

MINUTES

Board of Directors Meeting • January 16, 2004

ATTENDANCE

Juan Aguilar and Dixie Kracht, co-chairs; board members Guillermo Castaneda, Lupe Gamboa, Pete Garza, Mike Gempler (after 2:00 p.m.), Billie Heath (by telephone), Alicia McRae (by telephone after 11:45 a.m.), Mario Villanueva, Tomas Villanueva; staff members Tom Byers (Cedar River Group) and Brien Thane (Office of Rural and Farmworker Housing); and ex-officio, Mary McBride (office of Senator Murray).

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Juan Aguilar and Dixie Kracht called the meeting to order and thanked Mario Villanueva for providing the meeting venue.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Due to illness, Lisa Couchman is unable to attend the meeting and had been planning to bring the minutes. Tom Byers had attempted to retrieve the minutes from Seattle electronically but was unsuccessful. A motion was made, seconded and passed to defer approval of the minutes until the February meeting.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Contract for Staff Assistance: Juan Aguilar reported that the Executive Committee met following the December Board meeting, and again by conference call on December 23rd, to complete an agreement with the Cedar River Group (CRG) for providing staff assistance to the Board. Committee members requested that the draft contract submitted by CRG be amended to clarify that it will be CRG's responsibility to initiate an open search for a permanent Executive Director for the Trust prior to the completion of the Comprehensive Plan. Juan read aloud the language that has been added to the contract to reflect that request. He indicated that the Executive Committee had then voted to approve the contract as amended. Juan indicated that he had then forwarded the document to the Trust's legal counsel, Bob Kaplan, to review the contract. Mr. Kaplan indicated that he wished the Board to be aware of a conflict created by the fact that he also represents CRG. However, he indicated that the contract appeared to be in order and relatively standard in content. In light of the fact that HUD funding would be used to pay the costs incurred through the contract, he suggested reviewing the contract with HUD officials and amending it if necessary to conform to that agency's guidelines. Brien Thane indicated he would assist in that process by contacting the HUD regional office.

Dixie Kracht indicated that the chair would entertain a motion to ratify the contract as recommended by the Executive Committee. This action was moved (T. Villanueva) and seconded (Garza). Following a brief discussion in which the amount and duration of the contract were clarified, the motion was adopted by unanimous vote. At Billie Heath's suggestion, copies of the contract were made available to each Board member present.

Filing for Tax-exempt Status: Tom Byers reported that Bob Kaplan has nearly completed preparation of the application. With approval of the contract for staff assistance, the entire package can be assembled and ready for signature by next week.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Juan Aguilar reported that, with Tom Byers stepping down from the board to assume staff responsibilities, we will have one vacancy to fill. The nominating committee will be entertaining suggestions regarding nominees to take Tom's place as a "community stakeholder". A discussion followed during which several suggestions emerged. It was suggested that Senator Murray's staff should be notified of vacancies and asked for suggestions, but that final recommendations will be made by the nominating committee.

Guillermo Castaneda suggested that we seek to recruit "someone with access to money" such as a philanthropist or foundation representative. Billie Heath suggested that if the Board decided to take that course, we should be careful to avoid creating a conflict of interest that would prevent a major foundation from providing funds to the Trust. Mario Villanueva stated that he believes the Board should recruit someone with a background in public policy. Dixie Kracht closed the discussion by suggesting that staff develop an information form that could be used with all candidates to identify their strengths and the contributions they hoped to offer. Her suggestion was approved by consensus.

FISCAL AGENT REPORT

Brien Thane reported that the application necessary to secure the funding appropriated by Congress has been completed and submitted to HUD. He will continue to monitor the progress of the application so that CRG can be reimbursed for the work they have been performing on the Board's behalf.

INTRODUCTION OF PRELIMINARY LIST OF ISSUES TO BE ADRESSED IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Tom Byers reported that he has completed one-one interviews with five of the fifteen Board members to date, and intends to complete his initial set of interviews within the next four to six weeks. One purpose of those interviews is to identify issues that will need to be addressed in the comprehensive plan. Tom distributed a list of thirteen issues that have been raised so far (list attached to minutes).

CHANGES IN HUD LIST OF 'DIFFICULT TO DEVELOP AREAS'

Tom indicated that the most urgent of the issues is the recent change in the federal list of DDAs which plays a significant role in determining the value of tax credits for building low-income housing. Previously twenty-four counties in Washington State were listed, making developments in those areas eligible for a 30% increase in the value of the tax credit. Shortly before Christmas, with little fanfare, HUD released a new list which includes only four counties, all of which are in western Washington, dramatically altering the financial equation for farmworker housing.

Tom indicated that Board member Gloria Burton has been doing an outstanding job of organizing low-income and rural housing developers, state and local officials and other stakeholders to protest the changes. The strategy is twofold: to seek short-term relief on the grounds that insufficient notice was provided, and to seek a longer term dialogue with HUD and the stakeholders to develop a more appropriate methodology, at least for farmworker housing projects. Mary McBride reported that the Senator's office is actively engaged in this issue and will support the twofold approach. Tom said that many members of the Board have indicated

that they are willing to help by contacting other members of the Congressional delegation if that is what is needed to resolve the issue. He will keep the Board informed of developments.

REVIEW OF THE PRELIMINARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Dixie asked Tom to lead a discussion of the Needs Assessment Report prepared by CRG associate Trang Tu and distributed to the Board members at the December meeting. Tom focused on the summary of findings Trang developed from review of five separate studies aimed at enumerating the total number of farmworkers in Washington State. After reviewing these studies in detail, it is CRG's recommendation that the Board adopt estimates created by Alice Larson, which set the total number of farmworkers at 187,000; the total number of non-farmworker members of farmworker households at 102,000; bringing the total number of farmworker household members to 289,000.

Using these figures, Northwest Regional Facilities has developed a methodology for estimating the total number of housing units required to meet the need generated by farmworkers. CRG also recommends adopting these projections as a starting point for developing the comprehensive plan. Given the complexity of the information contained in Trang's report, Tom requested that each of the Board members review the materials prior to the February meeting, at which time we will seek agreement on the base numbers to be used to indicate the need.

Lupe Gamboa pointed out the complexity of developing accurate need statements. As an example, he pointed to the situation in Grant County, which is estimated to have about 10% of the total farmworkers, but may have a much greater share of the *need for housing* because so few housing units exist in that area in the private market. He went on to suggest that CRG's data would benefit from having complementary data from an actual survey of farmworkers to determine their views and preferences. The Board members agreed with the value of such a survey, and Juan Aguilar suggested that it might be possible to secure financing for such a survey from banks and others with an interest in the issue. Staff was asked to look into the potential of securing resources for such a study.

REVIEW OF PROPOSED MEDIA PROTOCOL

The Co-chairs asked Tom Byers to present the draft guidelines for managing press inquiries about the work of the Trust. Tom reported that the principle ideas in the guidelines are:

- we should work to develop positive relations with the press;
- we should expect each Board member to direct press inquiries to the co-chairs for a statement of the official Board position;
- other individual Board members should make it clear when speaking to the press that they are speaking as an individual rather than for the group as a whole;
- members should notify staff of press contacts as quickly as possible so that they can help the co-chairs prepare to make a well-articulated response; and
- our practice will be to notify Senator Murray's staff of press contacts as a courtesy.

Tom suggested that, in addition to responding effectively to press inquiries, the Board will also need to develop a proactive strategy to increase public awareness of the Trust and its mission. To forge that strategy, the staff has suggested that a media relations committee of the Board be established.

The Board members indicated general support for the guidelines as presented. Mario Villanueva suggested that it should be our practice to give priority to local members of the Board in determining who the co-chairs would recommend for responding to specific inquiries. There was general agreement with that concept. Dixie Kracht suggested that staff maintain a set of speaking points that will be available to all members. Tom accepted that responsibility. Following the discussion, Juan accepted a motion to approve the guidelines. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

REVIEW OF FEBRUARY WORKPLAN

The Co-chairs requested a quick overview of the activities planned for the coming month. Tom indicated that the following actions would be taken by staff:

- The needs analysis will be finalized;
- Individual meetings and site visits will continue with each Board member;
- Work will continue to resolve the problem with HUD regarding the DDA designations;
- A meeting will be held with the Senator's staff to discuss the general strategy for approaching foundations;
- A plan will be developed for stakeholder outreach; and
- A plan will be developed to conduct a survey of farmworkers.

The major objective of our February meeting will be to reach agreement on the Needs Assessment so that the Board can establish the planning targets that will be the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan.

TIME AND PLACE FOR FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING

Because of previously scheduled commitments, Tom requested that the date of the February Board meeting be changed to Friday, February 27th. That change was approved by consensus. It was suggested that the next meeting be held in the Wenatchee area. Alicia McRae volunteered to work with Tom to secure an appropriate meeting place.

Upon motion made (Aguilar) and seconded (T. Villanueva) the Board approved that the meeting adjourn at 2:10 p.m.

:Attachment

Respectfully Submitted: _____
Secretary

Approved: _____
President/Vice President