings with Mr. Scott, he agreed it would be a good idea to place the facts on the website. Commissioner Warner gave kudos to staff for the redesign of the new website. Commissioner Rios seconded that. This concluded the Executive Director's report.

Commissioner Barber asked about the new phone system due to receiving a couple of calls. He noted the new system is supposed to create greater efficiencies but questioned is there going to be a way for a caller to speak to a live person. Mr. Scott explained that we have not converted to prompts on our phone system. We still have a switchboard operator who transfers calls. He noted that most calls are for Resident Selection or Section 8, and they have meetings scheduled throughout the day and a caller may not get straight through. He added that there was inclement weather last week and staff was working remotely. On one day the phones were not transferred over, all of which may have contributed to issues with the phone system. Typically, when we are working remotely, one person in the department will have the Housing Authority cell phone and be able to answer calls from home. Mr. Scott noted that we have been extremely busy. Our staff is currently at 107 employees which is down from 134 employees that we had a few years ago. He recommended patience and if there is a specific problem, it can be addressed with the Executive Director, as he returns all his calls daily. Commissioner Barber noted that he understood that weather was a contributing factor, but he was concerned that callers were not able to get an answer when they called the number. Mr. Scott noted we are working on how to do this remotely.

Commissioner Barber then asked how quickly do we normally address snow removal? He noted that a resident had a doctor's appointment in the morning and the relative had to come over and shovel the walkway so he could get out due to him being in a wheelchair. Mr. Scott noted the maintenance department did not work remotely. We monitor the properties and deal with the high-rises first. They salt, sand and clean everything off. We start when the City starts clearing the snow. Mr. Scott noted that our staff does an excellent job with snow removal. Commissioner Barber expressed that his concern was how early our staff takes care of snow removal. Mr. Scott stated immediately. They are on call on the weekends and at night, and we must bear in mind that they have the same difficulty with driving into work. There are two snow trucks that run constantly. The high-rises have staff that take care of the property. We take care of the handicap units at the family development only.

Commissioner Barber asked were there still restrictions on guests in the high-rises due to COVID-19? Mr. Scott noted that yes, there are restrictions. He added there

are no positive tests with staff or with residents in the high-rises that we are aware of. We are getting close with the positivity rate reducing in the fives. However, he does not believe folks are getting tested as much due to the vaccinations. Vice-Chairman Banks noted his church is looking at the rates and trying to determine when to meet again in person. Commissioner Crawford noted that our positivity rate in Wyandotte County has gone from a high of 40 percent to below 20 percent. He agrees that the number of people being tested has gone down, stating only 53 people were tested in all the sites for January 2021. Commissioner Crawford advised that we are encouraging people to continue to be tested. The positivity rate is not low enough for us to go back to regular activities.

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## **Committee Reports**

### **Personnel**

Vice-Chairman Banks noted there was no meeting, but Tom Scott could bring us up to date on the search for an Executive Director. Mr. Scott noted he communicates weekly with the HCap person who is the responsible entity for the Executive Director recruitment. This week we have narrowed it down to seven folks and are following up with background checks and qualifications. He will meet again the first of the week. We are encouraging folks from the mid-west to consider the opportunity. Hopefully there will be three or four applicants to interview for next week.

### **CHIG**

Chairman Watkins noted that CHIG will meet in March.

The following committees did not meet: Bylaws, Development, Finance, Inclusion and Public Information, Development, Resident Participation and Executive.

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### **New Business Consent Item**

Commissioner Rios made the motion to approve Resolution No. 2021-01. Vice-Chairman Banks seconded the motion and the following vote was recorded:

AYES: Banks, Barber, Crawford, Jefferson, McDonald, Rios, Tomasic, Warner, Watkins. Wilson

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Rhodes, Walker  
ABSTAIN: None

Motion carried.

Resolution No. 2020-01, approving the job description of Family Self-Sufficiency Specialist.

HUD has awarded the Kansas City, Kansas Housing Authority a Family Self-Sufficiency Grant (FSS) to increase economic opportunities for families participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV). Hiring a Family Self-Sufficiency Specialist will empower families to increase their incomes and become more productive citizens in the community. This is a part-time position with a pay rate of \$20 an hour.

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-01—APPROVING THE JOB DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY SPECIALIST.

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### **Executive Session**

At the Chairman's request, Commissioner Crawford made the motion to go into Executive Session for 20 minutes to discuss a real estate issue. Vice-Chairman Banks seconded the motion and the following vote was recorded:

AYES: Banks, Barber, Crawford, Jefferson, McDonald, Rios, Tomasic, Warner, Watkins, Wilson  
NAYS: None  
ABSENT: Rhodes, Walker  
ABSTAIN: None

Motion carried.

Executive session began at 1:25 p.m. Mr. Scott was present during Executive Session.

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Chairman Crawford made a motion to return to Special Session. Vice-Chairman Banks seconded the motion and the following vote was recorded:

AYES: Banks, Barber, Crawford, Jefferson, McDonald, Rios, Tomasic, Warner, Watkins, Wilson  
NAYS: None

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ABSENT: Rhodes, Walker  
ABSTAIN: None

Motion carried.

Executive session ended at 1:45 p.m.

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Chairman Watkins then called for the meeting to adjourn and it passed unanimously.

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Matthew T. Watkins, Chairman

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Thomas M. Scott, Executive Director/CEO

\*Arrived after roll call.