

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Housing Opportunity Fund Advisory Board for the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh. City of Pittsburgh YouTube channel.

January 7, 2021

Members present: Lena Andrews, Jamil Bey, Knowledge Build Hudson, Joanna Deming, Jerome Jackson, Theresa Kail-Smith, Mark Masterson, James Myers, Sonya Tilghman, Derrick Tillman, Diamonte Walker, Adrienne Walnoha, Kellie Ware-Seabron, Megan Winters

Staff present: Jeremy Carter, Breanna Benjamin, David Geiger, Doren Hilmer, Victoria Jackson, Evan Miller, Brett Morgan, Sara Shore, Jessica Smith Perry, Vethina Hage

Others: Alexander Fisher, David Finer, Megan Confer-Hammond, David Finer, Averi Jefferson, William Lamar

A. Public Comment

Megan Confer-Hammond, Interim Executive Director of Fair Housing Partnership (FHP), encouraged the advisory board to establish a committee on fair housing that provides an equity lens for the goals and outcomes of Housing Opportunity Fund (HOF) programs. She provided the example of legislation from the City of Boston that requires developers and housing projects to identify the fair housing impact of their projects, and Oregon creating small business loans for black business owners from pandemic relief funds to address equity.

B. Roll Call

Jessica Smith Perry called the meeting to order. A quorum was present.

C. Review and Acceptance of Minutes from the December 3, 2020 Regular Board Meeting

Mark Masterson moved to approve the minutes of the regular board meeting on December 3, 2020 as written and previously distributed. Lena Andrews seconded. The motion carried.

D. Acknowledging and Accepting the Additional Allocation of 2021 HOF Funding

Jessica Smith Perry announced City Councilman Corey O'Connor asked for funds for his district to be reallocated to the Housing Opportunity Fund for 2021. The council legislation allocated the \$1,958,00 as follows:

Housing Stabilization Program: \$808,000

Demonstration Dollars: \$400,000

Legal Help: \$550,000

Administration: \$200,000

In addition to HOF funds, an additional \$500,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds was allocated to the URA for the Rental Gap Program (RGP), especially as it related to preservation. She thanked Councilman O'Connor, the councilman's district, and city council.

Adrienne Walnoha called for more robust analysis of the impact of HOF programs, including understanding the depth of the housing problems and the performance of providers for programs.

J. Smith Perry agreed and noted that the URA is creating more metric for analysis of programs.

RECOMMENDATION 1 (2021)

Mark Masterson motioned to acknowledge and accept the additional allocation of 2021 HOF Funding. Theresa Kail-Smith seconded the motion. The motion carried.

E. Recommendation for Approval of the Final Bylaws and Chair Description

J. Smith Perry presented the final draft of the bylaws to the advisory. The document was sent to the advisory board prior to this meeting.

Joanna Deming asked if J. Smith Perry could highlight any changes from the draft discussed at the December meeting.

J. Smith Perry responded that there was very little comment from the advisory board. Changes to the document were largely for clarification and there were no major changes to context.

J. Deming stated that there were a lot of comments and feedback during the December meeting. She also noted that her main concern was ensuring that URA staff is committed to the working groups and would collaborate with the advisory board.

J. Smith Perry replied that she and HR&A Advisors reviewed the meeting minutes and ensured the comments from the meeting were addressed.

RECOMMENDATION 2 (2021)

Adrienne Walnoha motioned to recommend the approval for the final bylaws and chair description. Sonia Tilghman seconded the motion. The motion carried.

F. Nomination for the Chair Position

J. Smith Perry invited Adrienne Walnoha to lead the advisory board conversation on the election of a chair and vice chair.

Derrick Tillman asked if the conflict-of-interest policy requiring the chair and vice chair to abstain from voting is the same as that for when board members are required to abstain from votes, or if there are additional nuances to the policy for the chair and vice chair.

A. Walnoha responded that the chair and vice chair will be able to participate in the conversation but must disclose conflicts of interest that exist.

Kellie Ware-Seabron asked that the committee have conversations and nominations during this meeting but vote at the next meeting to give the advisory board more time to review the criteria.

Diamonte Walker proposed a self-nomination process to gauge interest amongst board members.

A. Walnoha agreed with undertaking a nomination process at this meeting. She emphasized the sense of urgency in electing a chair and vice chair given the amount of time the board has discussed establishing these roles.

J. Deming observed that there is not a process for identifying a chair.

D. Walker responded that the advisory board previously formed a nominating committee. The committee determined that board members would self-nominate, and the committee would develop a formal process based on those self-nominations.

A. Walnoha recommended expediting the conversation on establishing a nominating committee to be prepared for a vote during the February meeting. She asked if the previous committee could be reconvened.

Jerome Jackson asked if a nominating committee will choose the candidates for election from the self-nominating board members. If so, a committee may not be needed if the goal is to vote for the chair and vice chair during the February meeting.

D. Walker stated her belief that the nominating committee's role is to develop a process by which voting can occur so the board can deliberate and elect the chair.

A. Walnoha proposed the process include the preparation of a packet to present detailed information about the nominees.

Mark Masterson suggested using the term and position criteria in the bylaws to generate a list of board members eligible for nomination.

J. Deming asked if nominees should have a year left in their term, and if the chair and vice chair have the same requirements for time served on the board.

A. Walnoha affirmed that the vice chair has the same term criteria as the chair.

Theresa Kail Smith stated that the board should set a deadline to vote on the chair and vice chair both for the health of the board and to give members time to consider the requirements of the positions.

A. Walnoha proposed that the board accept self-nominations at this meeting, and nominees use the time prior to the February election to meet with the board and advocate for their nomination.

D. Tillman asked if the responsibility to confirm an interpreter for board meetings means the chair is responsible for securing the interpreter or for confirming with URA staff that the interpreter will be present at the meetings.

J. Smith Perry replied that, according to the adopted bylaws, the chair is responsible for securing an interpreter. She added that the staff would be helpful in securing the interpreter.

J. Deming asked if board members would be permitted to nominate others during this meeting.

A. Walnoha stated that both self-nominations and nominating others would be acceptable.

J. Smith Perry cited section 5.3 of the bylaws which state that any board members other than the current chair may self-nominate or nominate someone else for the chair and vice chair position.

A. Walnoha opened the floor to nominations.

D. Tillman nominated himself for chairperson.

J. Jackson nominated J. Deming for chairperson.

J. Deming accepted the nomination for chairperson or vice chairperson.

J. Deming nominated K. Ware-Seabron for vice chairperson.

K. Ware-Seabron accepted the nomination.

A. Walnoha asked if the board would like to allow board members to continue nominations until a deadline.

J. Jackson agreed with setting a deadline to self-nominate in order to give the board members the opportunity to consider the responsibilities of the position.

A. Walnoha proposed a deadline of January 15th.

K. Ware-Seabron agreed with setting a January 15th deadline. She also proposed that during the following week the nominees release a vision statement for their candidacy.

M. Masterson added that, in addition to a statement, the nominees also include a resume as it relates to the chair or vice chair position.

D. Walker asked if the nominating committee needs to reconvene under the newly adopted bylaws.

J. Smith Perry stated the bylaws address the nomination process for a chair and vice chair but not for the selection of a nominating committee. She asked David Geiger to provide clarification.

David Geiger advised the advisory board to form a new nominating committee with no more than five members as a measure of good form and good board governance.

A. Walnoha remarked that a nominating committee could function as a working group, which bylaws provide guidelines for.

D. Walker asked if a nominating committee needs to be comprised of those members not self-nominating or accepting nominations.

D. Geiger advised the board to vote to confirm a nominating committee and select a chair. Additionally, he counseled that the subcommittee membership should not include members running for chair positions to avoid conflicts of interest.

RECOMMENDATION 3 (2021)

Diamonte Walker motioned to create a nominating committee to guide the chair and vice chair selection process for the HOF Advisory Board. Mark Masterson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

A. Walnoha nominated D. Walker as chair of the nominating committee.

D. Walker accepted the nomination.

RECOMMENDATION 4 (2021)

Jamil Bey motioned to appoint Diamonte Walker as chair of the nominating committee. Megan Winters seconded the motion. The motion carried.

A Walnoha asked if the board would like to consider membership of the nominating committee now or after the meeting.

D. Walker, chairperson, stated the discussion of membership would happen after the meeting. She stated that committee membership would be made public at the February meeting.

A. Walnoha asked J. Smith Perry if URA staff would send an email to the board members. The email would ask members interested in joining the nominating committee to respond to D. Walker.

J. Smith Perry affirmed the email will be sent after the meeting. Board members should respond to J. Smith Perry and Vethina Hage, who will assist D. Walker in convening the nominating committee.

J. Deming asked why board members would not volunteer at this meeting.

D. Walker, chairperson, responded that board members may want to deliberate on becoming a nominee for chair or vice chair. Those members would not be able to serve on the nominating committee.

J. Smith Perry thanked A. Walnoha for leading the conversation on nominating a chairperson and vice chairperson.

G. Programmatic Expenditures and Impact

J. Smith Perry presented the commitments and closings to date of both consumer and development programs. She also presented tables detailing the total allocations from 2018, 2019, and 2020 to each of the HOF programs, including total commitments and closings to date.

J. Deming asked if the data presented for the Housing Stabilization Program differentiates renters from homeowners.

Jeremy Carter estimated that over 90% of HSP users are renters.

M. Masterson asked that the data be presented differently in future. He noted that the current map presentation of data pinpoints is not meaningful in terms of detailing the dispersions of the programs among the nine council districts.

J. Smith Perry replied that the URA is currently in the process of evaluating how it shows its metrics.

H. HOF Announcements

J. Carter provided an update on the efforts to update the guidelines for the legal assistance program. These efforts have included meeting with different stakeholders around eviction prevention, including Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS), the Bar Association, tenant advocates, and mediators. The Requests for Proposals (RFP) will launch in February.

D. Tillman asked if “Legal Eviction Prevention Program” is the title of the RFP.

J. Carter replied that the RFP will be called “Legal Assistance” given that the advisory board wanted the program available to both homeowners and renters.

J. Deming asked about addressing the reimbursement issues.

J. Carter replied that the URA is in conversation with NLS. NLS will have to operate under the new program with their existing funding grant.

D. Tillman asked if the intent is to issue one RFP for renters and another for homeowners.

J. Carter replied that if the feedback from the stakeholders is that legal assistance for renters and homeowners are quite different. If the feedback from stakeholders is to separate them, then there will be two RFPs.

General Housing Announcements

J. Smith Perry provided an update on the allocation of CDBG-CV3 funds to be used for the Housing Stabilization Program pending URA Board approval during the February URA Board meeting. The proposed distribution of those funds are as follows:

Urban League: \$950,000 (including a \$100,000 reallocation from CDBG-CV1 funds)

YWCA: \$400,000
PCSI: \$300,000
Macedonia FACE: \$250,000

J. Smith Perry provided an update on the work between the URA and the city government to apply for rental assistance funding through the Coronavirus Relief Fund. More information will be shared in the coming weeks.

Evan Miller announced the release of the RFP for the East End Housing Development Program. A pre-application meeting will be held Friday, January 22nd at 9:30am via Zoom. The application and meeting information are available on the proposal section of the URA's website.

J. Smith Perry announced the 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) applications are due to the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) on March 5, 2021.

D. Tillman asked if the new relief fund has the same stipulations as the previous relief packages.

J. Carter responded that the Coronavirus Relief Fund comes from the Treasury Department and does not have the same restrictions as the CARES Act funding. Under the CARES Act, if a landlord did not accept the payment then the tenant had no recourse. The Coronavirus Relief Fund guidelines allows an agency to disperse the funds directly to the household if a vendor, such as a utility company or landlord, refuses to accept it.

J. Deming asked if another RFP will be issued for the CEA program.

A. Walnoha answered that the URA will have internal discussions this month on the program.

I. Adjournment

The next HOF Advisory Board meeting will occur on February 4, 2021 at 9:00am.

Derrick Tillman moved to adjourn the meeting. Kellie Ware-Seabron seconded. The motion carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.