

HOUSING COMMISSION OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2019, 4:00 PM
VIA METROPOLITAN TRANSIT BOARD ROOM
1021 SAN PEDRO, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78212

Members Present: Robert Abraham, Member
Nichole Collazo, Member
Dr. Paul Furukawa, Member
Jessica O. Guerrero, Member
Keith Hom, Member
Marianne Kestenbaum, Member
David Nisivoccia, Member
Lourdes Castro-Ramirez, Chair
Sarah Sanchez, Member

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Lori Houston, *Assistant City Manager*; Veronica R. Soto, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Jameene Williams, *City Attorney's Office*; Ian Benavidez, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Sara Wamsley, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Irma Duran, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Kristin Flores, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Allison Shea, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Azza Kamal, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Sarah Perez, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*

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- **Call to Order** - The meeting was called to order at 4:06 PM by Lourdes Castro-Ramirez.
 - **Roll Call** - The roll was called by Sarah Perez; at the time roll call was conducted, seven members were present representing a quorum.
 - **Citizens to be Heard** – None.
1. **Minutes** – Irma Duran stated that Jessica O. Guerrero and Dr. Paul Furukawa sent their minutes via email. Furukawa clarified that on his question from August 31 meeting, Lori Houston has provided an answer. Staff will add Houston's response to the minutes. Motion to approve by Keith Hom.
 2. **Budget Presentation** – Verónica Soto provided an update on the budget and the additional

funding proposed. Council approved budget as presented, plus leverage dollars from partners. A big change from previous fiscal years was the use of Tax Increment Finance dollars for pilot programs and rehabilitation programs. Budget is little over \$34.4 million when including the leverage dollars.

Marianne Kestenbaum suggested for next year, it would be helpful to prepare and present the budget along with the business plan, a week or two ahead of time to formulate questions.

Castro-Ramirez asked of the \$34.4 million, what the total amount of general fund and how it compared to last year. Soto stated it is the same, \$9.7 million. The additional \$6.2 million is from TIRZ and \$10.2 million leveraged. Houston added that there is a \$100,000 increase in general funds from Center City Dollars to assist. TIRZ money can be used like general fund dollars with few restrictions. Castro-Ramirez asked what the projected number of units would be funded, built or preserved with this money. Houston said we would have to look it up and it's broken down by programs.

Jessica O. Guerrero requested that for the next meeting, if staff can provide funding from other departments affecting housing, it would be helpful to further understand what the larger picture looks like moving towards Coordinated Housing System.

3. **(Item 5) Organizational Assessment of the Strategic Plan for the San Antonio Housing Trust**—Ian Benavidez presented on the assessment changes from previous briefings, introduced Noel Poyo, Executive Director of National Association of Latino Community Asset Builders. The commission previously requested more outreach; staff presented to CHDOs, Trust board and the community. NALCAB's final report is where we are to date, but not necessarily being implemented. Recommendations from the Commission reflected in the report had to do with governance. The structure proposed will include the foundation increasing the structure to 3 community members for a total of 11 and to change the CEO position back to Executive Director.

Hom asked if there were any other staff changes aside from the director. Staff explained that there are several Housing Trust staff, but there won't be any changes recommended by the assessment for those positions. Houston added that the title change allows for the organization to grow towards a CEO title.

Castro-Ramirez asked what recommendations have not been accepted yet. Benavidez said there are only two actionable items: one is the governance change, and one is to do an implementation plan that is being treated as a separate process. She asked if Council would approve of these changes. Benavidez responded that Council has been briefed.

Guerrero asked if the Commission was expected to give a collective opinion on the recommendations or if this was a briefing only. Benavidez stated this was a briefing only, coming back with changes after feedback provided at previous meetings. Guerrero stated she had feedback from community members: less representation from Council and more from community on the Board. We need to restore community trust, so 3 community members is a good start, and it is important for community to see representation. Benavidez restated that community members were increased to 3 after previous conversation. Balance is slightly tipped, will incorporate and see if we can make any changes.

Castro-Ramirez invited Poyo to say a few words. He reiterated that NALCAB was careful to not include staffing in the structure and to leave that task to the new Executive Director. The plan was to create structure within the communities [boards] in regards to the makeup of the various boards within the Trust.

Kestenbaum asked if NALCAB saw any rational in identifying members of the community that had nonprofit, finance expertise in regards to the issues we are facing. Poyo responded they suggested the Mayor will be appointing.

Nicole Collazo thanked Poyo and addressed Hom's question. Housing Trust staff is currently looking at all procedures and analyzing staff functions, not personnel.

Castro-Ramirez stated this was a significant milestone in recruiting an Executive. This was an important section in the framework. Appreciated the thoughtfulness and listening from staff and Trust, as there is a commitment to take the Trust to the next level.

4. **Housing Tax Credit Policy**—Duran called up Tim Alcott, citizen to be heard on item #3. Alcott is the Real Estate & Legal Services Officer for the San Antonio Housing Authority Development department. . The City's current policy for awarding Resolutions of Support or No Objection awards points for deeper affordability. Alcott requested that more points be awarded for developments that include project based vouchers or public housing. Alcott stated that if a tenant loses employment, public housing only charges \$50 a month for rent. Public housing applies a different level of subsidy that you don't see in other developments.

Benavidez briefed the Commission on the proposed Housing Tax Credit policy for 2020. The current policy has been used for past two years. 41 projects for both 4% and 9% resolutions have applied, which does not necessarily mean they were awarded at the state level. Benavidez reviewed the policy development timeline; including the meeting sessions and dates a survey was posted for public comment. The policy aligns with the Housing Policy Framework and with Regional Plans, putting growth where jobs are located. A recent federal change allows developers to create income averaging, providing points to developers that also include higher AMI units. City Council also requested the change to provide points to developments that assist domestic violence survivors. The major changes were in regards to the distribution of points: resolutions would not be given to a project that directly displaces tenants without a relocation plan. Other changes included consolidation of some categories and additional points for developments near job centers, expanding points to areas outside of downtown.

Kestenbaum requested clarification in regards to proof of coordination with a Councilmember and asked if public engagement existed already? Benavidez said coordination is to notify a councilmember; application criteria provide points for public engagement. Kestenbaum stated that many people, such as renters, do not get notification of a planned development. How can we ensure more inclusive notification? Benavidez restated the criteria in regards to notification, but it is more difficult to notify renters without a public meeting. Once the City requires developers to engage the public when seeking a Resolution of Support or No Objection, we come across possible legal issues. Kestenbaum asked for clarification. Jameene Williams clarified developers should not provide more notices or meetings to one group or area than another. The Housing Commission itself is part of the public engagement arm across the department, but did not know if staff had considered working with the Commission on more incentives. Houston stated this is why it's important to weigh in on the policy.

Castro-Ramirez asked if there was a public education campaign included. Affordable housing still faces challenges of public perception. . Staff and should do more in regards to public awareness and engagement. Kestenbaum reiterated the importance of inclusivity and transparency in each decision and defining the process.

Hom asked if other cities have their own criteria and what does the state have. Benavidez responded that the state's criteria are released annually every year in the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP.) Hom asked if 41 projects considered usual, if San Antonio was getting a fair share of projects. Benavidez confirmed it is. Hom inquired on the transportation proximity, if we could call it out. Soto stated there is 10% at the state wide category for at risk housing. Developers are not going so much for that as they do for 9% and 4%.

Robert Abraham asked for the participation rates for SA Speak up. Benavidez stated that there had been four responses but survey was released the day before. Abraham asked for more information on the SA Speak Up. Soto summarized the initiative, branded by the Government and Public Affairs department.

David Nisivoccia asked about the point structure for going over the maximum allowable points for deeper affordability. Benavidez presented a sliding scale, presented to developers and partners to see what numbers are realistic and possible options for deeper affordability.

Nisivoccia asked about the definition of direct displacement. Benavidez stated that if a development permanently displaced individuals without a relocation plan (such as vouchers, opportunities to find housing). Nisivoccia asked if this was for rehab or redevelopment. Benavidez stated that it was both.

Guerrero had two quick requests: to receive a full language of evaluation criteria and the extra slide. Guerrero asked if this was in regards to the rents that will be charged or income levels that will be accepted. Castro-Ramirez asked to show scenarios in the follow up. Guerrero asked for clarification, what tax credit involves, rent levels or who is approved to live there. Would it also be possible to include points for adjustments to leases that reflect more relationships between landlord and renters [limiting rent increases, tenant organizing activities will not be disrupted]. Benavidez asked for those questions to be submitted to ensure he understood the items Guerrero wanted to include in the criteria. Guerrero asked if Alcott was referring to give more points for SAHA collaborations.

Nisivoccia stated he wants to be careful in drawing distinction as a commission member and end user of the policy as a developer. Because rent is adjusted if a tenant loses income, it is a topic of discussion. Guerrero still not sure how it plays out in the scoring. Benavidez stated that from the City perspective, they would look through how it can affect the scoring criteria.

Dr. Paul Furukawa is thrilled the priorities expand to domestic violence survivors, and asked how does the policy support them. Benavidez said this is an interesting discussion: there is a possibility to award points for services and partners that are willing to work with victims, but cases cannot be disclosed to the public [making it difficult to announce what complexes receive points]. Castro-Ramirez said it is important to cite the Violence Against Women's Act, make sure we understand the law, implement protection.

On the affordability level, Castro-Ramirez stated it should say 'up to 30%' instead of 'at.'

Kestenbaum asked for clarification on the interim way for working on discrepancy, is there equivalence between 50% HUD and 60% SA AMI? Houston stated there is.

Guerrero asked if there is any conversation to introduce green or sustainable building into a category. Benavidez stated there is. In regards to relocation plans, is there room to set standards to relocation plans? Castro-Ramirez stated staff should look at the federal Uniform Relocation Act. It is important to come up with a standard for relocation assistance.

Castro-Ramirez asked what the next step is after voting. Benavidez stated that this would go to Planning and Community Development Committee. The policy would be brought back to commission on October 23, prior to City Council on October 31.

5. **Housing Portal Presentation**—While the consultants set up the presentation, Soto introduced guests from Tuscan, Az. Meghan Garza and Juan Cano of Rise Civic Consulting, CivTech residents, presented Housing Base San Antonio, a search tool for affordable housing. Hom asked what the criteria for proximity to transit was. Garza said there is a scoring criteria that it is within a city block, and Rise is working with VIA to clarify. Hom offered his assistance. Castro-Ramirez requested a feature for commute time. Garza said there would be layers added to the software.

Guerrero asked about the process for testing user friendliness. Garza said resident engagement; asking tenants to identify data points and key data. In next milestone, user testing might be added.

Collazo asked who would own the data. Garza said the data would be owned by the City, but data would be updated in the back end by users.

Hom asked if an online application would be added. Cano stated that is a goal for the future, but it requires coordination from partners and developers.

Furukawa asked if a client would have an opportunity to talk to someone to navigate through the system. Garza and Cano said in future versions there is a chance to email or chat with auto messages.

Collazo asked if clients would have access to link to resources. Cano referred to SACRD, an online resource directory. The initial release will have a link to that directory tied to zip code. In future, hopes to have this feature integrated.

Castro-Ramirez asked that it be considered to connect to the regional centers or employee hubs. She recommended a different terminology than ‘Social Worker,’ so it doesn’t sound like client needs to have a social worker to navigate through system. Castro-Ramirez stated that when properties are listed, some might have already a waiting list. Castro-Ramirez asked if this feature will be available in Spanish. Garza confirmed it would.

Guerrero would consider in the property features any listings with sustainability (solar paneling, features). Some cities have green audits and people look for that when relocating, feel like it may fit. Guerrero asked about including options or links for information on fair housing and tenants’ rights for people searching for homes. Consultants stated that there are education opportunities on the home page, including the opportunity to add messages from the City or Housing Commission.

Furukawa asked if any followers to the portal and dashboard have confused the two items. Cano stated that they are careful to name each program, but there are conversations that the two programs can work in tandem.

Abraham asked if all the icons on the program were sponsors. Garza stated they are partners they've worked with. The residency is free through the City. Hom asked to be added to the list.

6. **Director's Report**—Houston presented on the process of hiring the recruitment firm for the Chief Housing Officer. She discussed the Affordable Housing Policy and that it should be more of an implementation plan. More information will be provided at the next meeting. Houston referred to the Local Housing Solutions retreat where she, Soto, Castro-Ramirez and three other representatives [Planning, the Mayor's Office and SAHA] discussed the Implementation Plan. Houston stated the task force would be developed by the Implementation Plan of the Housing Policy Framework. Houston recommended the Commission and staff take a step back and identify the goals and measurements through an outline. The report can be drafted once an outline is agreed upon.

Castro-Ramirez reiterated that Houston mentioned the Local Housing Solutions retreat to help cities accelerate. Six people from San Antonio and representatives from Minneapolis, Atlanta, and Philadelphia participated and hone in on the work City is doing. Elements of the Housing Policy Framework are being implemented already, but there is no good plan to help track, the Commission's role is to be at the table. Castro-Ramirez recommended being involved in driving the creation of the implementation plan and have an offsite retreat to focus on this, possibly in December. Castro-Ramirez gave kudos to Guerrero for flagging the report.

Soto stated an invite was sent for October 1 for the Annual Report Special Session. Houston stated there might be more than one meeting on this topic.

Soto presented on the Director's Report. Next meeting slated for November 20 [future conversation changed it to November 19]. No December meeting, but staff will plan a retreat in early January.

Staff asked the Commission for suggestions for upcoming meetings. Kestenbaum asked for a discussion on a possible renters' commission. She stated her concerns on the annual report, if the role and process can be part of the retreat.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned without contest at :13 PM.