

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HOUSING AUTHORITY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

DRAFT

MINUTES

Wednesday, February 8, 2017

(Full minutes will be published once approved)

The Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia Housing Authority (“DCHA”) held its monthly meeting at DCHA Headquarters 1133 Capitol Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20002

I. CALL TO ORDER

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

William Slover, Vice Chairman
Ken Grossinger
Kenneth Council
Aquarius Vann-Ghasri
Clarence Mobley
Frank Lancaster
Brian Kenner
Nakeisha Neal Jones
Jose Ortiz Gaud

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Terri Thompson, Chairman
Shelore Fisher

Vice Chairman Slover called the meeting to order at 1:15 pm. He also made a statement regarding DCHA’s policy on decorum in public meetings. After a moment of silence, Vice Chairman Slover then asked for a roll call to determine a quorum.

II. ROLL CALL

Commissioner Kenneth Council – “Present”
Commissioner Ken Grossinger - “Here”
Commissioner Shelore Fisher – no response
Commissioner Brian Kenner – “Here”
Commissioner Frank Lancaster – “Present”
Commissioner Clarence Mobley – “Present”
Commissioner Nakeisha Neal Jones – “Here”
Commissioner Jose Ortiz Gaud – “Here”
Commissioner Aquarius Vann-Ghasri – “Present”
Commissioner William Slover – “Present”
Chairman Terri Thompson – no response

A quorum was recognized with nine Commissioners present.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 14, 2016

Vice Chairman Slover asked the Commissioners to consider the minutes of the December 14, 2016 Board of Commissioners' meeting. A motion was made to approve the minutes and was seconded. The minutes of the December 14, 2016 BOC meeting were approved.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Todman highlighted the following activities that occurred during the month of January:

John and Jill Ker Conway Residence – Director Todman thanked all of the departments involved in the success of the opening of the Conway apartments. There are 60 units of permanent and supportive housing for homeless veterans and affordable low income units for a total of 124 units within blocks of the Capitol. The project is contributing to revitalization of the NoMa area. Director Todman thanked the staff in the Office of the General Counsel, HCVP, and the Office of Capital Programs.

Book-Rich Environment Initiative – Director Todman announced that DCHA was one of 35 public housing agencies across the country to participate in this campaign designed to promote literacy and boost educational outcomes for youth in public and assisted living. HUD and other Federal agencies participated in reading to kids along with parents from public housing communities.

Funds for Maintenance Needs - Director Todman announced that the DC Council provided for DHCD trust funds to help with modifications on some DCHA properties and that there will be \$15 million to put to work on necessary maintenance at DCHA sites and will benefit the residents by doing this work.

New Administration – Director Todman stated that with the new administration at the Federal level DCHA will continue to work with industry groups to ensure that DCHA is a national role model for the new administration to look to as a leader.

Employee of the Month – Director Todman recognized three employees that were instrumental in increasing the number of children and families that received gifts during the Gift of Love Christmas gift celebration in December. Director Todman presented a certificate and monetary award to Deborah Jackson, Ron Fisher and Noelee Wishart and thanked them for their hard work. Commissioner Lancaster thanked the employees as well.

V. RESOLUTIONS

PUBLIC COMMENT

PRESENTATION AND BOARD DISCUSSION OF THE RESOLUTIONS

[At this point in the meeting, those members of the public who signed up to speak were given the opportunity to address the Board on the resolutions under consideration.]

Rhonda Hamilton – Ms. Hamilton stated that she is an ANC Commissioner and the President of Syphax Gardens Resident Council. She stated that she wants DCHA to allow small dogs on the property but has concerns about health issues of residents and pests. She is concerned that pet waste and dog food will attract rodents. Commissioner Vann-Ghasri stated that there are already rules in place regarding dog waste and animal control and asked Ms. Hamilton how she wanted the Commissioners to vote. Ms. Hamilton stated that if a doctor stated that a small pet would help an individual then she was in support of pets on the property but in general for adults and seniors she was not in favor of it. Commissioner Vann-Ghasri asked Director Todman to give some background on the 2005 Pet Policy and also stated that she and others work hard to have the previous pet policy adopted.

Debra Frazier – Ms. Frazier stated that she had questions regarding the pet policy and asked if the policy applied to properties of mixed development properties, what are the pet fees, when will the amended leases be available and how will residents find out about the new policy. She also asked how the policy will be enforced and how will the fines be assessed. Ms. Frazier also suggested specific dog areas and waste containers. Director Todman responded by saying that the policy only applies to properties where DCHA is the landlord and to senior only and senior and disabled sites. She further stated that not every pet is a dog and staff is working on a scale of fees. This policy will bring DCHA into compliance with Federal Laws. All heads of households for senior and disabled sites will have to sign a new lease. Offenses are curable and that DCHA will work with families to get them in compliance.

James Wilder – Mr. Wilder stated that he is Treasurer and a resident at Judiciary House apartments. He stated that Judiciary House currently has issues with residents who cannot care for themselves and is afraid that allowing pets will add another issue to ongoing problems. He also stated that he is in favor of pets for reasonable accommodations but does not think the policy should allow pets for all senior households. Commissioner Vann-Ghasri asked if there have been studies of trends in the private sector communities that allow pets in senior population communities.

Jacqueline Hargrave – Ms. Hargrave stated that she was the President of Ledriot Resident Council and stated that residents are concerned about the fees they would have to pay for pets and health issues that may arise from having pets in the building.

Reverend Clark Stone – Rev. Stone stated that he is President of James Apartments Council and that he was in favor of small dogs and cats being allowed as pets for residents of the building.

Deborah Press – Ms. Press stated that she was representing the ASPCA and thanked DCHA for making some changes based on their recommendations but still objected to the size limits. She stated that they also proposed that animals adopted from kill shelters be exempted because these animals have already been evaluated by

professionals. They also feel that the policy should not exclude family properties and that two-thirds of DCHA residents will miss out on the opportunity of having a pet.

Karen Settles – Ms. Settles stated that she and others had conversations with the ASPCA and they have been very helpful with their guidance regarding pets and that she was touched by their concerns. She also stated that she felt that there is no connection with the residents and the pet policy and that this is a humanity issue. She stated that she has had conversations with Commissioners Vann-Ghasri and Councils but felt that residents should have more input. She stated that Stoddert Terrace has been invaded by snakes and that the ASPCA has been helping in nurturing and feeding cats in the area. She asked that DCHA table the pet policy to get more weigh in from residents. Commissioner Vann-Ghasri stated that if the policy gets tabled, DCHA would be out of compliance with the law.

Resolution 17-01 To Adopt Final Regulations to Permit Residents Living in Elderly and/or Disabled-Only Low-Income Public Housing to Own Common Household Pets

Director Todman explained that resolution 17-01 is to adopt final regulations for common household pets for residents living in DCHA's senior and disabled sites. HUD put DCHA on notice that there was a law not considered in 2005 when DCHA had a previous pet policy. The law states that any resident at senior and disabled sites must have the opportunity to have common household pets and allows for DCHA to put rules around it. There were discussions and meetings with residents at the senior/disabled properties to get their input. Now they have the opportunity to have pets and bring DCHA into compliance. Director Todman asked the Board to approve the resolution. Commissioner Vann-Ghasri stated that DCHA needs to be responsible and make sure that homes are inspected and kept clean and stated that she thought Ms. Frazier suggestions may be good to incorporate.

Vice Chairman Slover called for a roll call vote on the resolution after the motion to approve was moved and properly seconded.

The Commissioners responded as follows:

- Commissioner Grossinger – “Yes”
- Commissioner Kenner – “Yes”
- Commissioner Lancaster – “Yes”
- Commissioner Mobley – “Yes”
- Commissioner Neal Jones – “Yes”
- Commissioner Ortiz Gaud – “Yes”
- Commissioner Vann-Ghasri – “Yes”
- Commissioner Council – “Yes”
- Vice Chairman Commissioner Slover – “Yes”

There were nine yes, the resolution was approved.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

RESIDENTS

Debra Frazier - A resident of Arthur Capper Senior came before the Board and asked what the status of the RFP is with the Arthur Capper Community Center regarding providing services for the community. She stated that there are several groups in the community that are asking to provide services. She also requested that members of the former Participant Advisory Committee (PAC) receive a certificate of appreciation for assisting in writing guidelines for the HCVP Board representative. Ms. Frazier stated that HCVP residents have been informing her that the HCVP Commissioner has not been responsive to their needs and they have had to go to other Commissioners. Ms. Frazier also requested a section in the DCHA newsletter dedicated to HCVP residents.

Detrice Belt– A resident of Barry Farm stated she received a voicemail from DCHA informing her that HUD has approved demolition for Barry Farm and wanted to know what that meant for residents. Director Todman stated that DCHA wanted to make it clear to Barry Farm residents that the HUD demolition/disposition approval does not mean that it is not time to pack up and move but that Housing Opportunities Unlimited would be contacting families to start their individual relocation plan.

Paulette Matthews – A Barry Farm resident asked if the pet policy was new because there have been pets at DCHA properties for years. She also stated that she continues to hear horror stories about vermin at DCHA properties and asked if the current pest control contract covers all DCHA properties and why hasn't it been terminated. Ms. Matthews stated that there continues to be problems with the mailboxes at Barry Farm and there is some confusion regarding responsibility and that the zip code for the property has a Maryland post office. She also asked if residents would be rehired for the Clean and Green program. Commissioner Vann-Ghasri stated that she used methods she learned at UDC workshops regarding cleanliness and stated that DCHA cannot be held accountable for the rodents but can be held accountable for their methods of treating the problem. She also advised Ms. Matthews to seek help from the Department of Employment Services regarding employment.

Helen Douglas – An Arthur Capper Senior resident came before the Board stating that residents had an urgent meeting last night regarding trying to secure permanent management for the property. She stated that in the past four months, there have been three assistant managers and they share a regional manager who is often not in the building with four other properties. She also stated that the CSX fund for the building of \$250,000 has not been used for and is needed for filter changes, trash overflows and there is inadequate cleaning of the trash rooms, poor security staff and lack of coverage at the front desk. Vice Chairman Slover stated that he has heard a lot of negative testimony regarding Edgewood Management and asked for an ongoing report from Edgewood. Director Todman stated that she would ask for a long term management plan from Edgewood and stated that there has been a property management change at that property in the last 24 hours. Vice Chairman Slover asked to keep a running history regarding Arthur Capper Senior.

Quianna Wiggins – A resident of Lincoln Heights came before the Board stating that her home continues to get burglarized and that she is fearful her children are becoming victims

of the community. She also stated that she has an ongoing recertification issue that has lasted over 2 years and is ready to give up her apartment because she no longer feels safe there. She says there is violence at Lincoln Heights and she can no longer live there. She asked the Board what options she has if any. Director Todman asked Ms. Wiggins to speak with Mr. Bovellet regarding her and to Ms. Hampton regarding family services for her children. Vice Chairman Slover and Commissioner Vann-Ghasri asked Ms. Wiggins not to give up her keys to her apartment and to speak with Mr. Bovellet.

Armanda Carter – A resident of Arthur Capper Senior came before the Board to state the problems they have been having retaining a manager at the site. They recently have had Mr. Thornton as the manager and she is requesting that Edgewood keep him because he wants to do the job and has been doing it well. Director Todman stated that DCHA will speak with Edgewood about the management plan but could not speak to who they would make a permanent manager.

Karen Settles – A resident of Stoddert Terrace stated that some residents come to the Board meetings reluctantly and are intimidated. She stated that she had a particular issue with Commissioner Vann-Ghasri and some residents just want to be heard and want to feel comfortable. Commissioner Vann-Ghasri stated that residents can use their power and not vote for her. She informed Ms. Settles that Board has meeting at properties to help ease the fears and difficulties that they may have coming to headquarters.

NONRESIDENTS

Margaret Dwyer – Ms. Dwyer stated that she is with Surge DC and working to dismantle white privilege and racism and stated that she sent the Board a letter in December asking them to rid all public housing of vermin. She stated that she has heard many people testify about problems that they have with rodents. She stated that she would like to see a target to eliminate vermin and a report monthly on the progress toward that goal and that it could make a difference in many people lives. Commissioner Vann-Ghasri asked if Ms. Dwyer thought it would be helpful to make a hygiene video or tips for house cleaning for residents. Ms. Dwyer stated that she was not talking in terms of punitive policies for residents. Vice Chairman Slover asked Ms. Dwyer to present a strategy to the Board on eliminating vermin.

LaKeisha Beavers – An HCVP resident in Maryland came before the Board asking for help regarding a self-help eviction that occurred in 2013. She stated that the home that she lived in was condemned due to several violations and that because she did not move out on a certain date the landlord took all of her belongings. She has sought legal advice and has documents to support various incidents regarding the matter and wanted to know what could be done. Director Todman informed Ms. Beavers that the HCVP director would contact their partners in Maryland to address her issue.

Linwood Coleman – A nonresident came before the Board to speak on behalf of Kera Carter. He stated that he was her caseworker and that Ms. Carter has documented mental and physical disorders. He stated that she does not have adequate housing that would allow for her to be treated. He stated that she was assured that she would receive housing but has had no returned calls when inquiring. He stated that he has made several calls on her behalf up until yesterday with no response. Mr. Coleman also stated that Ms. Carter

has been hospitalized on several occasions and is now living with family. Director Todman stated that she was looking at where Ms. Coleman is on the wait list and that she would receive a call for housing soon.

Kera Carter – Ms. Carter stated that she is the person that Mr. Linwood spoke on behalf of and stated she wasn't the only person in this situation. She stated that she does not fit in certain categories for housing and asked if something could be done to help her and others in her demographic. Vice Chairman Slover stated that Ms. Carter presented an interesting argument that should be looked into but it is a supply and demand problem that DCHA grapples with. Director Todman asked Ms. Carter to stay after the meeting to address her issue.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chairman Slover announced that the next DCHA Board of Commissioners meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 8, 2017 at DCHA Headquarters, 1133 North Capitol Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20002 at 1pm.

Meeting adjourned at 3:20 pm.

DRAFT