

MINUTES
OWATONNA HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING on JANUARY 25, 2021

The regular meeting of the Owatonna Housing and Redevelopment Authority was called to order at 4:00 pm 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, Council Member Nathan Dotson, and Administrative Technician Kristen Kopp.

Approval of the Minutes: Vice Chairman Atkinson called for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 28, 2020 meeting. A motion was made by Olivo and seconded by Hole to approve the minutes. Commissioners voting Aye: Atkinson, Hole, Kropp, and Olivo. 4-0, motion carried.

Executive Directors Report: Community Development Director Troy Klecker said that the City Council made appointments to boards at their last meeting. The City Council wanted staff on every board that has the ability to levy tax and spend dollars, which includes the HRA Board. All five members of the HRA Board are within a term limit, and terms come to an end on April 30th. The Council is recommending that Nathan Dotson be the Council Member to sit on the HRA Board when the next HRA member's term ends. Vice Chairman Atkinson's term will end in April 30, 2021. Anyone at any point in time can leave the board as well. He said that is why Council Member Dotson is attending this meeting, and he will plan on attending the meetings through the end of the year. Atkinson said that he would plan on going off the board at the end of April when his three-year term is up. He said he will have fulfilled his term, and said that there are other things he is interested in doing. Klecker said they will plan on having Council Member Dotson join the HRA Board at that time.

Klecker gave an update on housing projects. There are still three apartments under construction. The apartment on Florence Avenue is the furthest along. Eastgate has the foundation in and lower level concrete. They'll be starting framing soon. The Schrom project on Mound Street has all of the underground work done and are planning to start framing tomorrow. It will be fun to watch them come up. They ended up with 35 single family houses, which is an increase from 2019. We also had more single-family homes built than surrounding communities. They'd like to see that pick up this year if they can. A residential subdivision has been annexed in and they will be platting more single family lots. There are two apartment projects in the works right now: Riverwood on Lemond Road and The Pearl, a 43-unit apartment building on Pearl Street. That project is using Tax Incremented Financing. A couple of developers are interested in doing more apartments as well. We'll have a good indication of 2021 projects in the next couple of months. Covid has had a minimal impact on new development. Everything that was in the works has continued. The current eviction restriction goes until March 31st.

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 December totaled 106. Total year to date assistance and administration costs were \$701,386.31 and revenues were \$701,165.20. The Housing Choice Voucher Program fund balance at December month end is \$66,604.19. 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 \$528,013.10 and the expenses total \$583,954.49. The HRA General Fund balance is \$330,422.49.

We're adding two new vouchers this month. There are eleven applications out for Bridges and two for HCV. The 11 Bridges, are on a which is first come, based on funding in the grant. All applicants are

aware of the process. The social workers here in town are great and they want to work hard for these people.

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.

Other Business: Housing Manager Madkour said that the SEMCAC grant for seven counties – the numbers aren't final yet, but will be very soon. The breakdown is for rent payments, mortgage assistance, contract for deed assistance, etc. which is quite a spread. Steele County was a good portion of that. Although they are understaffed at the Steele County SEMCAC office, they administered to a lot of people. There's a good chance it will be extended again. He said that landlords aren't really happy at this time due to the eviction moratorium extensions. The 40 vouchers for the homeless population were issued to us finally. Initially when we received, he was told we had until April 1st to administer them. It takes a couple months to get someone housed. We got another letter that says we have until February 1, 2022. The other quirk is that initially they said it's to the homeless population 18-61, which would be set apart from the original 113 vouchers that we were granted. He said that now he thinks they have to go through the waitlist process and will have to vote it in as part of the admin plan. It will be to the homeless, so if someone on our waitlist has a homeless status, they go to the top of the list. It may be slower than we think because they have to get all the paperwork that they need, which can be harder for the homeless population as many are couch-hopping or on the streets. Klecker asked if another issue going to be finding units. Madkour said yes, and another issue will be qualifying with their landlords. He said he doesn't know what to expect, but he is glad we have the means to attempt to assist. Rents have gone up recently possibly because of the new apartments. Klecker said it's supply and demand. The more units we can get built, the more they can stabilize rates. There is a high demand right now.

Klecker asked what the Commissioners are thinking about having an in-person meeting in February. Kropp and Hole said that they'd be interested in another TEAMS meeting. Klecker said that they will plan on TEAMS for the February meeting, and they can evaluate it then.

Adjournment: There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Hole, seconded by Kropp. 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