

HOUSING COMMISSION OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2023, 11:30 AM
100 W HOUSTON & VIDEO CONFERENCE

Members Present: Robert Abraham, Member
Nicole Collazo for Pedro Alanis, Member
Kristin Davila, Member
Shirley Gonzales, Chair
Ed Hinojosa, Member
Kammy Horne, Member
Taneka Nikki Johnson, Member
Amanda Lee Keammerer, Member
Cecilia Garcia Redmond, Member

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Mark Carmona, *City Manager's Office*; Veronica Garcia, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Juan Valdez, *Mayor's Office*; Teresa Myers, *Mayor's Office*; Jameene Williams, *City Attorney's Office*; Ian Benavidez, *Neighborhood and Housing Services*; Veronica Gonzalez, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Patrick Steck, *Department of Human Services*; Sara Wamsley Estrada, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Allison Beaver, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Jacob Floyd, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Siboney Diaz-Sánchez, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Marivel Arauza, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; James McKenzie, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Jessica Lozano, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Valentina Fernandez, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*; Sharon Chan, *Neighborhood & Housing Services*

- **Call to Order** - The meeting was called to order by Chair Shirley Gonzales at 11:38 AM.
- **Roll Call** – Allison Beaver, Senior Housing Policy Manager, called the roll. At the time when roll call was conducted, nine (9) members were present representing a quorum.
- **Public Comments** – Beaver announced there were two (2) residents signed up to speak for public comment.
 1. Item #3 - Marcia Willmet inquired if solar energy had been considered as a different government resource for a backup resource for older houses and their communities. She stated demolishing older complexes would be more effective to get rid of infestations. Willmet noted that equipping new complexes with solar panels would also help offset the costs. Willmet stated rebuilding section by section through the city would be vital for the City's housing infrastructure.
 2. Item #3 - Keshia Brown, renter in District 10 and member of Texas Organized Project (TOP), stated after the storms of 2021, she became homeless for five to six months after being denied assistance due to her being outside of city limits. Since

moving into city limits, her current apartment unit has had eight code violations and is surrounded by neighboring drug addicts. She expressed worry for her 13-year-old son, fear of her landlord, and a wish to live in a healthy and safe environment. Brown wanted to ensure that the Tenants Bill of Rights was passed so renters could demand safe and healthy conditions without retribution. Tenants had been organizing the bill for over a year and were disappointed the original language had been edited. She requested the state law stipulating tenants can organize without fear of retaliation be explicitly noted. She mentioned the removal of mention of language justice, to communicate to tenants in a language they understand, is a failure to protect renters. Brown noted renters are the biggest stakeholders and the bill already had the support of hundreds of renters. Brown also requested the bill be voted upon by City Council no later than April as tenants deserved to know their rights immediately.

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 22, 2023. (Video timestamp: 4:15)

Commissioner Cecilia Garcia Redmond motioned to approve the minutes from the San Antonio Housing Commission meetings on January 25, 2023. Commissioner Kristin Davila seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Item #2: Briefing related to the 2022-2027 Housing Bond. (Video timestamp: 4:43)

Gonzales requested Ian Benavidez, Deputy Director, present. Benavidez presented an update to the Housing Bond's Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Request for Proposal (RFP).

Gonzales inquired when the RFP would be considered by Council. Benavidez stated the PSH RFP would be considered at the April 20th meeting. She asked if additional grant funds from other government entities were reflected in the leveraged funds category. Benavidez noted there were grant funds that could potentially be leveraged for the second round of RFPs for rental housing acquisition, rehabilitation, and preservation; affordable rental production and acquisition; and homeownership production but the guidelines from the federal government are still unknown. The PSH RFP has funds leveraged from Bexar County's Home- American Rescue Plan (ARP) fund in coordination with the Department of Human Services (DHS). Gonzales noted that ARP was a short-term funding source and asked if there was a long-term plan. Benavidez stated ARP would be used for initial funding, but SARAH (South Alamo Regional Alliance for the Homeless) is assisting as they have annual funding they could release and all partners are using SARAH for coordinated entry. Gonzales voiced her concern about the funding plan being sustainable as many PSH and developments have growing needs and maintenance. Veronica Garcia, Director, noted the funding recommendations include two years of operational funds for partners and they are able to apply for additional funding through DHS's Continuum of Care solicitations.

Commissioner Johnson requested clarification regarding Slide 18 and respondents following housing first and trauma informed care standards. Steck, Assistant Director, stated the RFP required each respondent to answer how they have or will adhere to housing first (accepting clients that may have issues with traditional housing arrangements) and trauma informed care principles (designing, staffing, and staff training to create a safe inclusive environment) in the past or moving forward. Both housing first and trauma informed care assist and prioritize the most vulnerable. Steck noted staff coordinated heavily with SARAH in the RFP process. Johnson inquired if there was a checklist of items respondents needed to have in their answers. Steck stated that staff noted items such as case manager load ratios, backgrounds of leadership and staff to hire, but no specified checklist was created for the review. Staff used their expertise as a certified trauma informed agency to evaluate and critique the open-ended question. Johnson recommended a checklist be created to assist in the evaluation. Commissioner Davila stated her experience with Merced Housing Texas, a recipient of City funding, annual compliance monitoring is present to ensure adherence to the proposal. Steck also noted that the Continuum of Care funding compliance monitoring through SARAH would also be present. Mark Carmona, Chief Housing Officer, noted that a checklist may not encompass all aspects of trauma informed care as the goal is to meet and respond to a client's current status.

Commissioner Abraham inquired if case management services were contracted and, if so, what was the duration of the contract. Steck stated that most case management was in-house, but the partner may have contracts with different service agencies. Benavidez stated the City would have an initial two-year contract to assist the partner with their operational servicing agencies and would have compliance monitoring. The contracts between the partner and serving agencies must have a duration of 15 to 20 years and would be monitored through where the partner receives their continual operations funding. Abraham inquired if there was a date for the second round of PSH funding. Benavidez stated no date has been set but would update the Commission after more staff coordination.

Commissioner Redmond asked if the locations of the projects could be shared. Benavidez noted that due to the solicitation's restriction on communication, project locations are unable to be stated now but would be released during the upcoming April 12th Council B-session. Redmond inquired if projects chosen were in areas that would adequately service the homeless. Steck stated the system that partners are required to use will prioritize and send clients to the PSH that best fits their situation and needs. Benavidez noted the three recommendations are in different districts and that the site's access to public transportation and services were considered.

Davila inquired how many PSH developments or units are there currently in San Antonio. Steck noted currently there were 700-800 scattered site PSH units. Davila noted the 288 units created through this RFP would be a significant impact to the SHIP's (Strategic Housing Implementation Plan) goal of 1,000 PSH units.

Gonzales noted the low ratio of leveraged funds for PSH and inquired how best to increase the leverage amount. Benavidez stated staff worked closely with developers to maximize dollars leveraged, however, currently there is a lack of funds that can be leveraged for PSH. Many projects rely heavily on donations, but staff is discussing other funding options with DHS, SARAH, and Opportunity Home.

3. Item #3: Briefing and discussion on the City's Tenants Rights Campaign. (Video timestamp: 40:58)
Gonzales paused for public comment.

Gonzales requested Veronica Gonzalez, Assistant Director, present. Gonzalez presented regarding the Tenants' Rights Awareness Campaign's background, goals, session dates, stakeholder groups, and timeline.

Redmond stated that the majority of the information provided pertained to education of tenant's rights but not sustainable and livable housing environments for renters as noted by the public comments from Willmet and Brown. She inquired what steps are being taken to ensure livable conditions for renters. Gonzalez stated staff is working with the Development Services Department (DSD) in helping develop the Proactive Inspections Taskforce to proactively inspect apartment complexes for code violations. Garcia noted that the Taskforce was being brought for Council consideration the next day on March 23rd. With the Taskforce's passage, DSD would handle the enforcement portion of the Taskforce and NHSD would handle the educational component. Jameene Williams, Assistant City Attorney, noted that there were several existing state and local laws that could be used to address concerns immediately, such as codes related to, residential development, building, and property maintenance. She noted the majority of residents are aggravated by the drawn-out enforcement process and how many opportunities a landlord receives to rectify their violations. She noted state law dictates the process. If a violation can be fined, the municipal court is only able to impose a limited fine and enforcement methods. She noted the majority of the enforcement power is held at that state level but staff does have lobbyists working on the matter.

Johnson noted several community members requested My City is My Home and SACRD (San Antonio Community Resource Directory) be added to the stakeholder group list. She requested clarification if the ordinance was the vehicle that stated the Notice of Tenant's Rights (NTR) must be served at the time of eviction. Williams stated that the NTR must be served at the time a Notice to Vacate is served to a resident. Johnson inquired if the NTR could also be instructed to be provided at the time of lease signing. Williams stated that Council could discuss amending the ordinance to include the verbiage. Johnson recommended that the NTR be provided at the time of lease signing.

Davila noted that during the Renters' Solution Subcommittee (RSS) meeting, members agreed that the NTR is best delivered in advance but noted the enforcement is difficult as smaller landlords may not be up-to-date or willfully ignore regulations. She recommended collaboration with the eviction court system to ensure NTR compliance. Gonzalez noted that their Eviction Courts Team coordinates with the Justice of the Peace Courts and they have observed many judges inquire if a NTR was provided to the tenant. She stated if a landlord or property owner has not given out the NTR, the judge delays the proceedings to give more time for the tenant to find additional assistance. Garcia noted that the NTR must be attached only if the Notice to Vacate is due to non-payment of rent and was issued within the San Antonio city limits.

Commissioner Horne requested clarification on Slide 26 regarding Housing Commission's role in April. Garcia stated the Commission would take action on recommending the resolution supporting tenant's rights before the PCDC (Planning and Community Development Committee) meeting on April 27th.

Abraham requested a flyer with the session dates as an image file and several print copies for community distribution by the Public Engagement and Outreach Subcommittee (PEO) members.

4. Item #4: Briefing and discussion related to background and an update on VIA's Advanced Rapid Transit (ART) North-South and East-West Corridors. (Video timestamp: 1:12:45)

Gonzales requested Art Herrera, VIA's Special Projects Manager, present. Herrera presented an overview of VIA's fleet, riders, Keep SA Moving focus, innovations, ART North-South Corridor, and an update on the ART East-West Corridor.

Gonzales noted the East-West Corridor travelled mainly through District 5, an area that has a high number of VIA riders and inquired what benefits the corridor would have to riders. Herrera stated the corridor would increase frequency of service and the distance a rider could go thus increasing their job option availability.

Abraham noted a new housing development, Los Arcos at Vida, on South Zarzamora and inquired if there were plans to expand further south past their coverage over Texas A&M. Herrera noted that coverage can be flexible and modified services areas can be made to meet demand but currently VIA Link operations are able to assist residents in the Zarzamora area.

Johnson inquired about the process to request a VIA Link service route be added in an area. Herrera stated a full evaluation with financial analysis is conducted and to see if VIA Link would be plausible in a requested area. Typically, fixed routes that have decreased in riders are first to be re-evaluated for VIA Link. He noted that the evaluation is an involved process, but duration may vary with each request. Johnson noted her experience with requesting VIA Link for her area had gone upwards past 4.5 months with no result. She noted as she relied on VIA at her previous home, the experience has been extremely trying as she now relies on friends and family to assist her. Horne acknowledged VIA is financially constrained as they have a larger servicing area than Houston but receive less than a penny of sales tax revenue per dollar. She stated the VIAtrans Paratransit service is available around ¾ mile around all existing bus routes. Horne stated VIA's Best Bus Effort is one of the opportunities available for VIA to receive feedback from the public and continue plans to improve routes. Johnson noted several community members have expressed their disheartenment after attempting to move into affordable housing but finding VIA did not service around the vicinity.

Gonzales remarked that the Roosevelt Street 2017 bond project had one of the best coordination efforts she had seen that involved extensive public input and planning with Public Works and VIA. She noted the State restricted some planned elements and the project halted. She inquired about its status. Herrera stated that though the planning took more time, the Roosevelt project has started construction.

Collazo inquired if there were similar projects in other cities. Herrera stated several cities have ART lines such as Mexico City, Indianapolis, Salt Lake City, and Minneapolis. He noted that VIA conducted research that included information gathering trips to find each ART's best practices and lessons learned. He highlighted each ART was slightly different than the other due to their communities and the landscape environment.

5. Item #5: Briefing on the Housing Commission Subcommittees ongoing work. (Video timestamp: 1:51:11)

Gonzales requested Davila, Abraham, and Johnson present.

Davila presented on the Renters' Solutions Subcommittee's (RSS) work regarding the Tenant's Rights Campaign. She highlighted discussions are being had about potentially creating short video factoids that could be posted on social media to increase awareness of tenants' rights.

Abraham presented on the Public Engagement and Outreach Subcommittee's (PEO) work to collaborate with District 8 for a townhall to promote housing activities, acceptance of Towne Twin Village's invitation for the PEO to tour their PSH facilities, and Commissioner Redmond's joining of the PEO.

Johnson presented on the Removing Barriers to Affordable Housing Development and Preservation Subcommittee's (RBSC) work to set a workplan for upcoming sessions to include items such as community land trust, land banking, and promotion of accessory dwelling units (ADU).

6. Item #6: Director's Report (Video timestamp: 1:57:25)

Gonzales requested Veronica Garcia, Director, present.

Garcia overviewed updates to the Property Tax Help Campaign (PTHC) and upcoming events.

Closing-

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned without contest at 1:37 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

**Sharon Chan
Housing Policy Coordinator**