

Hudson Housing Authority Board of Commissioners
Minutes of Public Hearing
July 7, 2021

In attendance: Revonda Smith, Chairperson; Robert Davis; Rebecca Borrer; Claire Cousin; Rebecca Wolff; Marie Balle; Executive Director Tim Mattice

Ms. Balle made a motion to open the public hearing on a request for qualifications (RFQ) for demolition and new construction of HHA properties at 6 p.m. Ms. Wolff offered a second and the motion was approved unanimously. The hearing was conducted in the Bliss Towers Community Room and via Zoom teleconferencing.

Mr. Mattice gave a presentation on the RFQ. The RFQ is a notice sent to developers who have experience working on affordable housing projects. The developer's corporate history, their development team, staff and their experience, projects completed in the past and financial statements are among the information sought in the RFP. The intent is to acquire a developer to help the board develop a plan. Mr. Mattice said at this point in the process, the board was simply asking for qualifications with specific experience in housing development.

Mr. Mattice told the audience where the board was in the RFQ process. It began with a vision for development, which involved demolition and new construction of existing public housing units. The board then set out to obtain input from residents via public meetings and weekly workshops, resident surveys and a meeting with residents, all in an effort to explain what its vision was and what the options were, how members arrived at this point and what they'd like to do in the future.

"We've reached a turning point in our public housing," Mr. Mattice said. "It has outlived its usefulness."

He then explained the content of the RFQ. The document seeks the developer's qualifications in development of affordable housing, past projects, their capacity, the resume of the development team, references, company finances, business terms and experience with the Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise and Section 3 Plan.

HHA will have a co-development partner, but will maintain ownership and oversight. The board is seeking a co-development partner with experience in financing, design, construction and management of affordable housing. They will be a limited partner for 15 years. They will secure tax credits for project equity, other grants and debt financing, and provide post compliance monitoring and training. "...Funding needs to be secured...to structure the project and make it work financially." The most important aspect is post compliance monitoring and necessary training for staff so they can take over maintenance of the property.

"What's important to us is their experience in what theoretically could be a \$50 million project," he said, as well as what opportunities for training and employment they would provide.

HHA went through a Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) conversion in 2020, which allowed the agency to convert units from their original source of U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) financing to project-based Section 8 contracts. The primary benefit of RAD is that properties that convert under this process are no longer restricted from securing private sources of capital financing and the owners are able to address deferred maintenance issues that have caused public housing and other HUD rental stock to deteriorate nationwide. HHA was able to secure line of credit financing to maintain its facilities until a new development plan was

decided on. HHA was able to leverage higher rents to make the agency more financially stable. “It was a long-term solution to fiscal stability,” he said. The RAD was approved by HUD.

Mr. Mattice said the new plan also will require approval from HUD’s Office of Recapitalization and the Buffalo field office. HUD wants to know HHA’s plan, which is demolition and new construction, the resident relocation plan, estimated project cost and financing sources. “They want to be sure the project is viable so they want specific information. If they believe it’s feasible, they will allow us to move forward with the RFQ.”

He then explained the RFQ process. It all began with approval of the document and public issuance. The RFQ will be advertised for 30 days and once responses are received, the board will review them and conduct interviews before choosing a developer. After that, a master development agreement (MDA) will be drafted, the project will be designed and project financing structured. An application for tax credits to secure equity will be submitted to New York State Homes and Community Renewal. Public hearings must be conducted and the plan must secure Planning Board approval and any required permits from the city before ground is broken.

A tenant asked about the role between the HHA and co-developer. Mr. Mattice said the relationship between the two entities was negotiable. “The level of control one has over the other depends on what’s negotiated.”

If the developer is going to cover the guarantees—there are probably a half-dozen of them—it would be more than likely that they would expect a certain level of control.

Responding to a question regarding a pool Ms. Borrer said that could not be decided until a developer was on board. There were similar questions that could not be answered until that happened.

Second Ward Alderperson and Hudson Catskill Housing Coalition member Tiffany Garriga asked whether a day care center would be part of the plans. She was told that the center was included in the residents’ survey and the results regarding it would be part of discussions with the developer.

“Where are you going to put us?” a tenant asked. Ms. Smith said the move would be to HHA property nearby and that the relocation cost would be paid for by the agency. Ms. Borrer pointed out that replacement housing would be built first and that demolition wouldn’t happen for three years or so as it was a phased project.

Ms. Smith added that the developer would give input on where temporary housing could be built. Some would probably be townhouses, plus a single building without as many floors as Bliss Towers.

She and Ms. Wolff said discussions were ongoing with the Hudson Community Development and Planning Agency regarding property it owns that is contiguous to HHA property.

In response to another tenant’s query, Ms. Smith said they would have the option to move and return. Ms. Wolff said income levels for tenancy would not change.

Asked who the developer would be, Ms. Smith said members didn’t know because they were still seeking solicitations. Ms. Wolff added that a developer couldn’t be chosen until the board went through a process. The tenants, she said, would be the first to know.

Resident Ron Kopnicki said that under the Open Meetings Law, the city must have in-person meetings. Since the gist of the law was to provide access, a combination of in-person and live-streamed meetings would be best. “You’ve shown that it’s not really a technological obstacle to do it,” he said.

A tenant asked for the percentage of those who moved back into a new Albany Housing Authority building. Ms. Smith said she didn't know, but would find out.

"We all want to see a successful project," Ms. Borrer assured. "We just want to make sure we have public comment so we can have the best possible project."

Ms. Wolff informed those in attendance that relocation would comply with City Code Chapter 174, which outlines housing policy, specifically §174-8 and 174-9, which state that those displaced would have to be relocated within city limits and "whenever feasible, they will have a choice between relocating within their neighborhoods and other neighborhoods consistent with the City of Hudson's responsibility to affirmatively further fair housing."

"We'll tell the developer the number of units we need and they'll figure out how to build them," she said.

A number of studies, including soil samples, must be performed before a decision is made on where to build the temporary units.

A tenant asked how the board arrived at its decision to demolish and new construction. Ms. Smith said Bliss Towers in particular had a number of problems. Plus, many people she spoke with said they were unable to do things they wanted to because of the building's design. "People don't like living here. It's time to get the ball rolling and give them what they want," she said.

Ms. Borrer made a motion to adjourn the hearing for the night but keep it open. Ms. Balle offered a second and the measure was passed unanimously at 7 p.m.