

**ERIE COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2024 AT 11:30 A.M.
CENTER PLACE APARTMENTS
100 NORTH CENTER STREET
CORRY, PA 16407**

Chairperson Heasley called the Regular Meeting of the Housing Authority of the County of Erie to order at 11:31 a.m., with the following present:

BOARD

Sherri Heasley, Chairperson
John Downey, Vice-Chairperson
Jennie Hagerty, Member - present by telephone
Bob Williams, Member
William "Buzz" Hammond, Member

STAFF

Beverly Weaver, Executive Director
Jarid Pettit, Controller
Rachel Petty, Administrative Assistant

ROLL CALL

Meeting attendance was taken.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dennis Tripp addressed the board about when the walk-in shower would be installed in his apartment.

Ms. Weaver responded by stating it depends on the schedule and recommended Mr. Tripp call Sam Vanchieri, Facilities Manager for details.

APPROVE MINUTES

On MOTION by Mr. Williams, seconded by Ms. Hagerty, the Minutes from the July 10, 2024, Regular Meeting were approved. Ayes: All.

FINANCIALS & BILLS

Mr. Pettit reviewed the internal financials by project for the month ending July 31, 2024 and the Yearly Income Statement Comparisons from January 1, 2024 through July 31, 2024.

Discussion was held relative to Mr. Pettit submitting key financial information on a summary sheet, eliminating the need to review them during the meeting.

On MOTION by Mr. Hammond, seconded by Dr. Downey, the Erie County Housing Authority Operating Budget and Income Statements were approved. AYES: All.

On MOTION by Dr. Downey, seconded by Mr. Hammond, the Erie County Housing Authority approved the submission of a streamline cover sheet listing highlights of the financials and bills with the Draft Minutes. AYES: All.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Public Housing Agency (PHA) Annual Plan - United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Resolution

Ms. Weaver provided updated information and stated that the actual Plan is available for review in the office or online at the Erie County Housing Authority's website.

On MOTION by Mr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Hammond, the Erie County Housing Authority approved the updates to the PHA Annual Plan. AYES: All.

b) 2025 Pension Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO)

Mr. Pettit reviewed the worksheet and reminded the board how the calculation is completed. He stated the obligation was a little higher than last year and confirmed that the auditors also review this information. He answered questions relative to who holds the pension and about past investments.

Ms. Weaver informed the board that Mr. Pettit and she had discussed estimated pension payouts recently because there are several employees who will be eligible to retire in the next 3-5 years. She stated that they requested estimated ending percentages from Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System (PMRS) to compare pension payouts and they will get back to the board once that information is received.

Mr. Williams volunteered to help review the housing authority pension and offered information relative the retirement plan at the Corry Redevelopment Authority.

c) Section 8 Administrative Plan Update NSPIRE Inspections

Ms. Weaver provided copies of the Administrative Plan Update chapter relative to inspections, and stated that HUD has extended the deadline an extra 12 months to start Section 8 NSPIRE Inspections to allow agencies an opportunity to prepare for the new standards. She noted that the Section 8 Inspector has already started implementing a lot of the new standards.

She brought the boards' attention to the list of inspectable items and stated that many of the repairs must be done within 30 days except life threatening deficiencies, which must be corrected within 24 hours.

Mr. Williams asked why the standards could not be ramped up sooner, to which Ms. Weaver responded that it is very difficult to find landlords and many of the existing landlords will have to make major repairs in order to pass the NSPIRE Inspection.

She stated that the new standards have already been sent to the landlords and while some have voiced their complaints that they are not going to cooperate, other landlords have decided to no longer participate in the program.

Mr. Williams stated the NSPIRE Inspections need to start or we are doing a disservice to the communities we serve. He stated further that a lot of the problems in our cities, boroughs, and townships is the housing stock. He noted we need good housing stock to keep tenants from living in squalor.

Discussion was held relative to the Section 8 Inspector having access to enter rentals, where the tenant holds a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, and making a plan for the inspector to immediately begin the NSPIRE Inspections.

Mr. Hammond volunteered to speak with landlords and clarified that the rentals he owns are not participating in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Mr. Williams revealed that funding from the Corry Redevelopment Authority and ACT 137 Funding from the Erie City Redevelopment Authority will be used to complete a comprehensive housing study to determine what Erie County housing stock needs are.

Discussion followed with regard to rental Housing in Corry and Director Weaver reminded her board members that their mission as a board member is not to be influenced by personal or political influences and it was brought to my attention by a member of the public that at the August first Friday meeting with the County Executive in Corry, that my board member, Bob Williams, had made a statement at this meeting that there is still an issue with the low-income in Corry and that 22% of low income that the Housing Authority owns is in the City of Corry and Corry High School has 22% of their student population that don't know what they want to do when they graduate and that's "our" 22%. Then Brenton Davis stated that "2 years ago I put Jennie Hagerty and the two of you (meaning Bob Williams and Buzz Hammond) on the board to take care of this problem". Director Weaver followed with; help me out here, I have met with both you, Buzz and the County Executive and I have explained that I am not moving our office out of Corry, it's not feasible, we (ECHA) own the building free and clear and also there is no way to *eradicate* the low-income population from Corry. Bob stated that the mission is not to eradicate the low-income from Corry that is not the mission at all. Going back to the numbers, it is 48 students didn't know what they are doing. It had nothing to do with that, my point on that was entirely different that the housing stock, but it does correlate with the educational system of what the strain is put upon Corry and that is a fact. Bob Williams went on to say that my job from the Housing perspective has nothing to do with my being on this board. My job is to make sure that my housing stock and what I'm trying to do with new and rehab and those things, that's my job – to make a factual statement of what it is. Bob Williams asked if he has ever said we need to move the building. Not one time, I have been one of your biggest proponent's and why, move the building, when everything is done online. He then went on to ask what's wrong with looking at our housing stock if Corry has all the burden and the housing study says it's all

here we need to figure out a plan over a period of time to disperse that housing and make sure we are making a better thing throughout the County and not just Corry.

Director Weaver then responded with there are Housing Laws and Fair Housing Laws that say we are not allowed to hand a person a Voucher and tell them to go find an apartment anywhere in the County of Erie, excluding the City of Corry. Mr. Williams went on to say we will build brand new housing instead of putting a roof on a house that is 55 years old that's what we can do that's better for the tenant. I am the biggest proponent of Section 8 Housing because it's helping the people, but, we have to give availability in different areas. That may not be the case, we may build them here in Corry. If we continue to put money into old buildings, then we are doing the same as our tenants. So we need to have nice houses and nice environments, that's my goal.

Ms. Haggerty responded by saying that Brenton Davis and my placement on the Housing Board; Bev I know you and I sat with the County Executive and he discussed potentially wanting to move the building and I thought when you and I left the meeting and you were very good about sharing the reasons why you could not move, I thought it was a good point and that the subject was closed. My interest in being on the Housing Board is because of the work that I do. So when we talk about moving structures I might have to slightly disagree because we were able to take a building and renovate it, and some of you have been through the facility, into housing for individuals who could not afford housing and wrap partners around it. So again my take is a little different because this is an opportunity for me to learn and share my experiences and if there is a grant available to share that with you Bev. So I'm just trying to understand what we are trying to accomplish because I don't have conversations with Mr. Davis about the Housing Authority. His conversations with me are about monies that the Mercy Center receives. So am I missing something? Mr. Williams interjected with that is my conversation is all about whole homes so my statement is I say go to the meetings and hear what I say. I believe in the state of the Union as a whole and this is where we are going to be. Mr. Williams went on to say that we have 122 jobs open in our local (Corry) industry. Is there a way we can get our tenants to have to apply for a job because they are not working and for someone coming out of Corry Mfg. after working a 12 hour shift and they have to look at one of our properties and the guy sitting out there smoking and drinking the whole time, there is a strain to that. Do I say we can do anything about it, but that is the state of our housing. Director Weaver brought up the fact that Mr. Williams mentioned the Housing Authority at the Corry meeting 9/6 when he was talking about the school and Mr. Williams pointed out that we (Corry school) have assisted lunch, everybody has it, but that's a strain to our Educational system. Discussion followed with Mr. Williams and Director Weaver with regard to the direct correlation to poverty and education. Director Weaver pointed out that the Housing Authority is not all of the poverty in Corry, that we are a certain percentage, but there are 3,125 people that are low-income in Corry and right now we have 99 Section 8 vouchers filled in Corry that isn't even close to 3000 and that's my point. You just keep throwing me under the bus and Mr. Williams responded with that's not the intent, but that's how it comes out and Mr. Williams said he apologizes if that's how I feel. He proceeded to say his job is to fix Corry and he is going to fix Corry and if that means I have to leave the board, I'll leave the board and Director Weaver responded with that is not where I am going with this. I'm just reminding you of your role as my board member. Mr. Williams said he would give his resignation to Brenton Davis today because his job is to fix Corry and that is what he is going to do. Mr. Williams proceeded to say that he hasn't heard one person say anything, other than himself, about the squalor these tenants live in. Mr. Pettit interjected saying a lot of them aren't our tenants. Further discussion with regard to the condition of the housing units that the tenants in Corry live in. Ms. Haggerty asked if anyone studies Erie Vital statistics because it is all there divided by County. If you go into Erie Vital Statistics It's a yearly report that is all there and divides everything into demographics and County property rate. This is very instrumental as far as accuracy. This is just a recommendation. I'm on it right now and it's very beneficial if people on the board want to take a look at that. And it does it by County.

Ms. Heasley asked where there is a list of the squalor properties? Is that something you can give me all the addresses. Is there information that we can go "Hey this is an Erie County Section 8 Property? Or this is an individual property?" Mr. Williams replied yes he could get that list. Discussion furthered with the effects of poverty on education. Director Weaver pointed out that she had a conversation with Mr. Hammond with regard to building new duplexes in Corry and renting them to Section 8 Tenants and Director Weaver replied yes, but we cannot steer them to those apartments. We can give them a list of landlords and if the landlord shares that they have open apartments we can share that information also. Mr. Hammond said he could start building tomorrow and he will use the example of a house on Mott Street area and building a unit that will house four families of 2 adults and 2 children, the only way I would rent it is to rent it to the people in the Mott Street house and tear the Mott Street house down. That is the whole idea, I do not want to increase the volume, I want to keep it equal. To get some of those houses so they are no longer on Section 8. The question was raised as to whether we should have a plan to rebuild the South Hills Apartments that the Housing Authority owns. Mr. Pettit replied that the only thing is if we had reason and could tear it down we would still

have to rebuild 50 units and fill them with Low-income renters. We cannot just move those tenants out, we have a 20 year use agreement with HUD to house Low-Income residents there. Mr. Williams added a suggestion about demolishing and rebuilding one building at a time at South Hills to improve our housing stock. He also added that with regard to additional vouchers and housing in Corry for Senior's. Should we have more Senior Homes? 53% of the homeowners in Corry are Widows. What's going to happen to those people, what's going to happen to those homes? We cannot change if they want to have Section 8 Vouchers, but what we cannot have is a bunch of low-value stock housing. That is putting a strain on the City of Corry. That's where I'm at Period. That's why Mr. Williams said there has never been discussion about put Bob on the Board to go move that. Director Weaver replied that is the impression I got when I was told what Brenton Davis said at the Friday meeting in August. And she continued with Jennie might be able to reiterate that. Mr. Hammond stated that he (Brenton Davis) never said a word to me about it, never, never. Ms. Hagerty said please, I don't mean to be naïve about this I'm still getting my feet wet with this is the Erie **County** Housing Authority and I don't mean this to be disrespectful but this is not just Corry, it's Albion, Girard, Harborcreek, North East, Millcreek, O.K. so why are we so focused on Corry right now? Rev. Downey interjected with I have some perspective on that. First of all this is a very healthy discussion. So, I'm glad we are having this discussion because we didn't used to have discussions like this in the past. This is the tension that I am seeing we have a history of this being the Corry Housing Authority as opposed to Erie County. A lot of this is legacy that we cannot make that go away. We are Erie County Housing Authority which is a distinct Governmental Entity and there is a tension between what's our responsibility as what Jennie was just saying for the whole County and that overview as opposed to the interest of the County as opposed to the leadership of the County Executive and I think he is looking at it through an Economic Development lens. So those two things come into tension like who is ultimately in charge of the questions that were viewed? I think it is hard to resolve because the Housing Authority is set up to be an Authority, not to be a sub-department of County Council, and that's what I see is hard to resolve it makes it more complicated because of the legacy of the Housing done here in Corry. It's already here. But if we had an objective view of the whole County where are the needs of the County? How does Corry match up to that? Mr. Williams stated that is why we have to do a County-Wide housing stock evaluation and I have proposed that with Jessica Horan and have given \$150,000 for that study to give us perspective where we need to be. Ms. Hagerty interjected with I look at it as whether you are housed in Corry or Harborcreek or North East, our responsibility is to the constituents and making sure they are living their best life. So I don't think a location should determine if we are providing the best services as we discussed in this meeting, to the entire County. I don't really understand what it would matter. Respectfully, everybody knows that when you're looking down 10th Street, 12th Street in Erie, St. Patrick's Haven, The Mission, the Upper Room, we have a number of concerns and issues. If we solve them together, my littlest concern is, not to be disrespectful to you Bev, I don't care where your housed, as long as we are providing the best care and opportunity to Seniors, to the lower-income families, Section 8 families to those people we are out here to serve and give them a better life-style. Whether you are in Corry or North East, we as a Board are here, hopefully, to provide you with support and guidance making it successful for everybody. Those are the lenses I see it through.

Mr. Williams said he is going to play devil's advocate and asked if it is fair for one particular area to have all of it? Director Weaver replied by explaining that throughout the County there are a lot of Hands Buildings that house low-income people, and there is so much more out there that you don't see like you do our own buildings at the Housing Authority. There is a low-income building in North East which is not ours, West Gate Apartments in Girard is low-income, there are Apartments in Fairview, which I'm drawing a blank on the name, but they are low-income and none of these are accounted for in our numbers so it makes it seem like Corry is weighted heavily. Mr. Pettit reminded the Board that we cannot relocate the low-income out of Corry.

Additional discussion was held with reference to constructing new housing throughout the County. Discussion was held relative to looking into building new structures because the Faircloth Amendment will allow for the replacement of buildings. It was noted that the housing authority has not been able to build since the 1970's when the Faircloth Amendment came out. Ms. Weaver announced that new structures may qualify with the use of tax credits and stated that she is open to researching the options.

Mr. Williams announced that he has money to finance the building of 4 new houses that will be located near the Corry High School.

Discussion was held as to the cost of materials to build the homes, details relative to home sizes and when the work will be completed.

Mr. Williams commented that the Land Bank demolished 36 homes due to blight and Mr. Hammond volunteered that he had 5 of his own properties demolished.

Ms. Weaver announced the first NSPIRE Inspection (formerly REAC) was completed at the Barnett Building, where out of 22 apartments that were inspected, findings included a loose toilet; an issue with a sink stopper; a smoke alarm that was not working; and 2 refrigerators that had cracked seals. We received a score of 99 out of 100.

Ms. Weaver stated that the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) has a new grant manager who is scheduled to conduct a desk monitoring on October 1, 2024 and explained that since the City of Corry is now under 51% Low to Moderate Income (LMI), the housing authority will have to conduct a survey of a percentage of the city population in order to obtain higher than 51% to complete area wide benefit projects through CDBG. She noted that to conduct the survey another employee may need to be hired or the project will need to be outsourced to a third party.

Discussion was held to possible projects within the City of Corry where CDBG funds could be utilized and Ms. Weaver reminded the board that all projects must be approved first and that HUD entitled communities have different rules than other programs.

d) Updates

Ms. Weaver advised that bids for the Barnett Building office renovation are due soon and she updated the board that the siding jobs in Corry and North East have begun with completion dates expected for the end of October.

She stated that the kitchens are done at West Court Apartments; Random Court and Marvin J. Schick Apartments.

She stated further that Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Program work to install walk-in showers in Corry has started and site work for generators at Pleasant Manor begin this week.

STANDARD REPORTS

Ms. Weaver provided updates and answered questions relative to the vacancies, applications, delinquencies, evictions and waiting lists for each Housing Authority Development.

She stated the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program's waiting list was closed April 30, 2024 to purge the applicants who are no longer interested, noting that 1,000 letters were sent.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other business before the Board and on MOTION by Mr. Williams, seconded by Dr. Downey, the Erie County Housing Authority adjourned the regular meeting at 1:03 p.m. AYES: ALL.