

MINUTES FOR HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING

DATE: Tuesday, January 23, 2024
TIME: 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Housing and Community Development Department
 350 West 6th Street; Dubuque, IA 52001

Gina Hodgson, Assisted Housing Supervisor, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. following staff assurance of compliance with Iowa Open Meeting Law.

Commissioners Present: Rick Baumhover	Renee Kehoe (virtual)	Sam Wooden
Amy Eudaley	Rick Merfeld (virtual)	
Ross Janes	Julietta Scott (virtual)	

Commissioners Absent: Cathy Dickens

Staff Present: Alexis Steger (virtual)	Tonya England
Gina Hodgson	Hollie Ohnesorge

Public Present: None

Oath of Office – Amy Eudaley

The Oath of Office was completed by Amy Eudaley.

Oath of Office – Julietta Scott

The Oath of Office was completed by Julietta Scott.

Resignation - Margie White & Calvin Jones

Hodgson spoke about the HUD audit and findings regarding landlords receiving City funding not able to be a member of Housing Commission. The resignation of Margie White was read. Calvin Jones no longer meets the requirements for his position as HCV Housing Commissioner. A recommendation will be made to City Council to formally remove him from the Housing Commission since he has not submitted a resignation.

It was requested that a letter of appreciation be sent to former commissioners—Yindra Dixon and Margie White. It was also requested that a letter be sent to Calvin Jones once he is formerly removed from the Commission.

Certification of Minutes – April 25, 2023, Housing Commission Meeting

Commissioner Sam Wooden moved to approve the Minutes for the April 25, 2023 Housing Commission Meeting. Commissioner Amy Eudaley seconded. Seven (7) in favor. Zero (0) not in favor. Zero (0) abstained. Motion passed.

Correspondence/Public Input

There was no correspondence nor public input.

New Business

a) Election of Housing Commission Chairperson

The Housing Commission discussed appointing a Housing Commission Chairperson due to Yindra Dixon's term ending.

Commissioner Eudaley moved to appoint Commissioner Rick Baumhover as the Chairperson for the Housing Commission. Commissioner Wooden seconded. Seven (7) in favor. Zero (0) not in favor. Zero (0) abstained. Motion passed.

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b) Election of Housing Commission Vice Chairperson

The Housing Commission discussed appointing a Housing Commission Vice Chairperson.

Commissioner Wooden moved to appoint Commissioner Julietta Scott as the Vice Chairperson for the Housing Commission. Commissioner Baumhover seconded. Seven (7) in favor. Zero (0) not in favor. Zero (0) abstained. Motion passed.

c) Appointment of Liaison to Housing Trust Fund Advisory Committee

The Housing Commission discussed appointing a Liaison to the Housing Trust Fund Advisory Committee.

Commissioner Eudaley moved to appoint herself, Amy Eudaley, as the Liaison to Housing Trust Fund Advisory Committee. Commissioner Renee Kehoe seconded. Seven (7) in favor. Zero (0) not in favor. Zero (0) abstained. Motion passed.

d) Appointment of Liaison to Community Development Advisory Commission

The Housing Commission discussed appointing a Liaison to the Community Development Advisory Commission.

Commissioner Baumhover moved to appoint Commissioner Renee Kehoe as the Liaison to Community Development Advisory Commission. Commissioner Wooden seconded. Seven (7) in favor. Zero (0) not in favor. Zero (0) abstained. Motion passed.

e) Appointment of Liaison to Long Range Planning Commission

The Housing Commission discussed appointing a Liaison to the Long Range Planning Commission.

Commissioner Wooden moved to appoint Commissioner Rick Merfeld as the Liaison to the Long Range Planning Commission. Commissioner Ross Janes seconded. Seven (7) in favor. Zero (0) not in favor. Zero (0) abstained. Motion passed.

f) Annual Plan Review

Hodgson gave a presentation on the Annual Plan Review. The Annual Plan provides information on policies, plans, missions and goals to the public through Resident Advisory Board (RAB), Housing Commission, and City Council annually. It also serves as a method to monitor the progress of the 5-Year PHA Plan. The draft of the Annual Plan, which will be for the fiscal year starting on July 1, 2024, must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 45 days prior to the beginning of the fiscal year.

A link to the draft will be placed on the City of Dubuque's website for review. It will then be placed on the Agenda for City Council to set a date for the Public Hearing; the Public Hearing will be tentatively set on April 1, 2024. Once the Annual Plan is adopted by City Council, it will be submitted to HUD on April 15, 2024.

The City has worked with the Greater Dubuque Development Corporation and developers to address housing needs for affordable housing. Several developments are underway to address these needs.

On January 1, 2024, the City increased the FMR to 120% citywide for voucher payment standards. HUD approved a waiver, which was granted for a 12-month period from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024. The data will be reviewed with HUD at end of the year.

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Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are being used for rehabing units. The first time homebuyers program helped provide low-interest loans and down payment assistance towards homeownership.

The Department is working to obtain data on how many landlords will accept the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program during rental license renewals. The rental license and tiered inspection processes are helping to increase quality housing by utilizing Housing Quality Standards (HQS) and the International Property Maintenance Code for all housing types.

The Office of Shared Prosperity focuses on collecting data to define needs for the community. In 2024, the City will be using data from a new software and the information collected by the Office of Shared Prosperity to research and plan for the next 5-Year PHA Plan to increase acceptance of HCV by housing providers.

City staff meet with the Landlord Association monthly to establish trust and communication skill building to promote the housing programs and work through any misunderstandings. Hodgson also highlighted the following:

- Hollie Ohnesorge attends each session of the Successful Property Maintenance training to present the Housing Choice Voucher program. In 2024, there will be more focus on recruiting new landlords for the HCV program.
- The online briefing was rolled out during the summer of 2020. In 2024, the briefing is going to be updated to address commonly asked questions.
- In 2023, the Voucher Payment Standard was increased for a 12-month period starting on January 1, 2024.
- The residency preference was added to the Administrative Plan but has not been implemented. Data is being collected. Other ideas are being tried.
- Housing Choice Voucher forms are being revised to make them readable on a 7th grade level. The new forms will be translated into Spanish and Marshallese.
- Assisted Housing is working with the inspection team to obtain data on units for the rent reasonable process.
- During 2024, the Department will be looking to add additional Project Based Voucher communities.
- The background check process for landlords were audited; the arrest records were removed to keep from causing a disparate impact.
- The Department looked at needs for interpreters of additional languages.
- There was an increase in social media presence.
- Assisted Housing is looking at and researching a possible tenant education course.
- HUD's Budget Tool is utilized monthly to forecast utilization.

Commissioner Eudaley moved to recommend the Annual Plan for review by City Council. Commissioner Kehoe seconded. Seven (7) in favor. Zero (0) not in favor. Zero (0) abstained. Motion passed.

g) Administrative Plan Review

Hollie Ohnesorge, Assisted Housing Coordinator, gave a presentation on the Administrative Plan Review. She spoke about Housing Opportunities through Modernization Act (HOTMA), which are required legislative policies for the Administrative Plan, that were effective as of January 1, 2024. HUD has permitted the housing authorities to delay implementation until January 1, 2025 due to the software companies used by the housing authorities not having the ability to meet the guidelines.

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Ohnesorge reviewed the following major changes:

- Violence Against Women Act of 2013 was renamed and human trafficking was added to it.
- Chapter 6, which discusses income and subsidy determinations, was completely removed and replaced.
- Chapter 7 (which explains verification of information) and Chapter 11 (which provides information for reexaminations when changes take effect) were amended.
- Earned Income Disallowance was discontinued--effective January 1, 2024. This was for disabled individuals receiving Social Security who wanted to enter the workforce. Earned income was phased in over three 12-month periods.
- A new guidance for annual income was provided.
- There was new guidance on defining and calculating student financial aid.
- Assets may be self-certified up to \$50,000.
- Deductions for elderly and disabled participants will increase from \$400 to \$525; however, any unreimbursed medical expenses that exceeded 3% will now be 10%. (A hardship exemption will be implemented for current participants receiving medical deductions because medical expenses exceed 3% of their annual adjusted income.) From the 890 families currently served, this change may impact approximately 100 families.
- If the family's adjusted income increases by at least 10%, an interim reexam has to be completed.

The City's software company believes it will be October 2024 before the new policies will be implemented. The chapter on Project Based Housing was not included in this version of changes. Alexis Steger, Department Director, stated the Public Hearing will be tentatively set for April 1, 2024 for the Administrative Plan.

Commissioner Wooden moved for the adoption of the Administrative Plan. Commissioner Baumhover seconded. Seven (7) in favor. Zero (0) not in favor. Zero (0) abstained. Motion passed.

Reports

a) Community Development Advisory Commission Report

Commissioner Kehoe indicated there was no report.

b) Assisted Housing Waiting List Statistical Summary

Ohnesorge, Assisted Housing Coordinator, reported in September 2023 the Housing Choice Voucher Waiting List was reopened for in-person pre-applications—if applicant was not disabled—at the Multicultural Family Center from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Of the 171 pre-applications received, approximately half of the applicants had never applied for the program and all racial groups were captured.

The lottery was not run; all pre-applications [in-person and paper pre-applications received from disabled applicants] were placed on the waiting list. In December 2023, there were 261 applicants who submitted a pre-application for the Housing Choice Voucher program. Approximately 890 families are being currently served with vouchers.

On the report, the "Totals by Preference" category is for collection of data for preference points. The information is being captured behind the scenes for reporting to HUD if the Department decides to continue pursuing preference points. The "First Preference" is for elderly, the "Second Preference" is for disabled, and "Fifth Preference" is for living or working in Dubuque.

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Steger, indicated the new budget is not yet approved. The new calculation released by HUD last week decreases the budget.

c) Housing Choice Voucher Participant Statistical Summary

Ohnesorge shared the Household Composition Report only includes data for current participants for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. There are currently 890 participating families across several programs—HCV, Non-Elderly Disabled Vouchers (NED), Project Based Voucher (PBV), Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), Tenant Protection Vouchers; 790 families are receiving assistance through HCV.

Information Sharing

- a) Questions were asked about the rights for a tenant who is being told by a landlord to shovel snow from a walkway. It was suggested that the tenants look at their respective lease to determine their responsibility for shoveling snow.
- b) The budget presentation for City Council for the Housing & Community Development Department will be held on March 28, 2024.
- c) The next Housing Commission Meeting will be on Tuesday, April 23, 2024.
- d) A low-income housing complex may be replacing the Riverside Bowl; they are working on process to obtain a 4% tax credit through Iowa Finance Finance Authority. The income would need to average around 60% of the area median income for all tenants.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Commissioner Wooden moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Eudaley seconded. Motion passed by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

Minutes taken by:


Tonya England
Recording Secretary

Respectfully Submitted:



Gina Hodgson
Assisted Housing Supervisor