

Minutes
RHA Repositioning Committee Meeting
March 17, 2021
11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Committee Present: Eric Braun, Gregg Warren, Wayne Felton

Committee Absent: Arne Morris, Bahati Mutisya

RHA Board Present: Susan Ellinger (left early), Joe Whitehouse

RHA staff: Liz Edgerton, Laura McCann, Jennifer Morgan, Donna Perez, Gwen Wall

Visitors: Elizabeth Alley

Review and approval of minutes of 2/8/21 and 2/12/21

Commissioner Felton moved and Commissioner Braun seconded approval of the Minutes from the February 8, 2021 and February 12, 2021 meetings. A vote being called, the ayes and nays were as follows:

Aye: Eric Braun, Gregg Warren, Wayne Felton

Nay: None

RAD Update

- Staff is setting up a Concept Call with HUD.
- HUD requested a change in unit count for the CNA to include the management offices and community centers.
- The Physical Needs should be completed for Heritage Park by the end of March (which includes the obsolescence).

Review of Heritage Park Meetings

Mr. Felton said Commissioner Fonville was at the first meeting along with six residents. The meeting was on site. Larry Zucchini was there to give a presentation. The meeting went very well - the residents were engaged in the presentation and gave positive feedback.

Some of the feedback included:

- Residents were encouraged that staff was there to hear what they had to say.
- Residents were eager and excited to see what the new Heritage Park would bring to them.
- Resident's had questions about their relocation choices.

Commissioner Warren asked what some of the resident questions and concerns are. Donna Perez said one of the residents is a single mother and enjoys the fact that her unit has a stoop and a patio area where she can feel confident to let her children play there while she was working in

the house. She wanted to understand what that might look like if it were a corridor building situation. The residents were also talking about overall security of the property, parking, and the fact that non-residents tend to use the Heritage Park parking lot for different purposes.

Commissioner Warren asked if RHA currently has a parking tag system for residents. Mr. Felton said they do not have parking tags for residents. However, that is something that was mentioned during the meeting (maybe have assigned parking spaces). RHA has that in place at some of the other properties. The residents talked about a gated community. However, staff doesn't think that would work. It would work better to have assigned parking for residents and visitors. There would be a fob entry on the building for security, which is what is done at RHA's senior buildings.

Commissioner Warren said he thinks it would be good to write down all of the questions along with the responses so that staff can keep track of them (as an internal document). Along with that, some of those questions could be translated into FAQs. Mr. Felton said staff is currently working on that.

Commissioner Braun said one easy answer, in terms of the gate issue, is that the city no longer allows gated communities if there are public streets running through the property.

Mr. Felton said another question that came up was about the 4- and 5-bedroom units. There were a few residents interested in the larger units and staff will need look into that.

Commissioner Warren said, given that there's a scarcity of 4- and 5-bedroom units in the city as a whole, it probably would not be difficult to include some in the overall plan for Heritage Park. The worst that could happen is that they would be under-occupied in some cases.

Commissioner Whitehouse said another way to solve that is to have two units side-by-side that would have a communicating door (a 2-bedroom unit on one side and a 3-bedroom on another with an interconnecting door in the middle). This would give maximum flexibility for the market. Mr. Felton said that could be done - possibly more easily in the garden apartments or villas. Typically, RHA has a quad of 1-bedroom units and there may be a way to reconfigure those and do something similar to that to have some 4- and 5-bedroom units.

Commissioner Warren asked if there was any additional information to share with the committee regarding the meetings.

Laura McCann said there were some questions about the income of who will be returning, how residents will be required to fill out applications, and what the eligibility criteria will be.

Commissioner Warren said it's a fine line that RHA must walk to give the residents a right to return while at the same time, given that they are tax credit units, they will still need to apply and qualify to return. The "right" to return is a conditional right.

Commissioner Warren said he participated in the Zoom meeting with the residents. Going forward, staff should give everyone the opportunity to introduce themselves (both staff and public). This will give RHA a good record of the meetings and who is participating.

Commissioner Whitehouse asked if there would be minutes from these resident meetings. Mr. Felton said staff is putting together the questions and responses.

Commissioner Braun asked if the chat boxes disappear after the Zoom meeting is finished. Gwen Wall said the chat boxes can be saved if the Zoom meeting is recorded.

Commissioner Braun asked if those meetings are being recorded. Ms. McCann said they are not being recorded. However, she is taking concise handwritten notes from the meetings (questions and responses).

Commissioner Braun said he doesn't know what the policy should be on recording the meetings. However, if it's appropriate, recording them seems like a good idea (although there may be reasons not to record them). It would also be helpful to know if the comments made are from the general public or residents (and may determine how RHA responds to those comments).

Commissioner Whitehouse encourages staff to set a policy to record the meetings (but also make an announcement at the beginning of the meeting to let everyone know it's being recorded). This would allow for full transparency for anyone who was unable to attend the meetings.

Commissioner Braun said it helps moderate bad behavior when people understand they are being recorded. It also helps to have a record if someone has misinformation or they mischaracterized what was said in the meeting.

Mr. Felton said one additional question that came up in an earlier meeting was the height of the building. Someone had concerns that a 5-story senior building might be too tall. However, in talking with the residents yesterday, they felt that a 5-story building is not too tall if it has an elevator.

Commissioner Warren said there are a couple other examples of corridor buildings in Raleigh that the committee can look at. One example is Carlton Place. It is a corridor building that almost feels like a garden apartment building. There are no real maintenance issues in that building - they're using LVT flooring in the corridors and that has been working well. The residents feel more secure knowing that only residents can get in (unless allowed in by a resident).

Another example is DHIC's Willard Street Apartments in downtown Durham. It is an urban building with multiple elevators and carpeted corridors. That is a family building but not yet occupied.

Commissioner Warren said the urban style that will be at Heritage Park will feel different than sitting on the front stoop and watching your children play. However, from the land planning aspect, there can be other ways in the design process to accommodate that need.

Commissioner Whitehouse said the needs of seniors are different than the needs of non-seniors. It is good to talk about how spaces work with each other. It is important to begin the project by discussing what the goals of that project will be, with a list of needs and amenities.

Commissioner Braun said one of the things that someone said in last night's meeting was a concern about the basketball court. He asked if that was concern expressed by more than one person.

Commissioner Warren said that DHIC doesn't put up basketball courts in their developments, basically because it brings in people who are not residents of the community.

Mr. Felton said that has been RHA's experience as well. There was an RHA community that installed a basketball court and within two years the president of that community asked staff to take it down. It was bringing in people from outside who were causing problems.

Mr. Felton said the concern is to find something for kids to do at Heritage Park. Playgrounds are geared for younger children and the challenge is to find something for the older children to do.

Commissioner Braun said he understands and defers to the people who have more experience about that.

Commissioner Warren said it wouldn't be difficult to say there will be washer/dryer hookups in all of the units. And also that there will be a laundry facility for residents who don't have washers and dryers.

Mr. Felton said there will not necessarily be a laundry facility in all of the buildings. It will come down to available space. Having a centralized laundry facility is another question that has come up during the meetings.

Commissioner Warren said DHIC didn't put washer/dryer hookups in their senior buildings but they did at Washington Terrace. That was a very positive thing for the residents. They were happy to be able to do their washing in their apartments.

Commissioner Whitehouse proposes staff focus on the goal for washer/dryer hookups - especially in the senior building since it is a burden for older people to carry their laundry to another facility. He encourages washer/dryer hookups in all of the senior units. That should be an expectation. Commissioner Braun agrees with this. Mr. Felton said staff would talk to Larry Zucchini about that.

Commissioner Warren said the NCHFA requires laundry hookups in family apartments.

Mr. Felton also said the question of a daycare came up during one of the meetings.

Communication Plan

Commissioner Warren asked Mr. Felton to give an update on the Communication Plan for Heritage Park.

Mr. Felton said he has spoken with the following people:

- Twice with Octavia Rainey. She brought up many questions about who would be allowed to come back and the income requirements. Ms. Rainey also provided a list of names of other people staff should contact.
- Elizabeth Alley. That was a good conversation and she provided a lot of positive comments about the project.
- Sonia Barnes (Congresswoman Ross's office). Staff is setting up a call to speak with Congresswoman Ross as well. Ms. Barnes had some of the same questions as Ms. Rainey (who will be allowed to return and income requirements).

The first meeting with the residents was held yesterday. Staff would like to schedule a public meeting and would like to hold at least two focus group meetings with the residents.

Staff is working on the FAQs to put on RHA's website.

Mr. Felton will begin calling the City Council this week and talk with them about Heritage Park.

Commissioner Braun said Mack Paul is very good friends with Congresswoman Ross. It would be good to let him know so that he's in the loop and may be able to facilitate anything you need.

Commissioner Warren said he knows her, too. He said to keep in mind she lives in Boylan Heights.

Commissioner Warren asked about the status of Yolanda Taylor with the Housing Justice Coalition. Mr. Felton said he sent her an email last week to answer her questions. She has not responded to that email yet.

Commissioner Warren asked Mr. Felton to copy that email to the Board.

Commissioner Braun asked Mr. Felton to keep the committee in the loop if there is any communication with the City Council (particularly if there are concerns).

Commissioner Warren told Mr. Felton to make sure the City Council knows who is on the RHA Board.

Commissioner Warren asked how the public meetings will be held. Mr. Felton said they would likely happen with a Zoom meeting. The meetings will be set up and posted on the RHA website. The residents will be able to attend those meetings, too.

Mr. Felton said staff is also setting up a Heritage Park information email so they have a place to comment or ask questions.

Talking Points

Commissioner Warren said there are no additional revisions to the Talking Points. Mr. Felton said that is correct.

Phasing Plan

Mr. Felton said staff received a report from the engineering company that Larry Zucchini is working with. They need more information to determine the water and sewer. They said there would be some demo of Dorothea Drive (where West Street ties into that intersection). The report was a very broad overview. Depending on how the water and sewer lines are run, RHA should be able to phase.

A narrative was put together for the Phasing Plan with a total of the units on each side. NC2-12 is the side that is up against South Street and it has 80 units. NC2-13 is on the south side of Dorothea Drive.

At one time it was discussed that the senior building would be completed first. However, there are currently only 39 seniors on site and this would not allow many people to relocate during demolition of the remaining phases.

By completing Parcel A first (northwest corner), approximately 50 units would be demolished. One of their concerns is the number of 1-bedroom units in that parcel so RHA would be over-housing some people. Per the ACOP, RHA can over-house by one bedroom size so there would be some 2-bedroom units there (residents also have the option to relocate into other public housing units or with a Section 8 voucher). This site would have approximately 105 units with 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units.

The reconstruction will be done with three separate tax credit deals.

The entire north side of the property is fed by one master meter for water and there is a backflow preventer that RHA installed. The engineers will need to determine if that property can be split into two halves. The water meter and the backflow preventer are directly in the middle of West Street extension as it is drawn.

Staff is wondering if RHA can get COs on those units without having West Street and Dorothea Drive tied together. That would save staff from having to relocate the meter and the backflow preventer. There would still be fire and emergency access to the site, given the configuration of the parking lot.

The demolition can be done in one phase.

Phase II of construction would be the senior building. Parcel C would be Phase III.

Commissioner Warren mentioned that the city will be a partner with RHA and maybe they can help with the cost of relocating the water meter in Phase I.

Mr. Felton said the demolition can be done in three phases, if needed. Phases II and III can be interchanged, if needed.

Commissioner Whitehouse said if RHA needs the Phase III area for relocation, he would demo Phase I by itself and look at doing three phases of demolition over time.

Mr. Felton said the management office is currently in Parcel E so this plan will allow the management office to be part of the multipurpose space and keep management presence on site.

Commissioner Whitehouse asked if the data could be broken down with each phase (for example, how many units are affected in each area).

The engineers did a profile on grading. West Street will have a lot of grading and that is something that RHA will need to factor in when developing the plan further.

Commissioner Whitehouse suggested working with some general contractors in the area for borrowing/donating dirt.

Commissioner Braun suggested keeping a master list all the things RHA must do for the city (at RHA's cost). This list might afford an opportunity for RHA to negotiate with the city.

Relocation Plan

Mr. Felton said the revisions of the Relocation Plan include:

- Minimizing the number of times a family needs to move.
- Seeking additional Tenant Protection Vouchers to assist with relocation.
- Right to return - applicants must be in good standing with previous or current landlords.
- Independent criminal background checks.
- Preference for applicants who were relocated due to construction will rise to the top of the waiting list regardless of work status or other preference status. This will be temporary until one year after the completion of site construction.

Commissioner Warren said one of the challenges with relocation is with utilities and deposits. He asked if the Heritage Park residents currently pay for their utilities. Mr. Felton said residents on the even side pay for electricity and gas (water is on a master meter). Residents on the south side pay for gas, electric, and water.

Commissioner Warren said that having a track record with utilities should make it easier to move to another location and set up utilities. However, would they be required to make deposits? Mr. Felton said that would depend on their payment history.

Commissioner Warren said the Walnut Terrace Relocation Plan had an additional benefit. Laura McCann said that was called a "dislocation allowance" and it was \$100 per household. She said she thinks that was something RHA decided to do (and not HUD guidance). The residents could use that money however they needed it.

Commissioner Warren said RHA should consider including a dislocation allowance in the Heritage Park Relocation Plan (and slightly increase the amount).

Mr. Felton asked what the amount of the dislocating allowance should be and would it be available to everyone. The residents moving into other public housing units will have fewer costs than those relocating with a voucher.

Commissioner Warren said there is already a set moving allowance so one question would be whether that's adequate to cover the cost of a move. Another factor is to determine the average deposit to rent a new unit.

Commissioner Warren wanted to clarify that the right to relocate back to Heritage Park applies to anyone who resides there - even if the household composition changes (for example, if a grandmother wants to move back to the senior unit but the remaining household wants to remain where they moved). Mr. Felton said that is correct. However, staff would need to think about a situation where a child is eligible for their own unit by the time the redevelopment is completed.

Laura McCann said there were some questions about helping residents with the relocation process. Mr. Felton said there will be case managers helping the residents.

Commissioner Warren asked what happens if a resident can't find a Section 8 unit, even after getting an extension. Mr. Felton said they would probably be moved into public housing, depending on the market.

Commissioner Warren said staff needs to make that clear to the residents because people will be concerned that might happen.

Mr. Felton said staff will also need to look at the reasons why they are unable to find a place. For example, do they have a criminal background issue or is there a credit issue?

Commissioner Warren said RHA might need to waive the criminal background history if public housing is the last resort. Mr. Felton said RHA's rules are fairly lenient and he would want to be very careful with that.

Laura McCann said the residents get re-screened every year. If they are coming out of Heritage Park, they should already comply with the criminal background rules.

Mr. Felton said they need to be careful about not saying "everyone at Heritage Park will be allowed to come back".

Commissioner Braun said there is a balance between not promising something that can't be delivered vs. residents who feel RHA will try to screen people out of the new development. From the resident's perspective, staff trying to be careful comes across as "cagey". Staff should try to give as firm and direct an answer as possible without being too vague (not wanting to over-promise).

RFQ

Commissioner Warren thinks it would be better to wait on the RFQ until a development partner is identified. Mr. Felton said that it would be fine to wait, whatever the committee wants. It is an important decision that RHA shouldn't rush into.

Commissioner Warren suggested the committee should focus on that for the next meeting. Getting other RHA Board Commissioners involved will be helpful in the process.

Mr. Felton said Jennifer Morgan is working with EJP to pull all of the information together.

Jennifer Morgan said one thing that needs to be decided is to determine exactly what RHA wants the developer to do and RHA will be in charge of.

Commissioner Warren said Commissioner Winstead and Commissioner Whitehouse would be a good resource for that - based on the legal responsibilities as well as the strengths and weaknesses of RHA.

Commissioner Whitehouse said this is one of the most critical phases of a development. RHA needs to make sure expectations are very clear.

The next Repositioning Committee Meeting will be scheduled in April when EJP is available to attend.

Adjournment.