

HOUSING COMMISSION OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2021, 11:30 AM
818 S FLORES & VIDEO CONFERENCE

Members Present: Robert Abraham, Member
Pedro Alanis, Member
Jeff Arndt, Member
Kristin Davila, Member
Shirley Gonzales, Chair
Ed Hinojosa, Member
Taneka Nikki Johnson, Member
Amanda Lee Keammerer, Member

Members Absent: Sarah Sanchez, Member

Staff Present: Mark Carmona, *City Manager's Office*; Verónica R. Soto, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Juan Valdez, *Mayor's Office*; Teresa Myers, *Mayor's Office*; Jameene Williams, *City Attorney's Office*; Patrick Steck, *Department of Human Services*; Ian Benavidez, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Sara Wamsley, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Allison Beaver, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Crystal Grafft, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*; Rachel Smith, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Sharon Chan, *Neighborhood & Housing Services Department*

- **Call to Order** - The meeting was called to order by Chair Shirley Gonzales at 11:33 AM.
- **Roll Call** – Allison Beaver, Housing Policy Manager, called the roll. At the time when roll call was conducted, seven (7) members were present representing a quorum.
- **Public Comments** – Gonzales, announced there was one (1) resident signed up to speak for public comment.

- 1) **Item 2:** Bill Neely, Executive Director of SACRD.org (San Antonio Community Resource Directory) stated that SACRD is a free online directory that lists human service programs available in the community. The directory is used frequently by residents, case managers, and social workers. SACRD is now developing a one stop shop housing project that was envisioned in the SHIP (Strategic Housing Implementation Plan) and should tie in with efforts.

Staff note: The Housing Commission deadline for submitted written comment is 24 hours before the meeting. The reason for this is because it takes 24 hours for comments received in a language other than English to be translated. Speakers can leave a voicemail to be played during the meeting up to three hours before the meeting. Speakers can sign up to speak live during the meeting virtually up to 3 hours before the meeting or to speak during the meeting in person up until the meeting starts. Speakers who call past the deadline are given the opportunity to submit a written comment to be included in the minutes but not read during the meeting, and to sign up in advance for the following meeting.

1. Item #1: Approval of the Minutes from the San Antonio Housing Commission meeting on February 23, 2022.

Commissioner Alanis requested that the recommendations from the various organizations in the roundtable discussion series be extracted and compiled into a report. Sara Wamsley, Affordable Housing Administrator, stated a white paper or short summary could be compiled from the three meetings and brought to the Commissioners in May.

Commissioner Pedro Alanis motioned to approve the Minutes from the San Antonio Housing Commission meeting on February 23, 2022. Commissioner Amanda Lee Keammerer seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Item #2: Briefing and discussion related to Permanent Supportive Housing in San Antonio and the Strategic Plan to Respond to Homelessness in San Antonio and Bexar County.

Gonzales requested Mark Carmona, Chief Housing Officer, to introduce the topic.

Carmona stated permanent supportive housing (PSH) acts as a bridge along the housing continuum from homelessness to affordable housing and homeownership. Identified as a SHIP recommendation and a Housing Bond category, PSH is housing and not a temporary shelter for members in the community experiencing homelessness.

Katie Vela, Executive Director of SARA (South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless), stated their organization started as a stand-alone nonprofit in 2015. SARA is responsible for coordinating HUD funding, strategic planning for the City and Bexar County around homelessness, and helps develop community-wide policies with other organizations for program operations.

Vela stated there were several organizations assisting with the community's homeless response system such as shelters like Haven for Hope and SAMMinistries. However, additional housing options were needed to advance people out of homelessness that may have a disabling condition and have been on the street for a year or longer. As the community does not have long term supportive housing for individuals with these conditions, they continue to struggle in the current system for the rest of their lives. Criteria of individuals that may need PSH include experiencing long term homelessness and having a mental, physical, or learning disability. Currently, scattered site PSH is the most common in the community, having resources in the community that is close to the individual's apartment. However, what is most needed is site based PSH where clinical/medical staff are available on site for individuals, so they can have greater stability and have easier access to resources. Vela noted a 98% retention rate with the current scattered site PSH program. She noted that there are currently 663 people on their coordinated entry waitlist and only 11 openings for the year. Vela stated that the waitlist is a testimony of the effectiveness of the program but noted the strain of availability.

Nikisha Baker, President and CEO of SAMMinistries, stated SAMM has served the San Antonio community for nearly 40 years and entered the PSH space shortly after the opening of Haven for Hope in 2012. With 175 units, SAMM is the largest community provider of scattered site PSH in the community. Time is dedicated to educating case managers on updated trauma informed care and tenants on good tenancy skills to ensure clients remain stably housed.

Commissioner Johnson's attendance was visibly and audibly confirmed at 11:51 AM.

Patrick Steck, Assistant Director of the Department of Human Services (DHS), stated DHS is the City's social services agency and assists with the continuum of housing services for the homeless. He noted that in 2020, a Homeless Strategic Plan was presented to Council with a key recommendation for more housing that clearly overlaps with the SHIP and the two plans are interrelated. Steck stated DHS also undertakes direct street outreach like SAMM to speak to vulnerable individuals that may not have wanted to connect with systems previously.

Scott Ackerson, Executive Vice President of Strategic Relationships at Prospera Housing, stated Prospera is the largest non-profit affordable housing provider in Texas. They are mainly concentrated in South Texas but are expanding to Austin. Ackerson was previously with Haven for Hope and a national consultant for homeless housing working at where it intersects with health care systems.

Kim Jefferies, President and CEO of Haven for Hope, stated Haven is the largest shelter in the community. Haven has scattered site PSH and houses one hundred individuals. Jefferies noted Haven's shelter is overburdened as many individuals that could qualify for PSH could not be transferred to a PSH home. They could not be transferred because there is a shortage of PSH homes available. Currently there are 80 individuals waitlisted in Haven's PSH Direct Referral Program.

Edward Gonzales, Executive Director of the Housing First Community Coalition (HFCC), stated HFCC began in 2017 with the express purpose of developing single site PSH and currently is developing Towne Twin Village, a 205-unit PSH community.

Chair Gonzales inquired about the differences between services and amenities provided in PSH. Edward Gonzales stated the main service provided at PSH is intensive case management to connect individuals to clinical or medical services needed. The developments will also provide amenities to improve residents' quality of life such as walking trails, computer lab, and a gym.

Alanis inquired regarding the demographics of the 660 families in need of PSH and what demographics typically need PSH units. Vela stated single individuals and adult couples with long-term, disabling conditions are key demographics in need of more PSH units. Gonzales noted with Towne Twin they are identifying individuals SARAH's index indicates are vulnerable and house people base on the referrals. Currently, singles and couples that are over 50 years old are being prioritized for Towne Twin. Alanis noted that universal design would be an important component to address for the aging population.

Alanis asked what sources of funding are used for the intensive services of the scatter site PSH. Baker stated that SAMM had been awarded an additional \$415,000 from HUD for their ongoing PSH supportive services and HUD is the largest funding source for the intensive services. Alanis asked if the bond funding for PSH would be geared toward the development and maintenance of the PSH units or the long-term operational support. Carmona stated the bond funding would be towards the development of new PSH units as organizations are able to bring services but not the capital for unit development. Alanis inquired if Medicaid would be able to support any services. Ackerson stated Texas is not a

Medicaid expansion state so it would not be able to be used for funding. He noted Prospera is working with Managed Care Organizations and their funding should directly impact social determinates of health. Ackerson also stated during Carmona's tenure at Haven, they were able to legislatively advocate for the Healthy Community Collaborative Grant that was able to fund Haven's PSH program. Carmona noted that a SHIP strategy is also to advocate for Medicaid expansion at the State and Federal levels. Ackerson noted during his span as a consultant, the states that had Medicaid expansion were able to focus were people experiencing homelessness as they were the highest utilizers of services.

Keammerer inquired regarding the new census data, how did the community change in terms of homelessness demographics. Steck stated DHS analyzed the released information and the 2019 Poverty Report. A reoccurring trend is that over 50% of households in poverty are families with single women as the head of household. Steck mentioned the new data was not a large departure from the 2019 report, but DHS will be further analyzing the data and doing a public engagement survey with people living in poverty to understand present needs and obstacles. Vela stated that SARAH does their own count annually on how many people are experiencing homelessness a single night of a year and will release results of the study in mid-May.

Keammerer inquired what solutions or barriers have been seen in other cities when approaching homelessness and what opportunities and barriers San Antonio has to adopting other cities' solutions. Vela stated San Antonio has one of the best systems nationally and noted that San Antonio hasn't seen a large explosion of unfiltered homelessness like other large cities, potentially due to relatively affordable housing and robust services from collaborative partnerships and system coordination. She stated the two areas that are lacking are medical respite and long term permanent supportive housing for individuals. Vela stated other communities have leveraged funding for development and done housing bonds for more single site PSH. Jefferies agreed that when she started at Haven for Hope the City's strong coordinated homeless response system was extremely helpful. She noted that many other cities' housing bond funding was directed to affordable housing only and not other parts of the housing ecosystem. Carmona noted that partnership opportunities to educate potential PSH developers on what services are needed on single site PSH and discussing how to best implement the services in the site design is needed. Ackerson highlighted that he had worked across the nation in replicating the San Antonio model. He noted with the passing of the HEARTH Act (Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing) in 2009, grant funding that used to be for emergency shelters were reallocated to emergency solutions grant that only funded PSH, thereby downsizing or eliminating several emergency shelters in the nation. However, San Antonio significantly increased capacity assisting in its dynamic distinction from the rest of the nation. He also noted, the community is seeing issues of gentrification and 95% housing occupancy rates and if left unaddressed, will most likely have similar outcomes to other large cities in the next five to ten years. He remarked that Los Angeles is investing billions in the homeless intervention system with detrimental results and agreed the SHIP's multifaceted approach is best.

Commissioner Abraham requested elaboration on the Towne Twin Village development and inquired the pros and cons of single site versus scattered site PSH. Gonzales stated the Village will be comprised of 100 tiny homes, 80 apartments, and 25 travel trailers, all under the same rental pricing structure. He stated the development is intentionally built to establish an internal community because often individuals living in PSH return to the streets as they felt isolated in their apartments. Towne Twin will cluster 10 to 14 units together to

facilitate community relationship building. Additionally, the Village will be on a main bus line so individuals without access to personal transportation are still able to reach off site services. The Village's core care coordinators and case managers will help individuals select opt-in services; increasing the effectiveness of a service if residents are more comfortable with participation. Gonzales highlighted the low barrier to entry, where the household won't be charged more than 30% of their income and the remainder will be covered by continuum of care subsidies from the federal government.

Abraham inquired regarding the coordination of PSH units if a resident can advance to better circumstances. Baker stated that housing vouchers are tenant based and will transition with the individual. Realistically, even if a resident of PSH moves to different apartment community, the individual will most likely not be self-sufficient enough to not require the additional supportive services. She envisions SAMM having the second single site PSH (after the Village) so residents of their shelter would be able to transition easily. Abraham asked if the unit would also stay under the PSH category after the tenant had moved out. Baker confirmed that for the Hudson Apartments, SAMM's site-based project, as well as Towne Twin's project, units would continue to be under the PSH category. Vela highlighted a partnership with SAHA for 40 move-on vouchers where tenants that have been stable for several years but still need housing subsidy are able to qualify and free up intensive services for other individuals. Baker emphasized the importance of PSH in a family setting where all members are able to take advantage of the intensive services and potentially break the cycle of poverty.

Commissioner Johnson questioned what the transition process would be if a PSH household were able to acquire higher income status. Gonzales stated the typical entry income range for the Village is up to 30% AMI (area median income). As they are also providing workforce training, if a tenant increased their income to 40% AMI, they would still qualify for most federal subsidies. If the tenant was able to increase their income significantly but still needed supportive services, they would be able to take advantage of services but would be charged the break-even rate of the unit, about \$800. He stated that Towne Twin wouldn't disqualify them but would work to see what would best fit their circumstances. Johnson asked if the households would be signing yearly leases. Gonzales confirmed that leases would be renewed yearly as the timeframe was determined to be long enough to converse about potential changes or improvements within the household. Johnson inquired about the occupancy limit of each unit. Gonzales stated that each unit is approximately 500 square feet, and the maximum occupancy would be two per unit though the majority of intake would be single tenants.

Commissioner Arndt agreed PSH was a great long-term solution in addressing homelessness but urged to prioritize the one-stop shop mentioned by Neely. He inquired regarding the Haven wait list time duration. Jefferies stated the wait list is synced with the Coordinated Entry's Homelink database. Vela stated over 2,000 individuals are listed under the Homelink database and are prioritize by the vulnerability index weekly. If a household is in the top 200 listed, they are locked in a "Priority Pool" that is sent weekly to agencies in case an opportunity arises. Vela stated that the average duration is two to three months, but the time varies greatly depending on the vulnerability of the person. Arndt asked for the address of Towne Twin. Gonzales stated Towne Twin is located at 4711 Dietrich Road next to the Eastside Education and Training Center. Arndt applauded HFCC for creating a community base while considering external needs that are essential for tenant stability, mainly transportation to widen individual access to the job market and other facilities.

Gonzales highlighted the bus stop as will be a climate-controlled area for individuals awaiting transportation along with the incorporated kitchen/dining area.

Commissioner Hinojosa inquired about the waitlist growth for PSH as he noted SAHA's waitlist doubled during the pandemic. Vela stated there was a decline in the waitlist as more options were provided during the pandemic; however, as CARES Act assistance wanes, the need for more homelessness intervention will increase especially as rent relief declines and eviction rates increase. Baker noted that individuals on the Homelink database may qualify for multiple interventions like rapid rehousing and PSH but would be guided to the program that would be first available or easiest to place. She agreed there may be a shifting trend to PSH as rehousing funds run low. Jefferies noted Haven also saw a decrease in shelter population from an average of 7,000 to 4,000 people but are starting to see numbers rise again. Steck concurred as their street outreach also indicates a rising trend.

Chair Gonzales asked Gonzales to elaborate on community buy in to PSH as many neighborhoods may have a NIMBY (not in my backyard) perspective. Gonzales stated community approval was a large challenge but was not more than anticipated and contributed it to proactive approach with community engagement and education.

Carmona summarized that a narrative change of homelessness needs to be created. With new evidence and data-driven messaging, not stigmas and community misconceptions. He expressed that as the Commission is refining its dashboard, it could collaborate with SARAH, as they are also developing a dashboard for their homelessness data. There is a distinct intersection with each issue.

3. Item #3: Briefings by Commissioners related to the work of the Housing Commission Subcommittees.

Chair Gonzales asked subcommittee members to present updates.

Abraham thanked Billy Mahone from SARAH for starting the idea of roundtable discussions with the Public Engagement and Outreach Subcommittee (PEO). He also thanked Crystal Grafft, Housing Policy Coordinator, for highlighting PEO items. He stated PEO met in February to discuss recruitment strategies for the newly formed Renters' Issue Subcommittee. Additional physical locations and organizational outreach were recommended to staff to account for the digital divide. He thanked Hinojosa for adding information in the SAHA bulletins as well.

Johnson stated the Renters' Issue subcommittee (RIS) launched their application for four renters and three owners/property managers. Commissioner Davila, Johnson, and staff met to discuss desired criteria and lived experiences for the new members. The application period opened on March 2nd and will close on April 4th. Applications will be reviewed by Davila, Keammerer, and Johnson. Currently, thirty-four applications have been received and reviewed on a weekly basis. Final recommendations are expected to be presented at the next regular Commission meeting.

Johnson continued regarding the Removing Barriers subcommittee (RBSC) that five of six recommendations passed the PCTAC (Planning Commission & Technical Advisory Committee) review process. The Commission's recommendation regarding tree preservation in the right of way was not accepted; however, all recommendations will still be presented at City Council for final decision. Staff will work with DSD (Development

Services Department) for other solutions to the tree preservation amendment. RBSC is finalizing its workplan and have decided to meet twice a month. Johnson thanked Grafft and Rachel Smith, Housing Policy Coordinator, for highlighting items in the subcommittees.

Keammerer stated the Dashboard & Annual Report subcommittee (DAR). She thanked Smith for her highlighted items. The members reviewed dashboard progress and which will contain an overview of the Housing Policy Framework (HPF), strategies, status, and investment summary. The annual report will provide the initial three fiscal years of the HPF accomplishments. Both items should be ready to present in May's Commission meeting.

4. Item #4. Director's Report.

Chair Gonzales requested Verónica R. Soto, Director, present.

Soto noted that a JPG version of the RIS flyer has been distributed to Commissioners as follow up from the previous meeting.

Soto stated the Risk Mitigation Policy (RMP) developed into the Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP) during the pandemic to assist with homelessness prevention by providing housing and utility assistance. As less federal funding is being distributed, EHAP will transition to the Housing Assistance Program (HAP) and closed the application portal on March 1, 2022. The remaining applications are being processed and a new portal will be open for HAP tentatively scheduled in April. HAP will continue to be informed by the RMP and the new RIS will assist on HAP policy direction. Of the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA-1) Round 2 funding being redistributed by the U.S. Treasury, \$4.3 million was awarded to the City. Soto highlighted that Wamsley led staff in submitting a grant application through TDHCA (Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs) and was awarded \$6.7 million. \$2.4 million will be distributed to the Right to Counsel Program expansion and the remaining \$4.3 million will go to Resident Relocation Assistance expansion. Both the ERA-1 and TDHCA items will be presented to Council also on April 7, 2022.

Soto stated \$2 million is slated to be awarded to assist in rehabilitation of rental units for FY23 from the federal omnibus bill. She continued that approximately \$900,000 in City fee waivers were distributed from applications received in January. In line with the updated City Fee Waiver policy mentioned in SHIP, affordable housing units were prioritized in waiver considerations. From the waivers granted, 1,800 rental units will be for families at 60% AMI and below; 400 rental units at 30% and below; and 64 homes for sale at 120% AMI and below. Soto noted that City Fee Waivers are still available, but SAWS waivers have been exhausted.

Soto announced the Planning & Community Development Committee meeting will take place on March 25th, Know Your Rights Training on March 31st and April 28th and the next Commission meeting to be held at SAHA on April 27th.

Keammerer inquired if there were specific people that should be thanked for the federal funding. Soto listed Congressman Castro regarding the \$2 million omnibus funds; Wally Adeyemo, Deputy Secretary, and Jacob Leibenluft, Chief Recovery Officer, regarding the redistributed ERA-1 funding; and Bobby Wilkinson, Executive Director, and Brooke Boston, Deputy Executive Director, for the TDHCA grant.

Arndt inquired regarding if the infrastructure bill (omnibus) was an earmark and who assisted. Soto stated the infrastructure bill was an earmark that was assisted by Congressman Castro and Ian Benavidez, Assistant Director, and Jaime Lalley-Damron, Housing Bond Administrator, submitted the application for NHSD. Arndt noted Castro assisted in submitting for VIA as well and would thank him for both recommendations.

Closing-

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned without contest at 1:04 PM.

DRAFT