

MINUTES
OWATONNA HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING on APRIL 26, 2021

The regular meeting of the Owatonna Housing and Redevelopment Authority was called to order at 4:01 pm in the City Council Chambers and on Microsoft Teams by Vice Chairman Atkinson.

Housing Manager Ghassan Madkour read a statement to allow for the meeting to be conducted by telephonic or electronic means and all votes will be roll call votes.

Members present were Jerry Atkinson, John Hole, Shari Kropp, and Vicki Olivo. Also present were Housing Manager Ghassan Madkour, Community Development Director Troy Klecker, and Council Member Nathan Dotson.

Approval of the Minutes: Vice Chairman Atkinson called for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 22, 2021 meeting. A motion was made by Hole and seconded by Kropp to approve the minutes. Commissioners voting Aye: Atkinson, Hole, Kropp, and Olivo. 4-0, motion carried.

Executive Directors Report: Community Development Director Troy Klecker gave project updates. He said The Pointe apartment opened up on April 1st. At the time of opening, 31 of 43 units were rented which is really good. The next to open will be the Mound Street apartment. Eastgate is still doing some truss work. They are a way out yet, but have started putting windows in. There are two other apartments planned for this year: Pearl and Lemond Road. Both have had plans submitted and are being reviewed now. There have been 10 new home permits issued and there is some interest from bigger builders, and they will be meeting with staff this week. Kropp asked about staffing. Klecker said the big builders have their staff that they would bring in. Kropp asked how the smaller builders would be affected. Klecker said that a lot of them could be subcontracted with the bigger builders.

Old Business: The Housing Choice Voucher program monthly report was presented by Madkour, including the City of Owatonna monthly balance sheet and revenue/expense report. Program utilization: The Housing Voucher program for March totaled 100. Total year to date assistance and administration costs were \$178,448.65 and revenues were \$238,344.44. The Housing Choice Voucher Program fund balance at March month end is \$121,331.74. Madkour provided City of Owatonna HRA monthly balance sheet and revenue/expense reports for the HRA General Fund including the Bridges Programs. The HRA Revenues year to date total is \$122,774.03 and the expenses total \$104,566.40. The HRA General Fund balance is \$358,975.57.

A motion was made by Olivo and seconded by Hole to approve the reports as presented. Commissioners voting Aye: Atkinson, Hole, Kropp, and Olivo. 4-0, motion carried.

The Housing Choice Voucher program is status quo. They've added three new vouchers in the last 30 or 40 days. We're going to be ending our current Bridges grant. The new grant, for \$487,650, will only be covering Steele, Dodge, Mower, and Waseca Counties. The last grant was \$532,000, which included Olmsted County. They received more funding, which was split up between 18 segments of Minnesota. He said the contract and resolution will need Board approval and also need to be signed by the Chairman and Vice Chairman at the next meeting on May 24th.

Madkour gave an update on Mainstream Vouchers. He said that although no one is on the Mainstream Voucher program yet, there are 40 applications out that don't have the homeless stipulation but do have the age and the disability requirement. He said he received one back today.

Madkour gave an update on the letters to non-active landlords. Unfortunately, out of 307 letters sent, he had 4 landlords reply, 24 return to sender, and 279 no reply. He said that he hopes this at least planted a seed with non-participating landlords.

Olivo asked about numbers for the Mainstream vouchers. Madkour said that if he runs out of funding, he won't be able to take on more. Like HCV, this is money based and not voucher based. He said that he added a line that said this was a first come, first served basis. He spoke to a colleague who has the Mainstream vouchers, and they only have 13 actives on the voucher. He said he hopes that, for those who are able to qualify for this program, their current housing meets the requirements. The deadline is at 5 pm two Mondays from today, and that is a hard deadline. The advantage to this program now is that these people are housed, and he sent the applications to an address. The homeless ones had gone out previously. The homeless applications went in the first bunch of 11. The qualification for this program is identical with their criminal background as HCV and HUD. Anybody in the family can be disabled.

New Business: Housing Manager Madkour said he sent letters to all clients without an email. He's not requiring people to have emails, but he's been able to gather 84 emails. He was able to email them a link to RentHelpMN.org which is assisting renters with rent dollars. Tenants can apply online or in writing. He also emailed it to all of the landlords. Ten people have told him they have no email. He's waiting for 35 to 40 answers. He won't force emails, but it makes it easier to communicate.

He told the Commissioners about Minnesota Housing Partnership, which is an 18-month program. The goal is to have a game plan or an actual resolution to get something going for housing. Their goal as a team is to have 90 units within the next five years. The group that meets is comprised by folks from different towns. They're getting different perspectives in the hopes it will help them come to an affordable housing solution.

Other Business. Madkour asked the Commissioners if they would want the next meeting in person or virtual. Kropp said that hybrid works well and she prefers that, but will attend in person if needed. Olivo said she also likes the hybrid option. Hole said he likes in person meetings. Klecker said that they can continue hybrid meetings. Madkour asked that Commissioners let him know if they will be in person or on Teams, so he can plan. Klecker said that agendas will need both locations.

Klecker said that this is Jerry Atkinson's last meeting. Nate Dotson will be taking that role on the board as the Council person. He said they will need some clarification from Schnitzler on whether she will continue to serve on the board or stepping down.

Adjournment: There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Kropp, seconded by Hole. Commissioners voting Aye: Atkinson, Hole, Kropp, and Olivo. 4-0, motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 4:34. pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ghassan Madkour
Housing Manager