

Minutes of the Ypsilanti Housing Commission

Thursday, April 28, 2016 – 6:00 p.m.

601 Armstrong Dr., Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Meeting called to order at 6:17 P.M. by Commissioner Smith.

ROLL CALL:

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| • Chairperson R. Smith | Present |
| • Vice Chairperson A. Moore | Present |
| • Commissioner T. Boone | Present |
| • Commissioner V. Brannon | Present |
| • Commissioner C. Hollifield | Present |
| • Executive Director Z. Fosler | Present |

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: R. Smith asked if there were any changes to be made to the agenda. A. Moore moved to approve the agenda as written, second by C. Hollifield.

Motion passed 5-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: R. Smith asked if there were any changes to be made to the meeting minutes of March 24, 2016. T. Boone moved to approve the minutes as presented, second by R. Smith.

Motion passed 5-0.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: None.

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS: None present.

RESIDENT COUNCIL REPORT: Z. Fosler mentioned that Commissioner Boone continues outreach and planning for the YHC High School Graduation Celebration. R. Smith suggested that if there are a small number of graduates, we consider honoring them in another way—without holding a separate event. Z. Fosler and T. Boone expressed support for this idea.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Job Posting – Communications and Executive Assistant:** Z. Fosler informed that the job posting for this position has been put on the YHC website and distributed through various mailing lists and he is beginning to receive applications.
- **Discussion of Street Naming for Parkridge Homes:** Z. Fosler informed the Board that he has moved forward on naming the new street to be constructed in Parkridge Homes “Hilyard Robinson Way”, in honor of the site’s architect and history. The City will now work through their process related to street naming. A. Moore asked if there were any other streets in the City that might have a similar name. Z. Fosler replied that he did not know. V. Brannon asked if there was a Hilyard Robinson Foundation or whether he has existing relatives. Z. Fosler said he would pass it along to the architectural historian to look into.
- **Executive Director Contract Renewal:** R. Smith opened the discussion of the executive director’s contract renewal. The Board reviewed a proposed contract submitted by Z. Fosler. T. Boone asked about a proposed change that would remove the requirement for the Board to approve hiring and firing of employees. Z. Fosler replied that he had suggested this change because it is not common for the Board to have this level of involvement in staffing decisions, and that to his knowledge this has not been YHC historically.

Z. Fosler drew the Board’s attention to the two significant changes proposed—salary and number of months of payroll continuation. A. Moore asked Z. Fosler to provide an explanation of why he thought these changes were appropriate. He responded:

- Z. Fosler explained that he has not had a salary increase in the three years he has served as executive director.
- He stated that he has brought in a great deal of revenue for the agency in the form of developer fees and referenced a handout that details development related revenue for the YHC.

- The YHC is the first developer to be selected for participation in the Kresge and Robert Wood Johnson Foundations' Strong Families Fund, which will provide up to \$900,000 in funding for supportive services for residents of Strong Housing for up to 10 years. This pilot program is ahead of the curve when it comes to resident service coordination and is something that will greatly impact the lives of residents.
- He pointed out that beyond the financial success the YHC has experienced under his leadership, great strides have been made to improve the quality of life of our residents. By the end of 2017, every resident of the YHC will be living in either a brand new or recently renovated unit, with onsite social workers to provide resident service coordination, patrolling security, and professional property management.
- He believes that he has been recognized by his peers as a leader on issues of affordable housing, citing his appointment by the President of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials to serve on NAHRO's Emerging Leaders Subcommittee and his service on both the Washtenaw Housing Alliance Board of Directors and the Washtenaw County Continuum of Care Board.
- When he first assumed the role of Executive Director of the YHC, a complaint that Z. Fosler frequently heard from other local organizations was that the YHC was difficult to partner with and that many had given up. He also referenced the overwhelming lack of confidence expressed by the Ypsilanti City Council. These relationships have been repaired and strengthened under his leadership, as evidenced by the overwhelming support expressed for the YHC's redevelopment projects—numerous local nonprofits provided letters of support, the Ypsilanti City Council has repeatedly expressed unanimous support for various requests related to the project, and the County provided nearly \$1 million in HOME funds for the Parkridge project.
- Nearly all press coverage of the YHC since he began as executive director has been positive.
- A solid partnership with the Parkridge Community Center has been formed, allowing for many YHC youth to attend the PCC Summer Camp at extremely reduced rates. It is expected that approximately 60 YHC youth will attend camp this year.
- Due to the at-will nature of his current contract, he can be terminated at any time for no reason. To provide some additional security, he is requesting an increase in the number of months provided for payroll continuation.

A. Moore acknowledged that Z. Fosler has done a wonderful job. She stressed the importance of ensuring that the pay for the position is comparable to similar organizations. She suggested that with all of the changes made to the organization, the executive director position has less day-to-day oversight responsibility.. Z. Fosler disagreed, stating that while the hands-on day-to-day property management tasks have lightened, his workload has actually increased. He is still responsible for ensuring that the various firms hired to carry out daily activities are effective and accountable, he is simultaneously managing two large redevelopment projects as the sole employee of the YHC, and he reduced the YHC's administrative overhead by eliminating two administrative assistant positions and the deputy director position, which paid \$60,000 plus benefits.

Z. Fosler expressed the importance of looking beyond simply the number of units an agency has when comparing ED salaries. He believes that an executive director that is coasting along without innovating provides lesser value than one that is continuously looking for, and taking advantages, of opportunities to grow and improve the organization.

A. Moore reiterated that her comments were not related to Mr. Fosler's performance, but to the fiduciary responsibility of the Board. She wants to ensure she understands what comparable pay is. R. Smith stated that the Board had performed a salary review study of the former executive director, who was paid higher, and had found the pay to be comparable.

R. Smith pointed out that some of the things that Z. Fosler is doing, no one else in the country is doing, citing that the YHC is the first participant in the pay-for-performance resident service coordination pilot. She stated that while sitting on the Washtenaw County Continuum of Care Board, she has observed how the community gravitates toward and respects him. He has done a great deal of positive public relations work for the agency. She referenced the significant amount of revenue he has raised for the YHC.

R. Smith agreed that reviewing comparable salaries should be completed. R. Smith informed the Board that she consulted with David Blanchard, the YHC's general counsel, and he has reviewed the proposed contract. His

main concern was related to the number of months provided for salary continuation. He suggested that the Board compensate through salary to address concerns about the at-will nature of the agreement rather than through payroll continuation.

V. Brannon noted that there was an apparent change proposed to the payout of vacation benefits. Z. Fosler responded that this was not actually a change, but rather a clarification. He felt that with the current language, one might imply that vacation benefits are only paid out when employment is voluntarily terminated; however, the personnel policy provides the payment of accrued vacation leave at termination, regardless of the reason. The change he has proposed to the contract language clarifies this.

R. Smith stated that Mr. Blanchard had also mentioned that the payroll continuation language may need to be tightened up, ensuring that payroll continuation would not be provided if Mr. Fosler left voluntarily.

V. Brannon stated that she is open to the idea of a raise. She agrees that A. Moore has raised some really good questions. V. Brannon thinks it is important to recognize that as the organization privatizes more activities, it is important to have an executive director that can manage and oversee those contracts. She agrees that finding salary comps is important.

C. Hollifield agreed that the Board need to look at comparable salaries and ensure financial responsibility. If Mr. Fosler's requests are within those parameters, then we should move forward with it.

T. Boone agreed that Mr. Fosler certainly deserves a raise. She does not think the YHC can afford to lose Mr. Fosler at this time. We might think the job seems to be getting easier because he doesn't have the same size staff, but the responsibilities of the public relations and fostering partnerships alone take a great deal of time. T. Boone believes his responsibilities have actually increased. She acknowledged that other organizations likely have their eye on Z. Fosler.

A. Moore agreed with T. Boone that the position has raised itself to more of an executive level, where Z. Fosler is not just supervising a maintenance worker, for example, but actually managing everything with a broader reach. She agreed that it is important when benchmarking that the Board is looking at a comparable position that has that broader reach and is innovative.

V. Brannon asked how the Board can continue working on the matter so action can be taken at the next meeting. Discussion ensued. R. Smith offered to find salaries for comparable organizations. V. Brannon offered to help with reviewing contract language and looking for contracts for comparable positions. Z. Fosler offered to send what he has related to salaries and contracts.

T. Boone asked about changing the at-will nature of the employment contract, so that the position is locked in for two to three years. The Board discussed how the former ED contract had been for-cause. Given some of the prior issues with that contract, a decision was made to make Z. Fosler's contract at-will. Z. Fosler iterated that the matter of payroll continuation is directly related to job security and the at-will nature of his contract. V. Brannon stated that if the Board is looking at extending the contract term, she would want to revisit the definitions of misconduct in the contract. As an example, she mentioned including more criminal activities, such as felonies.

V. Brannon asked Z. Fosler to send her a copy of the former ED contract, just for reference.

A. Moore would like to know what local housing commission executive directors are making. She also thought the Board might look more laterally at what other types of executive directors or heads of agencies or departments are making. R. Smith stated that she believes that that other leaders in the community are being paid more than Z. Fosler. A. Moore stated that we should get that data.

Discussion ensued regarding extending Z. Fosler's contract for another thirty days. V. Brannon made a motion to extend the current contract for a one-month term, until May 26, with the same terms, seconded by A. Moore.

Motion passed 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

MONTHLY REPORTS:

- **Regulatory, Oversight, and Legal Actions:** Nothing to report.
- **RAD:** Z. Fosler provided an update on RAD redevelopment activities. Discussion ensued regarding project delays with Strong Housing. A. Moore expressed concerns regarding the timeliness of tax credit delivery and requested that Z. Fosler provide monthly updates specifically regarding construction.. Z. Fosler also discussed problems getting natural gas turned on at our management buildings on account of delays at DTE.
- **Financial Reports:** Z. Fosler and the Board reviewed and discussed the financial reports.
- **Hamilton Crossing:** Z. Fosler provided an update on Hamilton Crossing.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

- **University of Affordability Conference:** Z. Fosler reminded the Board that he, Marquan Jackson, and Russ Olwell will be presenting at Cinnaire’s University of Affordability Conference in Indiana in June.
- **CSH Conference:** Z. Fosler reminded the Board that he, Marquan Jackson, and Russ Olwell will also be presenting at the Corporation for Supportive Housing Conference in June on the same topic. CSH and the Strong Families Fund will cover the travel expenses.
- **Meeting with MSHDA Executive Director:** The YHC and EMU hosted a meeting at the new Paradise Manor management building that included the new Executive Director of MSHDA, the CEO of Cinnaire, and representatives from the City, United Way, the County, SOS, and Alpha House IHN. The meeting covered the results of the Family Empowerment Program and progress on the Strong Families Fund.
- **Summer Camp Scholarships:** Z. Fosler informed the Board that the YHC will again be providing summer camp scholarships for YHC kids for the PCC camp.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

- Commissioner Hollifield (summarized): Good meeting. Still really surprised at how much building permits cost.
- Commissioner Brannon (summarized): Thanked Zac for making sure that not only our organization is taken care of, but that our residents are as well. She thinks this is actually more important in a lot of ways than the big projects.
- Commissioner Boone (summarized): Good meeting. Zac’s ability to see and address the people he serves speaks volumes about him as a leader. Keep doing what you’re doing. It’s awesome.
- Commissioner Moore (summarized): Agreed with previous comments. Thanked Commissioner Boone for bringing up issues that residents might be concerned about. Please keep us informed about milestones related to construction and tax credit delivery.
- Commissioner Smith: Glad to see the whole Board at the meeting. We will be ready to make some decisions on your contract at the next meeting.

ADJOURN: V. Brannon moved to adjourn, second by T. Boone. **Passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.**

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

The Ypsilanti Housing Commission and its Board of Commissioners, of the City of Ypsilanti, Michigan, hereby authorize the Executive Director to sign the approved Board of Commissioners minutes of April 28, 2016.

	YEAS	NAYS	ABSENT
Commissioner Smith	_____	_____	_____
Commissioner Moore	_____	_____	_____
Commissioner Boone	_____	_____	_____
Commissioner Brannon	_____	_____	_____
Commissioner Hollifield	_____	_____	_____

Zachary D. Fosler, Executive Director