

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF THE
ANNISTON HOUSING AUTHORITY
November 12, 2020**

Members Present: Marcus Dunn, Chairman
Cynthia Calix, Vice Chairwoman
Trudy Munford, Commissioner
John Wilson, Commissioner
Kenneth Winsley, Commissioner

Staff Present: Willie B. McMahand, Jr., Executive Director
Geraldine Allen, Senior Property Manager
Terri Lloyd, Planning & Development Officer
Shazmine Gullett, Executive Assistant
Clarence Copeland, Resident Safety Manager

Others Present: Boice Turner, AHA Attorney
Tim Lockett, Anniston Star
Glen Ray, NAACP
Ciara Smith, Councilwoman Ward 3
Demetric Roberts, Councilman Ward 2
Kathryn White, concerned citizen
Rosie Chatman, concerned citizen
David Curtis, Alabama Voters League
Richard Jackson, concerned citizen
Dr. Freddy Rimpsey, Alabama Voters League
Shirley Carter, Anniston Resident

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dunn.

Invocation

Invocation was done by Chairman Dunn.

Changes to the Agenda

There were several changes made to the agenda; Mr. McMahand thanked everyone for attending and explained that he has learned that we have additional visitors in attendance for the Public Hearing. They are staged over in the Employment Training building. The Board Members will decide how to proceed; they can have everyone come over, as many

that can fit, while still social distancing or they can decide to reschedule for a later date, so that we can be in a larger building. Vice Chairwoman Calix suggested that we go ahead and let our visitors speak. They will come over one at a time.

Public Hearing—PHA 5-year and Annual Plan

It was confirmed that the meeting was being recorded. Visitors will be called in one by one to speak. Vice Chair Calix motioned to open the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Winsley. All voted unanimously. Mr. McMahan explained that the Public Hearing today is for the housing authority's Annual Plan document, which will be voted on later on in the agenda. AHA's 5 year and Annual Plan is a HUD required document. It has been noticed, we've had the comment period and meetings with residents. The final step is to hear from the public.

Dr. Freddy V. Rimpsey, President of Alabama Voters League (AVL) introduced himself. Dr. Rimpsey recalled that when Mr. McMahan first accepted the position at AHA as Director, he met with AVL's committee, as they were concerned about making sure Mr. McMahan and the Board of Commissioners did not violate Title V of the Civil Rights Voting Act. There was talk about AHA's plans to demolish Cooper Homes, which at the time was the largest voting block of black people in the City of Anniston. He remembers a time when at large voting, which was against the law, was happening in the city and says he was able to change things, along with the Justice Department, and as a result they were able to establish 'black wards'. Dr. Rimpsey held up a copy of a law that states that 'when you move large portions of blacks from one ward to another, you are violating the law; it has to be pre cleared through the Justice Department.' Dr. Rimpsey explained that he let Mr. McMahan get away with demolishing Cooper Homes and now some of those people are in Saks, Lenlock and Oxford. He feels that had Cooper Homes not been torn down, we may have been able to elect a black mayor, who only lost by a few hundred votes. Dr. Rimpsey then added that Mr. McMahan and the Board has destroyed the black votes that others have worked hard to create and they will not sit back and let this continue. He has been told that Glen Addie Homes has mold and he understands that health and safety are important but he was told by Mr. McMahan that AHA would be purchasing other land, vacant lots and building other houses for people to move into and that has not happened. He implied that Mr. McMahan is like Donald Trump; he is hurting black people and he is undoing what some have suffered and died for, in the interest of black people. He stated that they are not happy about it and if they have to, they will file a lawsuit against Mr. McMahan, the Board and the City of Anniston, because they will not sit back and let them destroy black wards that they have worked hard to establish. Dr. Rimpsey offered copies of all documents that he had and added that he made Mr. McMahan aware of everything he is speaking of. He recalled being told by someone that Mr. McMahan has stated that he is not interested in the local politics, and that he is just here to do a job. Dr. Rimpsey feels that we do not need people here 'pimping' our folks for white folks. He also mentioned a young woman that he knows that was relocated to Jacksonville; her children are now in the Jacksonville school system and she is doing well for herself. He questioned why would she move back? He says

we've lost thousands, not a few hundred people that have occupied Cooper, Glen Addie and Barber Terrace. He would like something done. Boice Turner, AHA Attorney, asked Dr. Rimpsey if he was opposed to people finding a better life for themselves? Dr. Rimpsey replied that maybe he hasn't made himself clear, or Attorney Turner is trying to be facetious and make him look bad and he doesn't appreciate that. He says he is a man of God and has worked all of his life for people and bettering lives questioned why would he be interested in doing something that would prevent anyone from having a better life? Dr. Rimpsey explained that the people that we are moving out of the projects, a lot of them aren't even working and have nowhere to go but the housing authority. Several are on zero rent, mothers with children not working and people on disability. He stated that they do not want people living in mold but he does not want the housing authority to destroy black voting districts that they have suffered and died to establish. He said the record will show that white people do not traditionally vote for black people. Dr. Rimpsey then stated that whomever questioned him, he would like to give them an example. Attorney Turner introduced himself as Boice Turner, in which Dr. Rimpsey replied that he (Turner) "has always been an asshole." Chairman Dunn interjected and said that he would like to give him the time to give a closing statement. He said he's learned a lot, and did not know the history and thanked Dr. Rimpsey. In closing, Dr. Rimpsey stated that if AHA is going to continue to tear down housing where people are living, he would like for them to have other places to live within that ward or district because AHA is breaking the law. He explained that he has already spoken to the Justice Department about this. Chairman Dunn says that if another meeting is set up, he would like to be apart of it. Dr. Rimpsey said he was upset about someone trying to imply that he does not care about poor people, black or white. Dr. Rimpsey recalled suing 67 counties in the state of Alabama in order to get them to redistrict areas in hopes of getting black people to be able to work for the county government. In closing, Dr. Rimpsey asked for Mr. McMahan not to undo what he and others have worked hard, suffered and died for.

Pastor David Curtis, Vice President of Alabama Voter's League, spoke next. He explained that he has a couple concerns. He was here a few years ago, before Cooper was demolished and recalls being told that residents would receive vouchers and that Cooper would be rebuilt with housing in the area, but he has yet to see anything, which makes him feel as if he was given false information. Another one of his concerns is the dilution of votes. People are going to live in another district, which is hurting where they used to live. Pastor Curtis went on to say that if Cooper Homes was still standing, that could have been another 800 votes and we may have had a black mayor in Anniston for the first time, but the voters were taken out. He had a few main questions: when will Cooper Homes be rebuilt and will Glen Addie be an empty lot like Cooper? He suggested getting people back in this area so that if someone wants to run for office, they have the opportunity to use the people in this location to vote for them.

Glen Ray, President of NAACP, explained that when black people get concerned about what's going on, people want to bring up the time that it takes to make things happen. He

suggested that everyone in the room is salary, and no one is paid hourly and said he thinks that everyone is here because they want what's best for the City. He was told that Cooper Homes would be rebuilt, however, he is now being told that due to the soil, that may not happen. Mr. Ray would like to know if Cooper will be rebuilt. He insisted that we keep a promise before we start tearing down something else. There are people coming from Washington D.C., coming to spend time with children and help in the community. He questioned when is the community going to help itself, and when are we going to get people to help out with the community? Mr. Ray suggested building something back at the Cooper site, and informed everyone that if anything else is torn down before then, they will start marching and protesting.

Richard Jackson, a concerned citizen, expressed his concern about the demolition of housing for minorities in a minority area, before preparations are made to relocate them back to their original area. He believes that a plan needs to be put into motion, not talked about, to put people back where they were.

Shirley Carter, a resident of Anniston, addressed the 5-year plan and wanted to know if the document was supposed to address all of AHA's properties, or just the ones listed. She did not see Cooper Homes listed at all. Mrs. Carter described that she was unaware that questions would not be answered, and wanted to know how questions that everyone was asking would be addressed. Mr. McMahan explained that he and the Board will discuss how to answer all questions, after the public hearing. Mrs. Carter also pointed out that Barber Terrace is going to be rebuilt under RAD. She requested that Mr. McMahan explained to her what RAD was and says that her understanding of RAD means that independent funders will fund the rebuilding of the apartments and will therefore privatize the property and take the authority from AHA. She questioned if AHA is trying to take public housing from HUD and make it a private entity. Mrs. Carter also wanted to know if the first plan given to HUD on the Cooper Homes demolition include a one for one rebuild. Mr. McMahan answered, no, it was not required. Mrs. Carter then requested a copy of the original plan approved by HUD and all amendments that have been done since then. She pointed out that Cooper Homes is not mentioned in the 5-year plan and what do we do about that and also has there been an environmental assessment and where does it stand. Mrs. Carter would like to know what is the plan for Cooper Homes at this time and also how can there be a board meeting to approve the 5-year plan the same day that there are community comments. She does not think the plan is good for the community because there is no time limits on what will be done. Mrs. Carter also asked Mr. McMahan when is he retiring and wanted to know if whatever he puts in place now going to be the plan that the next Executive Director follows. Her final question was 'will the community be able to get written comments in the 5-year plan that came from the community.' Mrs. Carter was not pleased about not being able to get her questions answered on the spot, as she was sure she would have had follow up questions. She would like to know when she can expect her answers. Mr. McMahan replied after the public hearing is closed, the Board Members will

consider all comments, decide on the Annual Plan document and come back with how to answer.

Vice Chairwoman Calix motioned to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Winsley. All voted unanimously.

Approval of Minutes—August 27, 2020

These minutes are from our August Board Meeting. They were tabled last month due to not having the correct Board Members present for approval. Commissioner Munford motioned to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Winsley. All voted unanimously.

Approval of Minutes—October 8, 2020

After a brief review, Commissioner Winsley motioned to approved the minutes from this meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wilson. All voted unanimously.

Mr. McMahan informed the Board that the comments that were just given by the public during the public hearing will now become part of the Annual Plan document that will go to HUD. He also pointed out that the Annual Plan needs to be approved last; Board Resolutions AHA-20-028 and 029 fall in line with 027. If there is a problem with approving the Annual Plan (027), then all three need to be tabled. Chairman Dunn recommended that we not vote on 027, 028 and 029 today. Those will come back at a later date.

Vice Chairwoman Calix stated that in an order of transparency, she is hoping the Board will discuss how to make sure that they do not vote on a plan that the community is concerned about and needs to be adjusted. She also mentioned that some of those concerns are the same as what Board Members have expressed. Mr. McMahan said the Board can hold off on this plan until they meet and decide which direction they would like to go in.

Commissioner Calix reiterated that the 5-year plan will be discussed as a Board and then make sure the community is informed when we bring this back to the agenda for approval. Items need to be approved by the next board meeting, as the document needs to be submitted to HUD before January 15, 2021.

Board Resolution AHA-20-025—Collection Loss Write-Offs

The Anniston Housing Authority requires that vacated tenant account balances be written off monthly for public housing residents. It is recommended that the Board of Commissioners consider and approve the write off collection losses in the amount of \$2,194.70 for Conventional Housing for the month of July 31, 2020. A motion was made by Vice Chairwoman Calix to approve the collection loss write off. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wilson. All voted unanimously. Commissioner Wilson showed concern on the amount written off from Constantine. Geraldine Allen, Senior Property Manager, explained that the amounts are higher because of COVID-19. AHA is only allowed to continue to accumulate fees for rent and late charges, but we cannot proceed with the eviction process due to the guidelines that HUD and the CDC have laid out. These guidelines

have been mandated until at least the end of the year. The moratorium should be lifted sometime next year and evictions for nonpayment of rent will then start back.

Board Resolution AHA-20-026—Temporary Personnel Policy Change (Buy Back Program)

Mr. McMahand explained that due to COVID-19, we have a few employees that were not able to take their time off and have over the 320-hour threshold that can be carried over into the next year. The Board is asked to approve employees to buy back 60 hours, instead of 40, and also allow employees to take over 320 hours into the next year. Commissioner Wilson motioned to approve the Personnel Policy change. All voted unanimously.

Board Resolution AHA-20-027—Submission of PHA 5-Year and Annual Plan for fiscal year beginning 2021

This resolution was tabled.

Board Resolution AHA-20-028—Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP)

This resolution was tabled.

Board Resolution AHA-20-029—Proposed Flat Rents

This resolution was tabled.

Mr. McMahand explained the next process with the Annual Plan. The biggest change was updates, and a piece was added on COVID. A lot of the changes were pro-resident and accommodations for COVID. Improvements at various properties are also part of the document. He also spoke to RAD with Barber Terrace and closing the mixed finance deal. The closing is scheduled to take place in January and then redevelopment can start. The Cooper site would be a mixed finance deal as well. To answer Ms. Carter's question about "Why RAD?", Mr. McMahand explained you can do a lot more with RAD. In order to bring all the public housing units up to standard, a federal model was constructed and named the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD). AHA has studied it, and believes that it can work for a few of our properties. For the properties that it will not work for, the Board will be coming up with a plan moving forward. Ms. Carter then suggested that AHA gets with the City of Anniston to see how they can assist. Mr. McMahand replied when AHA was asked to come to the table 8 years ago, along with the City and the Board of Education put together the West Anniston Master Plan, the plan did not call for any public housing on the Cooper Homes site. Instead, a middle school was supposed to be there. When the plans fell through, that is when an engineered solution was designed to bring back units to the sight. When that deal is set in stone, AHA will then go back to the City to ask for funds. Vice Chairwoman Calix would like to know if it is possible to put a plan together that immediately addresses bringing Cooper Homes back; a structured plan with a timeline and updates. She suggested showing the community that we are working as hard as we can to bring back affordable housing in West Anniston. Vice Chair Calix also suggested that RAD is not the only solution; and that we review other options. Commissioner Munford agreed and added that we need

to prioritize and bring Cooper to the forefront as our number one priority. Mr. McMahan replied that Cooper Homes has never left the top of our priorities; we've never given up on the site. Ms. Carter suggested getting out a fact sheet to the public. Councilwoman Smith offered her services, if needed, in getting word out to the community on projects that AHA has going on. She would also like to attend AHA's Board Meetings. Councilman Roberts will meet with Commissioner Munford and get as caught up as he can.

Other Business

Mr. McMahan pointed out that we are working on a board portal that will be on our website. He would like for the board to review the information and give their suggestions and feedback. Also, the board iPads are ready, they will be passed out soon.

Executive Director's Comments

The Executive Director did not have any comments.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Commissioner Winsley to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wilson. All voted unanimously.