

Housing Authority of the City of Vineland

REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, September 16, 2021
6:00 p.m.

The Regular Meeting of the Housing Authority of the City of Vineland was called to order via video teleconference by Chairman Ruiz-Mesa on Thursday, September 16, at 5:08 p.m. at the Brown Community Center located at 191 W. Chestnut Avenue, Vineland, New Jersey 08360.

The following Commissioners were present:

Commissioner Chris Chapman
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi **(Absent)**
Commissioner Daniel Peretti
Commissioner Brian Asselta
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa

Also present were Jacqueline Jones, Executive Director, Wendy Hughes, Assistant Executive Director, Charles W. Gabage, Esquire – Solicitor, Linda Cavallo – Accountant and Gloria Pomales Executive Assistant.

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa read the Sunshine Law.

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on August 5, 2021. **TABLED - UNABLE TO PASS**

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for the Financial Report from the Fee Accountant. Linda Cavallo reviewed the Financial Report for the eleven months August 31, 2021.

Executive Director's Report:

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa requested the Executive Administrative Report. Mrs. Jones reported there is a change order tonight for the camera system at Asselta Acres. The installation is complete, but there is a couple of issues connecting the system to the main office. The change is for an extension of time. There is no change in cost.

An inspection of the roof replacement at Kidston and Olivio was conducted and there are a few punchout items. There is a change order for a time extension to complete this project to October 21, 2021.

Mrs. Jones discussed the Kidston Interior Plumbing renovations to replace the pipes in and out of the units. Twenty units have been emptied in two risers to start the project. All the residents have been relocated to either Olivio, D'Orazio or Tarkiln Acres. The project is currently in process with submittals from the contractors and ongoing approvals. Mrs. Jones hopes the project starts before the end of this year. The contractor will work in the two empty risers, all the bathrooms will be replaced and all units will be painted. Any other work that needs to be completed will be done. Once those two risers are finished they will be outfitted like a hotel unit. The other occupied units will be moved in and out of these hotel units until the project is completed. The residents will need to be out of their own units and into the hotel units for approximately 4-6 weeks. This project is expected to take a least 18 months.

In the last couple of months, the Authority awarded three real estate companies to sell the scattered sites. There is an issue with the pricing on these homes. The suggested listing prices that came back from the realtors were out of range and they do not tie into the appraisals. The best thing to do is to get the houses reappraised. It will be a quick appraisal because the Authority already has appraisals, but they are old. HUD wants the appraisals to be no older than year. The issue could be if the Authority chooses a realtor to list one of these homes and the price is well out of range of the appraisal it could look suspicious. The Authority will use a standard, which will be an independent appraisal and price the houses within that range.

A preliminary questionnaire has been sent to the scattered site residents asking them if they wanted to purchase a home or continue to lease. There was about an 80% response rate on the 69 houses that are occupied. The responses are being analyzed. There are about 11 families that are over income. Homeownership would be their option because if the Authority issued them a voucher, the vouchers would not pay anything towards their rent or mortgage. About 40 residents are interested in owning a home. A quick analysis of this indicated $\frac{3}{4}$ of them are extremely low income or very low income. A counseling session will be held with them through a credit counseling service company. Part of this process will include keeping 12 units consisting of 10 structures. Some of these units are involved in the EPA issue on West Avenue. The other houses chosen to keep are on Axtell Avenue. These units will be available and will be subsidized for anyone that is up to 80% of AMI (area median income). At some point, these units can be transferred over to the VHDC. If the VHDC obtains them, a voucher can be issued permitting a fair market rent.

Committee Report: Commissioner Chapman reported the Contract Committee discussed the professional contracts of Accounting, Auditing, Architectural and Engineering. Legal – General Counsel, Legal – Labor Relations Counsel, and Consulting Services to be awarded tonight. The committee reviewed the staff's rating and ranking. It is the recommendation of the committee to award Bowman and Company for Auditing, award Eisenstat, Gabage and Furman for Legal – General Counsel, award The Brooke Group for Consulting Services, award Linda M. Avena for Accounting, award Brown and Connery for Legal – Labor Relations Counsel and award Haley Donovan for Architectural Engineering Services.

Old Business: None.

New Business: Chairman Ruiz-Mesa reported he wrote to the Mayor and City Council in reference to the reappointment of Commissioner Chapman and Commissioner Asselta indicating the outstanding service they have provided to the VHA as well as being very qualified, knowledgeable and having experience. He requested for the reappointment of Commissioner Chapman and Commissioner Asselta. Chairman Ruiz-Mesa did not receive a response by either party.

With no other discussion in related matters the Chairman moved to the Resolutions.

Resolution #2021-39
Resolution to Approve Monthly Expenses

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa has reviewed the expenses and recommends them for payment in the sum of \$1,336,196.70. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)

Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa (Yes)

Resolution #2021-40
Extending Painting Services Contract

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-40. Mrs. Jones stated this is the allowable extension (2 of 2) with JC's Custom Painting. This is also the painter that will be used at Kidston to paint all the units. The units are supposed to be repainted every few years according to the DCA rules and sometimes it is just not possible due to a variety of reasons especially when they are occupied. This will give the Authority the opportunity to paint every unit in Kidston and Olivio Towers over the next couple of years. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-41
Extending Extermination Services Contract

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-41. Mrs. Jones stated this is the allowable extension (2 of 2) with Omega Pest Management LLC. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-42
Awarding Management Fee Accountant Services Contract

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-42. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-43
Awarding Auditing Services Contract

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-43. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)

Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa (Yes)

Resolution #2021-44
Awarding Legal Services Contract – General Counsel

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-44. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-45
Awarding Special Legal Services Contract – Labor Relations Counsel

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-45. A motion was made by Commissioner Chapman; seconded by Commissioner Peretti. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Abstain)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-46
Awarding Consulting Services Contract

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-46. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-47
Awarding Architectural and Engineering Services Contract

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-47. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-48
Adopting State Budget

Mrs. Jones stated the State Budget was initially approved a few months ago and then it is sent to the DCA. The DCA reviews and comments on the Budget. The last couple of years their comment on the budget is in regard to post employment liabilities for health and pension. This typically puts programs in the negative because it does not appear that in the one year that you can pay for these liabilities. When you take the liabilities off of the balance sheet the Authority is in good shape. The idea is that these benefits are paid on an annual basis and the budgets can handle the payments on an annual basis just not the entire liability, which is on the books but does not have to be funded at this point. Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-48. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-49
**Resolution for the Intention of Providing Management Services
to the Ocean City Housing Authority**

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-49. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-50
**Resolution for the Intention of Providing Management Services
to the Cape May Housing Authority**

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-50. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-51
**Resolution for the Intention of Providing Management Services
to the Buena Housing Authority**

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-51. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
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Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-52

Approving Change Order #4 for Olivio/Kidston Tower Roof Replacement Project

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-52. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-53

Award Roof Replacement Contract (757 S. West Avenue)

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-53. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-54

Approving Change Order #4 for Asselta Acres Camera Project

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-54. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-55

Authorizing Entering into a Contract Agreement with Mall Chevrolet

Mrs. Jones explained this resolution is for three (3) Chevy Malibu's which will replace some of the older vehicles in the VHA fleet. The purchase would come out of the Capital Fund through Operations. Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-55. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)

Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa (Yes)

Resolution #2021-56
Authorizing Entering into a Contract Agreement with Hertrich Fleet Services Inc.

Mrs. Jones explained this vehicle is a 2022 Chevy Express Passenger van and will replace the current passenger van the Congregate Program is using, which is about 10-12 years old. The used van will possibly be purchased by Cape May Housing Authority. Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-56. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2021-57
Approving One-Time Compensation Bonus Payments to Certain Authority Employees Based on Increased Hours and Responsibilities in Connection with the Authority's Shared Services Agreements, Management Agreements and Housing Assistance Payment Agreements

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa stated this has been done in prior years. Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-57. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. Mrs. Jones wanted to comment on the fees that the VHA is bringing into the COCC. This year she took the current financial statement and then she projected to the end of September. Mrs. Jones is projecting \$1.4 million in total income for COCC in fees and of that about \$370,000 is from the management of the other housing authorities and Melrose Court. The one-time bonuses that are recommended would be about 6% of the total COCC received in fees collected. It would also represent 25% of the \$370,000 from the other authorities. So overall 6% of the \$1.4 million and then 25% of the additional authority work. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Mr. Gabage stated the Board will be going into Executive Session in reference to the Executive Director, Jacqueline Jones.

Mrs. Jones waived her formal RICE notice and waived her right to be in the room during executive session so everyone can speak freely. Mrs. Jones stepped out of the room during executive session.

Resolution #2021-58
Authorizing Executive Session

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-58. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
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Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

The Regular Meeting closed for Executive Session at 6:29 p.m.

The Regular Meeting reopened at 6:47 p.m.

Resolution #2021-59
Authorizing Executive Director Contract

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2021-59. Mr. Gabage suggested if any Commissioner would like to comment on the reason for the vote. They are not obligated to comment, but it would be good for record to establish the reason for their vote. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chapman stated he is in favor of this Executive Director's contract on a multitude of reasons and will not waste anyone's time describing other than to say in summary that in his 25-year tenure at the Authority he has had 6 different Executive Directors that the Board had to hire and fire and inevitably all of those years and all of those meetings can come down to only one decision he has ever made that was right and fought for and that was the hiring of Mrs. Jones. This is the only decision that he would ever think he was absolutely right about. He has made a lot of mistakes as a Commissioner during his time, but the one absolutely certain thing he did correct was hiring Mrs. Jones to take over this Authority and was the best decision he has ever made.

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
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Commissioner Rudolph Luisi	(Absent)
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Commissioner Peretti stated he is in full agreement with what Commissioner Chapman stated.

Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Yes)
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Commissioner Asselta stated Mrs. Jones always put the greater good for the City of Vineland and the residents first and foremost. Mrs. Jones always looks for different avenues to increase revenue.

Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
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Chairman Ruiz-Mesa stated agrees Mrs. Jones deserves this contract as well as to have some sense of security in her position. She has done an excellent job running the agency and making the Board Member's job easier.

Chairman Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)
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Chairman Ruiz-Mesa asked for comments from the press and/or public. Chairman Ruiz-Mesa asked for comments from any Board Members. Commissioner Chapman stated there are a lot of things that are happening here at the Authority and as a tenured member it has been his pride and joy to serve. He acknowledges he made a lot of mistakes over the years. It is funny on the Executive Director's contract is the summary of really what he would have to say, which is that inevitably that his time here, as difficult as it has been at times, he believes the one thing he got

right was when he fought to hire Mrs. Jones as the Executive Director. It was not an easy hire but it was only born out of the process of having gone through a number of Executive Directors that really failed this Authority and failed the City of Vineland. Through whatever fault and anyone can go back and look that he was part of that but it has become abundantly clear that the likelihood of him being reappointed, which he respects, understands and has no disagreement with. He serves at the will of the appointment process. At this point in time, it certainly feels like he will not be reappointed. It also appears that Commissioner Asselta will not be reappointed. The Board is aware that Commissioner Luisi is not present tonight based upon the process of there being a little bit of confusion of whether he is appointed and serves and having been reappointed, but no one has been reappointed in his seat. The Board here at the Housing Authority is going change and it is the nature of a housing authority. He respects that and he wants to be able to speak here in a public meeting that he will continue to offer his voice to this Authority and any Commissioner who comes on board if they have questions of him or think that he could lend his historical narrative or favor to understand where things come from or where things go he will be available to everyone and anyone to say here is why we did what we did and how it turned out. That being said, he thinks if this isn't his last meeting it will be his second to last meeting. If himself, Commissioner Asselta and Commissioner Luisi are not here and only being a seven-member board which struggles to get board members attendance that when it changes there will be a dynamic shift in the direction of the Board. It may be the most positive thing that can happen. No one will know and does not know who the new members will be, but only knows that his history here served him well to know that kind of seismic change in the Board most likely represents change. His concern will primarily be that the Authority within the City of Vineland continues to operate and serves the people that it is empowered to serve, which is what it has done tremendously under Mrs. Jones. This is and should be the primary goal of the Commissioners. The Board's only job is really to hire and fire the E.D. When it comes down to it, that is truly the only thing the Board is empowered to do. He stated he screwed that up a number of times, but he got it right once. Commissioner Chapman wanted to thank everyone. He is a big fan of the Authority and believes it has done great things in the community. That is the hard thing sometimes and it is really not necessarily that you think you are doing the next great thing. You have to realize just getting this right with what you have is the accomplishment let alone the fact that additional revenues have been brought in and able to operate without any question of financial distress. There have not been board meetings where this room is packed with people screaming of what is going wrong. This is an Authority that works, works well, it functions seamlessly in the community and to Commissioner Chapman that is the measure of success that didn't always exist. Mr. Gabage can remember the Authority spent years in litigation over a number of matters of hiring and firing. We have not had any of those issues in front of us. Mr. Gabage agreed and stated an no meeting that went on to 12 – 1 a.m. at night listening to mostly tenants complaining. Commissioner Chapman stated not that there are not problems and not that there are things that have to be solved. Mrs. Jones is a problem solver. She is able to put whatever is in front of you and figure out what needs to be done. That is a rare quality in this day and age. Commissioner Chapman has served at the pleasure of others that have appointed to him to the board. He is happy that he had the opportunity to be here and serve. He holds a pride for himself and he respects greatly that if it is not the wishes of others that is within their absolute realm and right to do. He has never in 25 years in being appointed by 5 different Mayors has ever solicited for himself to be appointed to the Authority's Board or any other Board. Commissioner Chapman believes the only thing he feels he brought to the table is historical narrative (not early on), ability to understand and have the vision of realizing through 6 E.D.'s of how ugly an authority can get without an atmosphere of leadership that is systemic within the organization. You cannot fake that. You cannot just suddenly create that. It is something that any leader within any organization has to bring to the table and when it is not there it is quick to expose itself and quick to dismantle the fundamental function of the Authority, which is to provide services to those that need it within the City of Vineland and in the VHA's instance three other Authorities. Commissioner Chapman wishes everyone the best at the VHA and will always be available to both Commissioners and

Staff if they feel like somehow or another there is something he can say or do that would make a difference in changing someone's mind or directing the Authority in a positive direction.

Mr. Gabage and Ms. Avena thanked the Board for their reappointments.

Mrs. Jones thanked the Board for approving her contract. She appreciates all that has been said tonight and appreciates the board's support.

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa stated Commissioner Chapman and Commissioner Asselta's appointments are good through November and will attend next month's meeting but wanted to thank them for serving on the Board. They have been good board members and they have a lot of knowledge and it is much appreciated all they have done for the Board and the Vineland Housing Authority.

With no further business to discuss, Chairman Ruiz-Mesa entertained a motion for adjournment of the Regular Meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The vote was carried unanimously by the Board Members present. The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jacqueline S. Jones
Secretary/Treasurer