

MINUTES

Homes for Good Housing Agency



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Location of the meeting:

This meeting will be conducted via public video call and conference line (see details below).

Wednesday, March 30th, 2022 at 1:30pm

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 Homes for Good conducted the March 30th, 2022 meeting via a public video call with dial-in capacity. The public was able to join the call, give public comment, and listen to the call:

CALL TO ORDER

Board Members present: **Char Reavis, Michelle Thurston, Heather Buch, Laurie Trieger, Joe Berney, Jay Bozievich**

Board Members absent: **Pat Farr**

1. PUBLIC COMMENTS – 20 Minutes

(Maximum time 20 minutes: Speakers will be taken in the order in which they sign up and will be limited to 3-minutes per public comments. If the number wishing to testify exceeds 10 speakers, then additional speakers may be allowed if the chair determines that time permits or may be taken at a later time.)

None.

2. COMMISSIONERS' RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS AND/OR OTHER ISSUES AND REMONSTRANCE (2 min. limit per commissioner)

None.

3. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA

None.

4. COMMISSIONERS' BUSINESS

Michelle Thurston: I don't know if this is the appropriate time to bring this up, but I was able to hear yesterday about the results of the vote for the reorganization of this Board for future, and quite frankly, was disappointed to see that it was not passed and moved forward. And while I completely appreciate the discussion that was made, I was a bit disappointed that we as a Board have been meeting for months upon months to get our Board restructuring done smoothly, and I was disappointed to know that at the very last moment, it was changed. And what I think bothered me the most is Commissioner Reavis and myself were left without a voice at the last minute, despite the fact that we put a lot of time, energy, and passion into this, with the knowledge that the discussion was concluded, and a decision was made. I personally trusted that the decision we as a Board made on June 24th was what would be expressed in the vote in the County. A lot of time, effort, and due diligence by the Board, the County, and the staff at Homes for Good was put into making this transition as smooth as possible, and the last-minute change was disheartening, and I just wanted to vocalize that.

5. EMERGENCY BUSINESS

None.

6. ADMINISTRATION

A. Executive Director Report (Estimated 10 Minutes)

Jacob Fox discusses the opening of the Homes for Good administrative building to the public and staff returning to the office.

Jacob Fox discusses clients successfully moving on from housing assistance through the Family Self Sufficiency Program.

Jacob Fox discusses the wildfire recovery areas and the rebuild of Lazy Days Mobile Home Park.

Jacob Fox discusses fiscal year 2020 audit results.

B. Approval of 02/23/22 Board Meeting Minutes (Estimated 5 Minutes)

Motion: **Michelle Thurston**

Second: **Jay Bozievich**

VOTE

Ayes: **Char Reavis, Michelle Thurston, Heather Buch, Laurie Trieger, Joe Berney, Jay Bozievich**

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: **Pat Farr**

The minutes are approved 6 / 0.

C. ORDER 22-30-03-01H — In the Matter of Authorizing the Executive Director or Designee to Apply for Assistance from the Oregon Housing and Community Services Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the Coleman affordable housing development. (Spencer McCoy, Project Developer) (Estimated Time 10 minutes)

Spencer McCoy gives presentation on the Coleman and discusses Homes for Good's recommendation to apply for 9% tax credits for the development.

Jacob Fox: Just a clarification, Spencer. We are applying for tax credits, but we are also applying for gap funding simultaneously. Is that correct?

Spencer McCoy: That's correct. We're also applying for a half a million of gap to Oregon Housing Community Services, and we will also be applying for Oregon Affordable Housing Tax Credits to give us the option of reducing the rent, so it's not just tax credits, there is gap financing as well.

Laurie Trieger: Just a couple of quick questions. One is, you mentioned 52 units, and so far we've been hearing about this project that's had a range of 40 to 60, so are you just landing on that number for the purposes of the application, or how definitive is that number at this point?

Spencer McCoy: The number is pretty definitive. That's what we applied for when we applied for HOME funds, it's what we determined the site allowed for, especially given that we had a four-story sort of target while having also ground floor commercial services, so since we had a range of 40 to 60, we've honed into 52 units.

Laurie Trieger: Okay, so it is retail ground floor?

Spencer McCoy: Not quite. So, it will be entirely Sponsor serviced. While it won't be residential, it will be Sponsors providing services to both residents of the project, but also clients coming from off-site, so we will be able to provide services for other folks as well.

Laurie Trieger: Great, yeah, I knew about the services they wanted to provide, but I thought I heard you say something about retail ground floor, so just confused there. You mentioned it's permanent housing, not transitional, but it's not PSH right?

Spencer McCoy: Not by Oregon Housing and Community Services definition. I know there's a lot of conversation as to what meets the definition of PSH and what doesn't, however, it will have wrap-around support services, but we will not be pulling from the centralized wait list, which is one of the criteria to be permanent supportive housing for Oregon Housing and Community Services, because we'll be pulling directly from the apartment community waiting list.

Laurie Trieger: And then my last question is, I love that you're connecting with ABC, with Active Bethel Citizens, is Trainsong Neighbors Association active currently? They've ebbed and flowed over the years. I know many years ago, I did a lot of work with the Trainsong neighborhood, and there's a physical divide, but it is adjacent to, and a lot of those folks rely on that 99 corridor and consider it kind of part of their community, so I just wondered if they're currently active, if you've reached out to the Trainsong Neighborhood Association as well.

Spencer McCoy: We did check on that. Unfortunately, the Trainsong Neighborhood Association is not currently active. They had one member that was sort of partially active, but they weren't meeting regularly, we invited them to the meeting that we had at ABC with ABC neighbors. However, we also intend to have another meeting through the land use process where we're going to invite people within a certain radius of the property, and we'll also invite the one member who we were told was a member of the Trainsong Neighborhood Association to that meeting as well.

Laurie Trieger: Great, and then my last question is if either of the Eugene city councilors that represent that part directly and adjacent- basically Evans and Syrett- are exactly that, or adjacent to it, just to bring them along on the project, if they've been included in any of the briefings or know about the project?

Spencer McCoy: Yeah, absolutely, and I can let Jacob expand on the meeting that him and Paul had with Claire Syrett, but I know that they met with Claire and discussed the project, and she recommended that we meet with Active Bethel Citizens, and we proceeded to do that.

Jacob Fox: Yeah, the only thing I would add, Paul and I met with Claire, she's very knowledgeable of Sponsors, Homes for Good, is very supportive, and then we took her direction on meeting with the ABC neighborhood. It actually hadn't occurred to me, Laurie, to meet with Greg, but I think that's a great idea, and we will definitely connect with him and make sure that he's knowledgeable. From past

engagement we've had with him, we know he's a strong supporter of Homes for Good and Sponsors, but we will definitely take the time and follow up on that.

Laurie Trieger: That would be great. I just know if he starts hearing from neighbors about it, when he hasn't heard directly, it would go a long way.

Joe Berney: A question, a quick statement, and forgive my naïveté here, but when you talked about the gap financing piece of this, are we starting to see, in addition to the usual subsidies and mechanisms in place to provide permanent supportive housing, are we seeing more gaps, and is this something that we're going to see more of? Where in addition to normally applying for the tax credits or what have you, it's still not enough, and consequently, there's maybe this new thing called gap financing that, is it mainstay or am I just reading into something that's not there? Thank you.

Spencer McCoy: Yeah, that's a great question, and I can certainly touch on gap financing and tax credit projects, and what I'll say is that gap financing has always been necessary in order to make tax credit deals work since the program was formed. With 9% tax credits, those tax credits will pay for approximately 70% of your overall project costs, and that remaining 30% has always needed to be gap financing. Now what we're able to secure in order to use for gap financing just changed over the years, and in this case, HOME funds is one example of a gap financing that we're using to pay for that final 30% approximately of project costs. There are other funds that we're applying for, Oregon Housing Community Services, and they will also serve as gap financing. Another example, for a 4% tax credit project, it only pays for approximately 30% to 35% of your overall project costs. You need significantly more gap financing. That said, with construction costs increasing, the overall gap financing needs are also increasing, so we're needing to secure more funds than we have in the past, just by the nature of what that 70% entails.

Joe Berney: You're pretty good, Spencer. Thank you very much that. If I make sure, that brings another question: in the same way that Homes for Good is stating its values, like "housing is a human right" and is broadcasting that, at some position, is it the role of this body to ever question the fact that subsidized housing in this country benefits the rich more than it benefits those that need the subsidized housing, vis-a-vis tax credits?

Spencer McCoy: That's a big policy question. I would just say that we are selling tax credits that reduce your tax liability in order to receive equity to build this housing, and that is a fundamental mechanism of the tax credit program.

Joe Berney: Yeah, for those that don't know, the tax credits are usually more often than not institutional, and there's only a limited amount, and it's amazing how fewer and fewer people are in the position to control more and more of these investments in terms of who is purchasing the tax credits themselves.

Jacob Fox: To Joe's accurate point about how tax credit investors and lenders associated with tax credit investing do make a lot of money, and certainly it's a discussion we can have as a Board. As someone that's worked in affordable housing for 20 plus years, I don't know what the alternative is. Joe probably does have some ideas about that, but certainly if we ever want to put some time on the agenda to discuss it more in depth, we'd be happy to do so.

Joe Berney: That'd be great, Jacob. The way it's structured does two things: one, it benefits the wealthiest among us, and two, it decreases the taxes generated that could be set for public housing.

Motion: **Heather Buch**

Second: **Joe Berney**

VOTE

Ayes: **Char Reavis, Michelle Thurston, Heather Buch, Laurie Trieger, Joe Berney, Jay Bozievich**

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: **Pat Farr**

Board Order 22-30-03-01H is approved 6 / 0.

D. Work Session — Moving To Work (Beth Oches, Rent Assistance Division Director)
(Estimated 25 minutes)

Beth Ochs gives presentation on HUD Demonstration Moving to Work Program, including the Landlord Incentive cohort that Homes for Good has been selected to participate in.

Commissioner Thurston: When I first heard about the Moving to Work, I got to be honest, I was a little concerned, a little hesitant about the finer language and how this was going to work within the Homes for Good agency. And for one, I'd like to thank you because every question that I've had or any concern that I've had, you've been right there along the way, just kind of explaining things and making sure that they're understandable. And second, I'm really excited about the possibility to attach the housing voucher to things other than your traditional housing and maybe expanding that to include mobile homes or things along that line. I think that we'll really have a great effect in especially rural communities, because as we know, infrastructure doesn't always allow for larger developments and what not, so I'd just like to thank you for all your work that you've put into this, you have made it extremely easy to understand and get excited about, so thank you.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Joe Berney: I just wanted to share that in terms of Commissioner Thurston's initial remarks, I absolutely understand them. I know that this has been a long process. I've in some ways been the minority of this process, but nonetheless, that was the proposal to the group represented. What occurred yesterday was interesting in that Commissioner Farr was not present to vote, so that you didn't have the full Board of Commissioners voting. I have been keenly observant, and I had to vote with my heart, I had to, I apologize. But that's my job in that position. So I just want to share that my particular vote was made, I think with the intention that every Commissioner had, which is to make Homes for Good stronger. I was very clear that I would support the next motion the next time this was brought up, it wasn't killed, but I'll tell you why, I just, if I may, my vote was as it was. I believe Commissioner Bozievich, and if he's here, you can say if I'm saying this incorrectly, feels very strongly that all five County Board of Commissioners should be on the Homes for Good Board. I don't agree with that, and I do agree with diversifying and expanding the Board, as was the intent behind this particular proposal. What my experience has been is that Homes for Good and the County are intimately wedded. In fact, if you look at the Homes for Good website, it says, "who we are: Homes for Good is Lane County's housing agency". It doesn't say Cornerstone is Lane County's housing agency, it doesn't say St. Vincent de Paul, it says Homes for Good. And as I have gone through this journey of seeing Covid and incident commands and resources the County was able to acquire, and then give to Homes for Good as it related to some projects, as we went through the fire, the devastating fire, and

see exactly the same process, and we see how integrated these are, it is my personal opinion, and I just-Commissioner Thurston- wanted to explain this just to respond, because it is my personal opinion that if we have a majority of the 5, i.e 3, members of the County Board of Commissioners on this body, which would at worst just add one more Board member to still get the diversity that this new governance structure would provide, I think it would be exceedingly wise and strong, especially since the two entities are bound together as one in many instances. Since we are experiencing the greatest housing shortage in the history of this country, according to articles I've been reading, and the greatest housing burden. So meanwhile, before this comes back to the Board of Commissioners- and other questions couldn't be answered, if you recall- so this will come back to the Board of Commissioners, it may look slightly different. I will support whatever that looks like, and none of the good work of Homes for Good is being interrupted in the meantime, so I just wanted to explain that that was the intent behind that, and I won't take any more of your time. Thank you.

Char Reavis: Thank you, Commissioner Berney. I appreciate that. I think why Michelle and I were just a little bit upset, we all know each other here and I'm just going to say, you moved to vote that way in our Homes for Good meeting. And so I think that was like where we went, "what happened here?" Because you did state you wanted more people on the Board, and I appreciate that, there's nothing wrong with that. We all need to say our piece about things, that's why we're here, but that's where we kind of got a little shocked, that's because I understood in one place and not in another.

Joe Berney: One Commissioner wasn't there, that might have affected that. And what I stated what was consistent with my view of what's best for Homes for Good, and I had to do that there.

Char Reavis: Yeah, and I understand that. And there's no ill feelings, I think that we were just trying to clarify what happened, and I appreciate that you said your heart about that

Berney: And no ill will, I just wanted to explain. I just want to state that. Thank you.

Michelle: I appreciate your explanation. I was, like I said, privileged enough to watch the meeting unfold yesterday morning, and I was very aware of Commissioner Bozievich and respected his vote because that's where he stood the whole meeting. I think the thing that, as I stated, bothered me was that when we left that June 24th meeting, we had had this discussion, you had said you possibly wanted more than two Commissioners, but after some good discussion, you then came to the conclusion of that, you said something to the effect of, as you were sitting there, you were realizing how much time Homes for Good was going to be requiring of you a month, and that quite frankly, you weren't going to be able to do that, and immediately after you called for the motion and that motion passed 6 to zero with Commissioner Bozievich absent. And so when that meeting was done, I felt that everybody had their voices heard, that we had come to a decision, and that when that decision was going to go to the County Board of Commissioners; that's what the vote was going to be. If it was going to change, or if there were more questions or concerns, I would have hoped that Director Fox or the rest of the Board would have been made aware of that in the last several months between the vote of yesterday and the passing of that order in June, on June 24th. And that wasn't the case. And so I think where I'm standing is, Commissioner Reavis and I were the only two who were not- our voices were not heard at the meeting yesterday, and had there had been any question or concerns, we would have brought it back here, we would have chewed it out more, hashed it out, instead of wasting so much time and energy to now have to go back and now re-discuss it and go through those issues. I'm not upset in what you want to do, I completely respect and understand that you didn't feel comfortable. I fully respect and understand that. Where I'm having trouble is, it was not brought to Director Fox, and it wasn't brought to the rest of us to have that open discussion to make sure that when it came to the County, we were all on the same page. So that's only where I'm coming from, but again, I respect your feeling and I definitely respect Commissioner Bozievich's opinion, and he's held fast and strong to that, and I completely respect that. But thank you for explaining more.

Joe Berney: No, thank you very much. We'll get there.

Char Reavis: We'll get there. I mean, I think it's a worthy discussion, and we'll definitely be discussing it more and it will come back before the County Board. I think you voted on some stuff in September too, I can't remember. But anyway, I think what we just need to think about here is to respect everybody's belief system and how we can work together, even though we don't always agree. And I also feel like we really need to look at the urgency of this because there is a timeline that's taking place. We have to have time to interview. There's all these things that we have to do between now and then, so however we're going to do this, we need to do it soon.

Joe Berney: We are all unified and wanting a strong Homes for Good. And regarding urgency, Jacob started talking to me about this three years ago.

Char Reavis: Right, and now we are down to the wire.

Joe Berney: Other more urgent things that happened. This calendar year this will be handled, resolved, moved forward, etcetera.

Meeting adjourned.

