

**ST. CLOUD HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
STUDY SESSION**

**Wednesday, October 23, 2024**

A Study Session for the St. Cloud HRA Board of Commissioners was held on Wednesday, October 23, 2024. Chair Nancy Gohman called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Commissioners present: Mike Conway, John Dvorak, Seal Dwyer, Nancy Gohman, George Hontos, Hani Jacobson, and Carol Lewis. Absent: none.

Executive Director, Louise Reis, began the Study Session by providing updates on personnel and operations at the St. Cloud HRA. Ms. Reis said the HRA is still in the process of hiring a Deputy Director and would provide an update at the next meeting. Commissioner Hontos asked how the interviews are going and Ms. Reis said there have been qualified applicants and part of the hiring process includes Commissioners Gohman and Dwyer during the final interview for Board feedback.

Finance Director, Karen Rizer, then provided an update on the staff's recommendation for pay increases in 2025. The current performance review process is being revamped by Gallagher and will not be completed in 2024, so Ms. Rizer is compiling a recommendation to present to the Board for approval in November. Commissioner Conway asked if employees would be equalized in their respective pay scales, depending on time in their respective roles, and Ms. Rizer responded, that is being considered.

Ms. Reis then discussed eligibility requirements for Grace McDowall Apartments. Historically, the HRA has allowed anyone of extremely low-income, with a preference for anyone 62 and older or handicapped or disabled. In 2023, there was a meeting with Minnesota Housing that challenged the criteria and suggested individuals who are younger than 62 and not handicapped or disabled are not eligible. Ms. Reis said in August of 1988, the HRA passed a resolution allowing all individuals of extremely low-income to apply because the agency could not keep up with occupancy and HUD allowed the resolution. In 2010, Ms. Reis received notification from HUD about inconsistencies in paperwork and Ms. Reis shared the documents with HUD about the approval for applicants; HUD responded they would take care of the inconsistencies on their end. In June of 2023, this issue was noted again in a management review. The HRA then reached out to HUD and they have turned it over to their legal department. HUD shared that if they find the additional applicants should not have been allowed, it will be the HRA's responsibility to help the affected residents find different housing. Commissioner Hontos asked how many units are at Grace McDowall and Ms. Reis responded there are 90 units and all are currently occupied. Commissioner Dwyer clarified it is either handicapped or disabled, not both, and Ms. Reis said yes, it is either handicapped or disabled. Commissioner Hontos asked how many residents are impacted and Ms. Reis said approximately five residents. Ms. Reis added it has always been HUD's objective to not make anyone homeless, so if HUD rules these residents cannot stay, the HRA would ask if they could continue living at the property until they can find alternative housing.

Ms. Reis moved to the final item on her agenda, creating a Housing Navigator position. Voucher Programs Manager, Lori Lygre, added that other housing authorities have added similar positions helping voucher holders find housing and developing relationships with landlords and property managers. Commissioner Conway asked if the person would be a liaison between the landlords and HRA and if a streamlined process could be provided to landlords for more incentive to rent to voucher holders, and Ms. Lygre said yes, it will be helpful for landlords to have one contact instead of several occupancy specialists they need to contact about rent increases or changes. Commissioner Jacobson asked how long a voucher holder currently receives to find a place to live. Ms. Lygre responded they have 60 days to find a unit, and the voucher holder can extend for two 30-day extensions. Commissioner Gohman asked if it's a part-time or full-time position. Ms. Lygre said the position would be full-time and the job description could include assisting with recertifications, covering the front-desk, and helping applicants apply to the HRA's waiting lists. The HRA is currently working on the job description and hopes to post for the position the beginning of 2025.

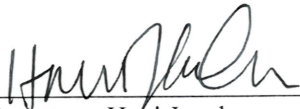
housing project, and Ms. Reis said the application was not approved, and Central Minnesota Housing Partnership wants to reapply in the spring with additional community support (like donated land, reduced City fees, etc.). Ms. Reis added the HRA is looking at providing VASH project-based vouchers but there will be additional discussions with the VA and Central Minnesota Housing Partnership.


Commissioner Lewis asked Mr. Soenneker about an update on the Brownstones project. Mr. Soenneker said the bulk of the work is completed, but there is a lengthy punch list. Chair Gohman asked for a CDBG update and Mr. Soenneker said there are 21 on the waiting list, but the HRA is out of fix-up funds until January 1, 2025.

Commissioner Lewis brought up during open discussion that she would like to see City Council provide two members to the St. Cloud HRA Board versus the current three members, to allow for more community participation.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
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Secretary, Hani Jacobson

  
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Chair, Nancy Gohman

**ST. CLOUD HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
REGULAR MEETING**

**Wednesday, October 23, 2024**

A Regular Meeting for the St. Cloud HRA Board of Commissioners was held on Wednesday, October 23, 2024 at 1225 West St. Germain Street, St. Cloud, MN 56301. Chair Nancy Gohman called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m.

Consent Agenda:

1. Roll call was taken and the pledge of allegiance spoken. Commissioners present: Mike Conway, John Dvorak, Seal Dwyer, Nancy Gohman, George Hontos, Hani Jacobson, and Carol Lewis. Commissioners absent: none.
2. Approval of Agenda – Commissioner Gohman pulled Item 5 – Approval of Payment Standards Effective January 1, 2025. Commissioner Dwyer moved items 2-4 for approval; Commissioner Conway seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted in favor; the agenda and consent agenda moved as presented.
3. Approval of Regular Minutes, September 25, 2024 – approved as presented.
4. Review of 2024 Financial Reports – no action required.
5. Approval of Payment Standards Effective January 1, 2025 – Commissioner Gohman asked how the HRA arrived at the conclusion to keep the payment standards the same. Executive Director, Louise Reis, said the Fair Market Rents remained a similar amount and the HRA decided to maintain the same payment standards as 2024. Commissioner Hontos asked how the rents are determined and Finance Director, Karen Rizer, responded that the payment standards for the voucher program are required to be between 90 to 110 percent of the fair market rent. Commissioner Gohman moved for approval; Commissioner Dwyer seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted in favor; the motion carried.

Open Forum: Chair Gohman asked Ms. Reis if any member of the public had requested to speak; Ms. Reis responded there were none.

Old Business: none.

New Business:

6. Approval of Resolution 2024-15 – Authorizing Participation in the Minnesota City Participation Program for 2025 – Ms. Reis shared this program is applied to on behalf of the City of St. Cloud to Minnesota Housing because it reserves first-time homebuyers' funds. Commissioner Hontos stated that this would be good information to share at the council level about a way that the city is contributing to home ownership in the community. Commissioner Dwyer moved for approval; Commissioner Lewis seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted in favor; the motion carried.
7. Approval of Contract for Design / Engineering Services for Empire Apartments Boiler Replacement – Project Manager, Paul Soenneker, requested the Board approve the contract with Design Tree Engineering in the amount of \$29,500.00 for the design and engineering services for the replacement of two boilers and two HVAC pumps at Empire Apartments. Commissioner Hontos asked about hiring a design company versus an HVAC company for project details. Mr. Soenneker said every HVAC company would potentially bid something different, whereas the engineer designs the specs and then bids are received in a more accurate manner. Commissioner Hontos moved for approval; Commissioner Dwyer seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted in favor; the motion carried.
8. Approval of Contract for Design / Engineering Services for Wilson Apartments Sanitary and Domestic Pipe Replacement – Mr. Soenneker shared the HRA is requesting the Board approve the contract with Blumentals Architecture in the amount of \$215,000.00 for the design and engineering services for the replacement of the sanitary and domestic pipes at Wilson Apartments. Mr. Soenneker met with two companies that reviewed blueprints

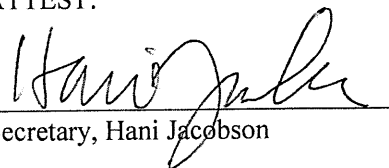
and Mr. Soenneker called agencies that had completed similar projects, and they all recommended using a firm that has experience with the project due to unforeseen issues that can arise during this type of project. Mr. Soenneker and HRA staff recommended going with Blumentals, even though the bid is higher, because of their experience completing several similar projects. Additionally, Blumentals has a plan that could result in residents having to be relocated for less time. Commissioner Lewis commented the cost upfront may be more, but hopefully it will cost less to rehouse the impacted residents in the long run. Commissioner Gohman asked for clarification on the tenant relocation. Mr. Soenneker responded Blumentals will coordinate a plan for which residents need to be out of their units and when they need to be out by. Commissioner Hontos asked how long the construction will impact residents. Ms. Reis responded 4-6 weeks per stack. Commissioner Lewis asked if the idea is to first house the impacted residents in other HRA units. Ms. Reis responded the HRA is coordinating with local hotels that have dinettes for the duration of the project. Commissioner Gohman asked about the timeline and Mr. Soenneker responded the HRA hopes for to begin the project in the spring. Commissioner Lewis moved for approval; Commissioner Dvorak seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted in favor; the motion carried.

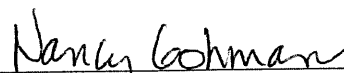
9. Change in Medical and Dental Insurance Providers – Ms. Rizer shared that changing the medical and dental insurance providers from Health Partners to Blue Cross Blue Shield effective January 1, 2025, would save the HRA approximately \$16,500.00. Commissioner Lewis asked if there is a difference in coverage for employees and Ms. Rizer said it is very comparable. Commissioner Dwyer moved for approval; Commissioner Conway seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted in favor; the motion carried.

10. Report on Activities – Ms. Reis said on October 29, 2024 HRA staff will have a table at Project Connect at River’s Edge Convention Center. Ms. Reis said the November HRA Board Meeting will be scheduled for November 13, due to a city council meeting on November 20. Ms. Reis added the HRA received the grant agreement from Benton County for ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds for Eastwood Apartments and the HRA staff is starting by replacing the boiler.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
Secretary, Hani Jacobson

  
Chair, Nancy Gohman