

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2024
MILLS PARK TOWER
7:45 AM**

OFFICIAL RECORD

PRESENT: Commissioners Walz, Teitelman, Sood, Kelm, Socall, and Chairman Muse
Staff, Pope, Swaggerty, Burgos, Carpenter

ELECTION OF BOARD VICE CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson Muse stated that the office of Vice-Chairperson. She then nominated Commissioner Socall for the office of Vice-Chairperson of The Housing Authority of the Village of Oak Park's Board of Commissioners. She then asked if there were any further nominations for the office of Vice-Chairperson. There were none.

It was moved (Sood) and seconded (Teitelman) to elect Commissioner Socall to the office of Vice-Chairperson of The Housing Authority of the Village of Oak Park's Board of Commissioners.

AYES: Commissioners Walz, Teitelman, Sood, Kelm, and Chairperson Muse

NAYES: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Socall

APPROVAL OF REGULAR OPHA JANUARY 16, 2024, MEETING MINUTES

Chairperson Muse asked if there were any corrections to the January 16, 2024, OPHA regular meeting minutes. Ms. Swaggerty stated that Commissioner Teitelman had provided three (3) corrections which had already been made to the meeting minutes included in the packets available at the meeting. Chairperson Muse asked if there were any additional corrections to the meeting minutes. There were none.

It was moved (Socall) and seconded (Kelm) to approve the January 16, 2024, meeting minutes of the Housing Authority of the Village of Oak Park. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Chairperson Muse moved on to the next item of business, Public Comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Muse asked that individuals who speak to state their name and unit # for the record and limit their comments to three (3) minutes. She also asked that they use the microphone so they could be heard.

MPT resident Merrit-White congratulated Commissioner Socall on her election to Vice-Chairperson. She then passed out "Tell the Truth" buttons. She explained that the buttons were from the Amen group, an organization that has been working with the youth in Oak Park for over 20 years.

MPT resident Darcy stated that one of the many reasons the Resident Council was formed was to allow resident input and involvement in the development of the operating budget and to gain an understanding of how the money is used. She requested that the Resident Council be able to be more informed regarding MPT budgets and expenditures.

MPT resident Palmisano shared he has been a resident of Mills Park Tower for over 6 years and that eviction proceedings have been initiated against him. He stated at length his objections to the process and the facts being represented (as he understands them), stating that he had not broken any rules. He added that if he gets evicted, he will become homeless.

President Pope explained that there is a standard process related to an eviction, and that OPHA is following that process. He stated that raising this at a Board of Commissioners meeting is not consistent with that process, but if Mr. Palmisano wanted to provide written information to the Board of Commissioners, that could be facilitated.

Chairperson Muse affirmed this, saying if Mr. Palmisano would like to share more information with the Board of Commissioners, he can present that information in writing to the board as this process plays out. She then asked if there were any more public comments.

MPT resident Perkins stated that she believes Ms. Carpenter is an excellent building manager who is doing a wonderful job. She stated she hopes Ms. Carpenter will stay and keep up the good work. She said living at MPT is a pleasure and wished continued success to everybody working there.

Chairperson Muse thanked everyone for their comments and explained that it was time to move on to the next agenda item.

HA-2024-01 APPROVAL TO SUBMIT THE OAK PARK HOUSING AUTHORITY'S 2023 SECTION 8 MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (SEMAP) CERTIFICATION TO HUD

Ms. Cobb explained that the proposed SEMAP Certification had been included in the board packet and provided a brief summary of the report. She stated OPHA anticipates receiving the maximum points achievable as shown in the SEMAP indicator chart. As such OPHA would continue to be considered a high performing Housing Authority with a rating of 100%

Executive Director Pope explained that the SEMAP Certification is management evaluation tool of the Section 8 program, and the evaluation is based on a series of metrics including timeliness, percentage of utilization and other factors (listed on the first page). He said that the consistent and continuing high rating is reflective of the quality of the work of the HCVP team. He expressed gratitude to LaTaunda and her team for all their hard work.

Chairperson Muse asked if there were any questions.

Commissioner Walz said that she thought we had a written policy to encourage participation of owners outside areas of minority concentration. Executive Director Pope responded that we do not. Commissioner Walz asks if that is something that we can work towards for next year and Executive Director Pope stated yes, we can look at that. He stated that we do broad scale outreach to try to encourage owner participation. He added that Mr. Southward and Ms. Cobb maintain active relationships in the community, but he says he thinks putting a written policy in place would be beneficial.

Chairperson Muse asks if there are any further questions.

Commissioner Teitelman congratulated Ms. Cobb and her team for their achievement and asked if this was a stand-alone report or once it's submitted is there a process for approval and do we get something back from HUD. Ms. Cobb explained that HUD will review the information submitted and will respond in roughly sixty days. Commissioner Teitelman asks if we can circle back to this once we hear a response. Executive Director Pope said we would.

Commissioner Sood asked to be reminded of the significance of the high performer status. Ms. Cobb stated there is stratification in the ratings and High Performer is the highest you can achieve. She then explained that HUD rates every Housing Authority based on the indicators listed in the SEMAP indicator chart and scores their performance in each of those areas. If a Housing Authority fails to complete required tasks they will not qualify for the allowable points in that category. She said that the rating of a High Performer is anywhere from 92%-100%. She added that a low score can result in corrective action.

Chairperson Muse congratulated the HCV Program staff for their continued success in achieving the High Performer designation over the years she has been on the board. She then noted in indicator 14, Family Self-Sufficiency Program, that we had reported N/A. She stated that recently HUD had announced that it awarded \$130,000,000 to PHAs and CRVAs for Family Self-Sufficiency programs. She asked if this is something we might consider pursuing in the future. Ms. Cobb stated that in early 2020 we had started discussing what we would need by way of staff to participate in the program, but then our focus and efforts shifted with the arrival of COVID-19 and the subsequent pandemic. He said we could certainly look into it again. Chairperson Muse thanked him and added that the Chicago Housing Authority had received \$1.3M for HUD for the program and suggested we might look at partnering with them in some way. She added that she understood the issue of staff capacity but said she would love to see us offer a Family Self-Sufficiency Program to our participants sometime in the future.

It was moved (Muse) and seconded (Socall) to approve the submission of The Oak Park Housing Authority's 2023 Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) Certification to HUD.

AYES: Commissioners Teitelman, Kelm, Sood, Socall, Walz, and Chairman Muse.

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

HA-2024-02-02 APPROVAL OF REVISED OAK PARK HOUSING AUTHORITY'S SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM'S ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN

Executive Director Pope explained that Mr. Southward was ill and unable to present this request. He explained that the Administrative Plan is the set of rules, regulations, and policies by which the HA operates. He stated that we are specifically requesting approval of modifications to Chapter 3 of the Administrative Plan. He stated that Chapter 3 speaks specifically to the opening and management of the HCVP waiting list. He stated these modifications will bring the Administrative Plan into conformity with the procedures that will be used to open and create the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program's 2024 waiting list. He added that he wanted to make sure the Board understood that we will likely come back to them for approval of further revisions to the plan once we receive further guidance and recommendations from HUD regarding HOTMA (Housing Opportunities Through Modernization Act). He added we don't know when those recommendations will be received.

Chairperson Muse asked if there were any questions.

Vice-Chairperson Socall asked if staff had looked further into the use of texting in our communication with applicants and participants. Executive Director Pope answered that currently we do not have the technical capacity for texting, but we are looking into incorporating it.

Vice-Chairperson Socall and Chairperson Muse expressed concern that Section 3.c of the plan only lists mail as the method of notification for removal from the waiting list. Vice-Chairperson Socall understood the need for a paper record of the attempted notifications but is concerned that a household may be unfairly removed or purged from the list. She asks for clarification that voting to approve the plan as modified does not signify that this will be the only way in which the household will be notified. Chairperson Muse stated that adding notification by email and phone to this section will raise the comfort level of the Commissioners. Executive Director Pope states that the reason for not listing email and phone is because we are only including the methods that are required under the Administrative Plan. He added that we can go beyond that in our outreach but if we list email, phone call, and text in the plan we will then need to create a paper trail related to all of that activity and that is a level of administrative activity we don't want to be responsible for. He said we can certainly add email, phone, and text to our efforts, but he would rather leave that unstated in the document.

Chairperson Muse asked if there were any further questions. There were none.

It was moved (Sood) and seconded (Walz) to approve the revised Oak Park housing Authority's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program's Administrative Plan.

AYES: Commissioners Teitelman, Kelm, Sood, Socall, Walz, and Chairman Muse.

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

HCVP WAITLIST OPENING UPDATE

Executive Director Pope reported that the HCVP waitlist will open on March 4, 2024, at 8:30 am and will close on March 15, 2024, at 3:00 pm. He shared that information related to the waiting list opening and participation in the HCVP had been distributed to several organizations and news outlets, included in the Village of Oak Park's FYI newsletter, and published on OPHA's website. He added that YARDI has been cooperative in working to ensure that the application process goes smoothly, and we avoid some of the issues we encountered in 2022.

Ms. Swaggerty reported that we will have a special assistance number with live operators to provide online help in completing and submitting pre-applications to seniors and persons with disabilities during regular business hours throughout the waitlist opening.

Chairperson Muse thanked the staff for the information.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Chairperson Muse asked that due to time constraints that staff limit their presentation to highlights only.

MILLS PARK TOWER

Ms. Carpenter briefly summarized the activities administrative, maintenance, and social service activities and resident events for the month of February. She highlighted that Mills Park Tower is fully staffed.

Chairperson Muse asked if there were any questions.

Commissioner Teitelman asked for the status of the elevator replacement. Mr. Burgus reported that the start has been pushed back to March, but he doesn't have an exact date at this time.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER

Ms. Cobb briefly summarized the HCVP activities for the month of February, highlighting a lease up rate of 98%.

OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Kelm stated that despite the strides made in communication, collaboration, and transparency between the Board, Management and MPT residents, there have been several incidents that indicate we need to work harder on our communication. He referenced the failure of Management to advise residents of changes in meeting dates and times. He also suggested that recent conflicts between residents might have been resolved differently had Management been more transparent about the issue.

President Pope responded by apologizing to residents present and Commissioner Kelm for the lack of advance notice of the change in meeting dates. He stated that in terms of the discussion of harassment by a resident at last month's meeting, people need to understand that there are certain issues that will never be addressed in this setting. He added that transparency is vital, however with both OPHA and HUD there are certain red lines that once crossed can only be mediated or resolved through channels established by the OPHA or HUD. He added that there also may be limitations on our ability to be able to rely on a resident created committee to mitigate a violation of the rules within the community. He said he would be happy to discuss the matter further with the Resident Council.

Chairperson Muse asked if there were any further comments.

Commissioner Walz stated she was disappointed to hear of the recent breakdown in communications and asked that the board get regular updates on how communication and collaboration is progressing.

NEW BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT TO EXECUTIVE SESSION UNDER SECTION 2A OF THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSION A LEGAL MATTER

It was moved (Sood) and seconded (Socall) to adjourn to executive session under section 2A of the Open Meetings Act for the purpose of discussing a legal matter. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ADJOURNMENT OF FEBRUARY 20, 2024, REGULAR MEETING

It was moved (Teitelman) and seconded (Muse) to adjourn to the February 20, 2024, regular meeting. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary, Andrew Teitellman