

**Housing Finance Authority of
St. Johns County, Florida
Regular Meeting
January 23, 2025
Minutes**

The Housing Finance Authority of St. Johns County met at the Kingfisher conference room in the Health & Human Services Building – 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, Florida 32084.

The meeting was called to order at 3:04 p.m. by Michael O’Donnell, Chair

Members Present:

Michael O’Donnell, Chair
Robert Marshall, Vice Chair
Erick Saks
Carolina Morrow
Brian Clark
Malinda Peeples

Members Absent:

Linda DeGrande

Others Present:

Priscilla Howard – Executive Director HFA
Jenny Harvey, Housing and Community Development Manager, St. Johns County
William H. O’Connell, CPA
Bill Lazar, Housing Partnership
Rich Komando, Bradley, Garrison & Komando
Joseph Cone, Assistant Director, Health and Human Services, St. Johns County
Jenny Harvey, Housing and Community Development Manager, St. Johns County
Laura Lavelle, Administrative Coordinator, Housing & Community Development
Alexander Mansur, Chair, Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
Tom Torretta, Development Director, Habitat for Humanity
Carol Holtz, CARE
Ken McClain, CARE
Susan Jenness, CARE

Notices regarding the meeting were sent to all members. Quorum was present. No press was in attendance.

Pledge of Allegiance

- I. Agenda -** Chair O’Donnell stated that the Educational Workshop on Community Land Trust under new business will be postponed until the February Board Meeting due to weather conditions which is causing the speaker to not be able to attend the meeting

Approval of Agenda: **Motion** was made by Board Member Saks to approve the agenda with the modification; motion seconded by Board Member Marshall. **Motion passed unanimously.**

II. Public Comment: Mr. Alex Mansur thanked the Board and Staff for hosting the Holiday Housing Networking Event. It was great having an opportunity to speak with other stakeholders and learn more about their organizations. Mr. Mansur said he is looking forward to this event next year.

Mr. Ken McClain stated that CARE attends these meetings to keep informed on what is going on in affordable housing. We are also here to assist where we can in moving affordable housing for all forward.

III. Minutes –

Approval of Minutes: Motion was made by Board Member Marrow to approve the November Board Meeting minutes; motion seconded by Board Member Peeples. **Motion passed unanimously.**

IV. Financial Report

- Mr. O’Connell reported
 - with the assistance of Marrienne Edmonds, Financial Advisor and Priscilla Howard, he finally received a check for \$18,750.00 for the HFA’s administrative fees from Victoria Crossing.
 - Mr. Maxwell’s loan is current
 - the HFA Audit is underway, and he has submitted everything requested by the auditors.
 - the SBA account is earning about \$2,100 a month.
- Mr. O’Connell wrote checks for legal advertisement to the Gannett Firm; Mrs. Howard; accountant’s firm; and legal counsel.
- Mr. O’Connell stated that the Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss statements for December are in the Board Materials.
- Chair O’Donnell asked about the amount of funds kept in the regular account and the SBA account. Mr. O’Connell stated that the regular account has sufficient funds to cover expenses until June. He explained that accessing funds from the SBA account requires two signatures and takes approximately two weeks. Mr. O’Connell stated that when the HFA begins the Small Builders Loan Program, he will just need to know the amount of the loan and how the loans will be repaid. Mrs. Howard stated that the HFA will know more after the workshop on Community Land Trust.

V. County’s Update

- Ms. Harvey reported on the following:
 - There are 10 downpayment assistance recipients successfully encumbered for the new program. 3 closings to date. The program is on pause for new recipients until current

- files are processed. HUD housing counseling continues and there is an additional Housing Counseling staff.
- The AHAC report was submitted to BCC in December and expertly presented by the Chair, Alex Mansur.
 - Working with Mrs. Howard on a resolution concerning a resident at Oaks of St Johns.
 - Chair O'Donnell invited Mr. Mansur to highlight what AHAC is working on. Mr. Mansur stated that AHAC held its first meeting last week and plans to advance recommendations from its December report, with a continued focus on impact fees. Mr. Cone and Mr. Komando noted that Commissioner Whitehurst remains engaged in discussions on impact fees and how it affects the affordability of housing. After further discussions, Mrs. Howard asked Mr. Mansur and Mr. Cone to keep the HFA informed on the development of an impact fee waiver program and offered HFA's assistance if needed. Mr. Komando added that the challenge is the increase housing effect on existing infrastructure. Board Member Marrow suggested county staff invite commissioners to visit and discuss programs in counties with similar initiatives. Mr. Cone stated that he has a standard practice to research initiatives of other counties of similar population and demographics.

VI. New Business

- 1) Board Member Marrow asked the Chair about the status of his meetings with the new Commissioners. The Chair reported that he and Mrs. Howard met with Commissioners Taylor and Murry. Mr. Komando joined in the meeting with Commissioner Murry but was unable to attend the meeting with Commissioner Taylor due to another obligation. The Chair stated that an annual report was handed to each commissioner, and the HFA was able to share historical information as well as what we are currently working on. Mrs. Howard encouraged the Commissioners to contact the HFA if there are any questions, concerns or as an additional resource for affordable housing.
- 2) **Board of Directors Applications** – Mr. Komando informed the Board that they each have a copy of a letter from Board Member Clarke indicating that he does not wish to seek another term on the Board. He also explained to the Board that they have 2 additional applications in their board materials. They are charged with voting on a recommendation that will be sent forward to the BCC. The Board proceeded with discussion on each application.
 - Mr. Erick Saks is seeking reappointment to the Board.

Approval of Recommendation of Mr. Erick Saks for reappointment to the Board; Motion was made by Board Member Marshall; motion seconded by Board Member Marrow. **Motion passed unanimously.**

- The Board discussed Mr. Walker and Mr. Freeman's applications at length, noting their similar credentials. After an extensive discussion, the Board was unable to reach a unanimous decision. The vote was split. Therefore, the Board Members did not put forth a recommendation to the BCC.
- 3) **Executive Director's Contract Extension**: Mr. Komando informed the Board that Mrs. Howard contract is an annual contract and is set to expire on January 24, 2025. The

Board needs to act to either extend the contract or let it expire. A request to extend the contract for two years is before the Board. Chair O'Donnell asked Mrs. Howard to explain what she expects to happen at the end of the 2 year term. Mrs. Howard expressed her desire to continue to serve the HFA and Board as Executive Director. However, she is only seeking a 2 year extension to allow the Board more time to determine if they want to seek a full-time local Executive Director. Mrs. Howard stated she will continue to work for the HFA and Board of Directors if they mutually agreed that she is the best candidate for the position.

Approval Extension of Executive Director's Contract: Motion was made by Board Member Saks to extend contract for 2 years; motion seconded by Board Member Marrow. **Motion passed unanimously.**

VII. Old Business:

- 1) Mrs. Howard stated that the Holiday Housing Networking Event was very successful. She plans to reach out to all participants to gather their interest in starting a Coalition of Housing Advocates. Mrs. Howard will also approach the county about a mid-year informational event for users.
- 2) Mrs. Howard reminded the board to be on the lookout for information concerning the Florida Association of Local Housing Authorities Education Conference.

VIII. Board Members Comments

- 1) Board Member Marrow commented that she initially had concerns about hiring a non-local Executive Director. However, she expressed satisfaction with the work done and believes Mrs. Howard is the right person for the job
- 2) Chair O'Donnel thanked Board Member Clarke for his dedicated service on the Board of Directors, acknowledging his valuable contributions and wishing him the best in his future endeavors.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Board Member Saks and seconded by Board Member Marshall to adjourn the meeting. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting Adjourned at 4:03 pm

Next Meeting: The next regular meeting of the HFA will be held on February 27, 2025, in the Kingfisher conference room in the Health & Human Services building, at 200 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary