

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
COMMISSIONERS OF THE

CITY OF ROANOKE REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Commissioners of the City of Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority and the City of Roanoke Council Members met in a joint session with the Roanoke City Council on Tuesday, September 5, 2017, in the City Council Chambers of the City of Roanoke, 215 Church Avenue, in the City of Roanoke, Virginia.

Mayor Lea called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. After conducting certain business of the City of Roanoke including the swearing in of the new City Manager, Mayor Lea announced the joint meeting with the City of Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

I. CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL

Chair Burruss declared that a quorum was present.

PRESENT: Commissioners Anguiano, Burruss, Garner, Karnes, Smith and Witten

ABSENT: Commissioner Butler

OFFICER PRESENT: Mrs. Glenda Edwards Goh, Secretary-Treasurer

CITY COUNCIL: William Bestpitch, Council Member; Michelle Dykstra, Council Member; Raphael Ferris, Council Member; John Garland, Council Member; Sherman Lea, Mayor; Anita Price, Vice-Mayor; David Trinkle, Council Member

ALSO PRESENT: Jackie Austin, VP of Finance/CFO; Daniel Callaghan, City Attorney; Matt Chittum, Roanoke Times; Bob Cowell, City Manager; Joe Dashiell, Reporter for WDBJ7; Frederick Gusler, Director of Redevelopment

and Revitalization; Brenda Hamilton, Clerk of the Circuit Court; Drew Harmon, City Auditor; Patice Holland, RRHA Legal Counsel; Melinda Mayo, Roanoke Communications and Media Officer; Suzy McCoy, Deputy City Clerk; Stephanie Moon Reynolds, City Clerk; Sherman Stovall, Assistant City Manager for Operations; Brian Townsend, Assistant City Manager for Community Development; Melissa Wills, Executive Assistant; Other Interested Persons

II. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Mayor Lea stated that the City was honored and delighted to have the Board of Commissioners from RRHA with Council in a joint meeting and that this has not happened in quite some time. Mayor Lea introduced Chair Burruss, noting her recent appointment as Chair of the Board and recognizing her for her outstanding work in the community and with RRHA.

Chair Burruss thanked Mayor Lea and welcomed everyone to the meeting. She expressed appreciation for having the Board at today's meeting and recognized Board members as being a hard working group that is honored to be serving the City in the way that they do. She explained that it is a good but challenging time at RRHA as the proposed federal budget presents more unknowns than most federal budgets in the past several years. She said there is no doubt that RRHA will work through and be successful, even with the unknowns. She thanked the Council for their support of RRHA.

Mayor Lea also recognized Mrs. Goh and thanked her for her work over the years at RRHA. He stated that she has worked with him many times over the years and her work with the City has been vital.

III. DISCUSSION

Mayor Lea asked Chair Burruss to give an update on the RRHA Board of Commissioners Annual Report for Fiscal Year July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017. Chair Burruss stated that it had been a busy year at RRHA and deferred to Mrs. Goh who had prepared the report.

Mrs. Goh stated that she had submitted a written report, which included highlights for the year. She stated that RRHA has developed plans for accessibility modifications to several of the public housing dwellings. She explained that a plan has been developed to use Operating Fund Financing which allows RRHA to secure a loan with Operating Reserves with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approval. She stated that this is still in the approval process with HUD, but once completed, it will allow RRHA to make more units accessible to people who have physical disabilities and need accessibility. These will be financed through private financing, but HUD allows RRHA to secure that financing with Operating Reserves.

She explained that RRHA has also continued the gradual implementation of the Choice Neighborhoods Transformation Plan in the Loudon Melrose Shenandoah West neighborhood, which largely overlaps with the City's Melrose Orange Target Area (MOTA).

Mrs. Goh stated that the Jobs Plus program has been very successful and RRHA has seen an increase of approximately ten percent in the employment rate for residents of Lansdowne Park. Staff has also seen increases in earned income of Lansdowne Park households from the program as well. She explained that there are

about twenty-five nonprofit partners from throughout the City working with RRHA providing services in the Jobs Plus program. She stated that the grant funding for the program goes through April 2019.

She shared that the intergovernmental agreement between RRHA and Roanoke Police Department (RPD) has continued this year. RPD provides above-baseline policing services at RRHA Public Housing sites during high police call volume days and times, as determined from RPD service call data. She said that residents have been very receptive to this, and it has been helpful managing criminal activity at the public housing sites.

Mrs. Goh stated that the RRHA Board of Commissioners recently conducted elections, with Ms. Burruss elected Chair. She said that, in the prior year, Commissioner Karnes served as Chair while Ms. Burruss served as Vice-Chair. She explained that new officers' terms were effective Friday, September 1, 2017.

Mrs. Goh said that the remainder of the written report that she had submitted on behalf of the Board included dates of meetings and public hearings, as well as a listing of all actions taken during the year and the attendance of Commissioners at Board meetings.

Mayor Lea referred to the next item on the agenda regarding the status of providing affordable housing and location and asked Vice-Mayor Price to address this issue. Vice-Mayor Price said that today's meeting was a great opportunity for City Council and the RRHA Board to come together to have this conversation. She commended Board members for their work and congratulated Chair Burruss on her appointment as the new Chair. She explained that the reason she proposed this

agenda item was because all members of City Council get questions about what is going on with affordable housing and this was a great opportunity to explore it further.

Chair Burruss said that she appreciated Vice-Mayor Price raising the question and that it is one of the things that RRHA works with on a daily basis. She said that Mrs. Goh has been diligent in pursuing opportunities to provide affordable housing, as she had mentioned in the earlier annual report, but also to disperse it in a variety of locations and not create clusters of low income housing. Chair Burruss asked Mrs. Goh if she could elaborate on this issue.

Mrs. Goh explained that RRHA has built a number of scattered site units in recent years. She said that emphasis over the past several years, as Chair Burruss noted, has been placed on creating public housing in communities throughout the City on scattered sites, housing that is indistinguishable from non-public housing in neighborhoods. Some of the challenges that RRHA faces include being able to afford the cost of lots outside of areas where there is a high concentration of poverty. She stated that RRHA must develop within HUD's financial guidelines, and this can be difficult when the price of lots for development is high. She said issues such as tap fees also present challenges in development of scattered site public housing. She provided an example of lots in Northeast Roanoke not located in an area of high poverty concentration. RRHA has options on the lots; however, the cost to develop them may be prohibitive because there are not connections to the water and sewer mains, and the tap fees cause development costs to be higher than HUD's development cost limits. She said that these are important challenges for the RRHA Board and City Council to possibly work together on in order to achieve the larger

vision of making affordable housing available throughout the city and not just in one quadrant of the city, which has been the historical pattern. She shared that RRHA has developed twenty-two units of scattered site public housing in the past three years and that, if these units were not pointed out, people driving by would not be able to readily identify them as public housing, which is a goal of RRHA.

Commissioner Anguiano added that, to Mrs. Goh's point, the developed units are an asset to the neighborhoods and need to be viewed in that way. Vice Mayor Price agreed.

Chair Burruss stated that there are three different locations at scattered sites where RRHA has an option to build if the details can be resolved. She said that some areas in the city are going to be cost prohibitive just because of the cost of lots.

Commissioner Anguiano stated that something he and Commissioner Witten have discussed is whether discussions are differentiating between affordable housing and public housing and what distinctions are being drawn.

Vice Mayor Price stated that this speaks to the point as to whether there is a distinction between the two and leads into another conversation regarding the barriers and challenges found in being able to develop these sites where housing cannot necessarily be identified as housing for people with low household income. She went on to say that in conversations with residents from the city, one of the barriers that everyone can appreciate is that housing still presents a challenge but, if these challenges are not acknowledged, they cannot be addressed. She said that while she knew that much more in depth conversation will be needed in the future, she wanted to bring it up today. She stated that the kinds of issues that Mrs. Goh had addressed

earlier needed to be discussed. She stated that she didn't want people to be able to distinguish which developments were affordable housing as there seems to be an ongoing stigma regarding persons who need a housing subsidy creating problems for the neighborhood.

Council Member Garland added that he has been trying to determine what to do with abandoned properties that come up as foreclosures in the City of Roanoke and are publicly offered. He said he would like to determine a way to get those properties into the hands of the most responsible stewards who would develop and rehab them to bring single family residents in as opposed to what typically happens during the sale of those properties. He would like to see the City work with RRHA to brainstorm an effective way to take those blighted properties and make sure they become something besides low income rental property with an owner who may not take care of it properly.

Chair Burruss responded by saying that perhaps discussions between Mr. Cowell and Mrs. Goh about how to proceed might be good at a later time as this did not seem to be the proper time or venue for such planning.

Council Member Trinkle added that he believed that, with regard to tap fees and the Water Authority, there should be some opportunities for grants to cover those costs because it is undevelopable land for the most part unless connected to water.

Chair Burruss said that this may be the first of many conversations between the two and she looks forward to hearing about a proposal to engage the right people in that discussion.

Council Member Garland added that since he has been attending the RRHA

Board meetings, Mrs. Goh has added a placeholder on the agenda for Council comments which has been helpful because it encourages conversation between the two. He said he did not know if other Council Members were aware of that, so he wanted to make sure that if they have any questions for RRHA, they can bring them to him and he will bring them up at the RRHA Board meetings.

Mayor Lea thanked Council Member Garland for attending the RRHA meetings and representing the City Council. He introduced Council Member Bestpitch and stated that he had a question that relates to how RRHA coordinates with other agencies to address housing needs.

Mr. Bestpitch stated that he believed in determining where to go from here that it would be a good idea for Mr. Cowell and Mrs. Goh to consider inviting other organizations into the conversation such as Habitat for Humanity, Rebuilding Together, Restoration Housing, and Total Action for Progress (TAP), along with others that have been involved in the same types of things. He stated that he and Mayor Lea had the opportunity to attend a ribbon cutting of a home that was recently built by Habitat for Humanity and that they are really working hard to design and build homes that fit in with the neighborhood that are not distinguishable from other homes in the same area that will help contribute to the fabric of the neighborhood in a positive way. He stated that he believes there is a need to look at the opportunities to take abandoned or derelict structures that exist and perhaps have utility connections already that also meet HUD guidelines and are within the resources that are available. He said that this would be a tremendous benefit to these neighborhoods as nearby property owners are very concerned about the impact on their property values when these empty

houses just sit there and deteriorate. He stated that he believed that there was a way for the City and RRHA to coordinate efforts and partner together to address these issues.

Mrs. Goh explained that RRHA participates in a partnership called the Roanoke Neighborhood Revitalization Partnership that includes TAP, Habitat, Rebuilding Together, RRHA and the City that's been in place and working together since the City's target area was Hurt Park. She stated that this partnership may be an important vehicle for moving forward with the types of initiatives discussed regarding abandoned properties. She went on to say that RRHA also has a staff member who is the agency's representative on the Roanoke Regional Housing Network, also another important local partnership for addressing housing needs, and that RRHA has a staff representative on the Advisory Board for Restoration Housing. She stated that there are some relationships and partnering structures in place that can serve as vehicles to hopefully move to the next level in terms of looking at affordable housing needs and meeting the shared goals of having affordable housing available to people throughout the City. She said she believes that another important partnership to develop is with private developers so that, as housing is being developed throughout the City, a component of each housing development would be how to incorporate some affordable housing.

Council Member Bestpitch added that as those types of things are being done on the public side to help enhance neighborhoods, it makes it attractive for the private developers to come in and add to that investment in a way that makes sense for them from a business perspective. He said he is not surprised by the coordination efforts

that are going on, but opportunities are needed to get the word out about them. He expressed appreciation to RRHA and reiterated that if there were things that the City could do to help, it should be communicated to them.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Anguiano regarding any barriers that RRHA has run into that the City may be able to assist with or at least make them aware of, Mrs. Goh responded that in addition to things like the tap fees mentioned earlier, it would be helpful if the City Council could keep the aspect of a plan for affordable housing in mind when reviewing proposals from developers and asking them how they can incorporate affordable housing into their plans. She said that in order to change the dynamic of having affordable housing concentrated in Northwest Roanoke, it needs to be a part of every development-related conversation.

Council Member Trinkle stated that this was a good point and that it could be a part of everything the Council reviews in terms of new construction or rehab. He asked whether the new apartment buildings in downtown Roanoke had a percentage of affordable housing as part of their federal requirements for their deal. Council Member Garland explained that a lot of them are financed using loans that require affordable housing, but that he was surprised that the thresholds for low income were pretty high, making it easy for even a young professional to qualify for those low income apartments.

Mayor Lea asked Mr. Cowell or Mr. Townsend if they would like to comment on these issues and Mr. Townsend responded that as the City had tried to encourage housing downtown over the last decade, they entered into various agreements with developers. He explained that RRHA was instrumental in one development, the

Hancock building, where the City support was channeled through RRHA and those agreements always had a low income component to them. He reiterated that Council Member Garland had a good point in stating that the requirements for being considered low income meant that someone just coming out of college or graduate school in their first job, who was single and living alone, would probably meet the qualifications for the Virginia Housing Development Agency (VHDA) program. He went on to say that several developments, including the Patrick Henry building, the Hancock building, and the YMCA project had the VHDA component to them which was very instrumental in providing long-term, low interest loans in return for a certain percentage of the residents having to meet the income criteria. He stated that those income criteria are much different than the criteria HUD imposes for Section 8. He said that it is important to make sure that everyone is in agreement as to what affordable housing means because, depending on what program, what agency, or what funding mechanism, everyone may be talking about affordable housing, but not talking about the same income level. Mayor Lea agreed that this was very important.

Mr. Townsend stated that another important point is that in Virginia, there are limitations on using regulatory approaches such as zoning changes in order to achieve set-asides for specific income categories. He said that the best tools are normally facilitating such goals, funding or loan programs as opposed to trying to affix some sort of apportionment through a land use regulation. He wanted to make sure everyone understood that the bigger tools are on the financing and public support side, not necessarily on the land use regulatory side. Council Member Trinkle stated that maybe big projects that involve City incentives could be the route taken. Mr. Townsend replied

that, when City support is involved, that has been an avenue for creating positive impact.

Mayor Lea introduced the next point regarding whether the Council anticipates RRHA being involved in any possible eminent domain action and stated that he was not aware of any that was anticipated. After a question from Council Member Ferris whether the question was asked relative to the kind of development that took place on Reserve Avenue and Jefferson Street, Chair Burruss stated that she had raised the question. She said that she had developed a clearer understanding of RRHA's role in eminent domain as it relates to economic development.

Council Member Ferris stated that, for the record, the only eminent domain that Council has considered was storm water improvement related eminent domain and the Council action at the last meeting authorizing the City administration to consider eminent domain in acquisition of real estate for the greenway. He stated that neither of these involved RRHA, which Mr. Callaghan confirmed.

Mayor Lea introduced the next item which was the coordination of housing and planning efforts between the City and RRHA to avoid duplicity of effort. Commissioner Witten stated that he had raised this question and that, stepping back from the Commissioner role to a citizen role, he wanted to make sure that there was a process to coordinate activities such as those discussed regarding the Regional Housing Commission or Habitat for Humanity. He stated that, as a citizen as well as a Commissioner, he wanted the Council to know that the City and RRHA are working together toward common goals. He said with regard to the Choice Neighborhoods grants, the cities that won the grants were very well coordinated and that if Roanoke is

going to try for the grant, better coordination and planning was needed in order to be awarded a grant. He said that coordination needs to be at a regional level, not just a staff level. He encouraged everyone to review the Choice Neighborhoods Transformation Plan and stated that it is an amazing document. He emphasized that there are some real opportunities, not just for the neighborhood, but in the way housing is approached in the City.

Commissioner Smith stated that he felt there was great excitement and enthusiasm during the first round of Choice Neighborhoods, but after the initial period the enthusiasm was gone. He said RRHA was still excited but he was not sure if the other entities that said they shared a common goal were still as excited and trying to achieve it. He stated that the excitement needs to return, with everyone feeling that they are working together toward a common goal. Mayor Lea stated that this was a good point.

Council Member Garland used the All-America City award as an example of how it was achieved through collaboration on the part of the City, School Board and others that worked together and were enthusiastic about the application process. He reiterated what Commissioner Witten said that if everyone can come together on these opportunities for grants, then RRHA would have a better chance of success.

Mr. Townsend stated that, in reference to the Choice Neighborhoods grant item, the City and RRHA had applied twice and did not receive it either time. He said that Mr. Gusler had reminded him that the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) was out for the third round of Choice Neighborhood grants. He stated that there would be a meeting on September 13 regarding this as they waited for HUD to identify the rules

and procedures for this year's grant. He stated that the City has every intent to participate in developing the application for a third time and that the school system and library were lined up again as partners and that other groups would be called back again. He said he believed that the deadline to apply was November 22, which is a quick turnaround. He believes that is a hindrance to Roanoke to be in the same applicant pool with other much larger cities such as Boston, St. Louis or Philadelphia that have massive amounts and scale of resources. He stated that it would be helpful to have a subcategory for applicants from mid-sized or small cities.

Mr. Townsend shared that the City of Richmond had applied five times with impressive contributions and dollar figures and asked Mrs. Goh if they had gotten past the first round. Mrs. Goh stated that they had paid nearly \$100,000 for someone with a successful track record to write their grant application the fifth time and got past the first threshold, but did not make it beyond that point.

Mr. Townsend went on to say that they have a better understanding of how HUD scores now than they did during the second application so they are more savvy in terms of structuring the application but that the issue of resources and partnerships in comparison with the other cities competing for the grant continues. He went on to say that the goal is to apply again this year and call back to the table the same partners that were used the first two times, but with the understanding of what the relative position is with those localities that would likely be in the competition as they are much bigger and, from HUD's perspective, have needs that probably appear much greater than Roanoke's on a relative basis.

Mrs. Goh said that she would agree with what Mr. Townsend said regarding

relative needs. She stated that, although both Council and Board members see the needs because they live here and care about the community, visitors from large cities often do not view Roanoke's public housing as distressed. She provided an example of a visit in August by HUD's new Regional Administrator from Philadelphia. She added the bigger cities have millions of dollars of leveraging in their applications and, because applicants are all in one big pool, it makes it very difficult for smaller cities to pass that first bar because they do not have that kind of money.

In response to a series of questions from Council Member Dykstra, Mrs. Goh explained that the total amount nationwide for this round of Choice Neighborhoods grants is \$138 million and that, in the last round, thirty three applications were received. Mr. Townsend stated that they try to make the grants approximately \$30 million each, so that means that between four and five were awarded each year. Responding to a comment from Council Member Dykstra, Mrs. Goh confirmed that it was a highly competitive process. Council Member Dykstra asked if HUD offered any feedback on previous grant applications or any kind of review. Mrs. Goh explained that they do not provide feedback to applicants that do not pass the first cut and, when Mr. Gusler talked with someone from the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority that made it one step further than RRHA, he learned that they were very disappointed in the fact that they did not receive an evaluation or assessment, but only given vague feedback regarding which requirements they did not meet.

Chair Burruss, referring to Mr. Townsend's comment about engagement with the two primary partners in the last two rounds, questioned whether expanding the number of primary partners or changing the role of some of the primary partners in the

application was needed since it was not successful in either of the last two rounds. She said that perhaps the whole community engagement part of the application needed to be reevaluated.

Mrs. Goh clarified that there were actually different partners in the first and second rounds of the implementation grant applications. She stated that the first round involved the same partners for the People section that had been involved in the planning phase. She said that in the second round the People section lead entities were the school system and the library.

Mr. Townsend said that what was learned was that the financial and housing sections unlock the door to get into the evaluation of the other components which are the People and the Neighborhood components. He stated that if it was close between two localities that are essentially equal on the financial and housing components, HUD would pick the communities based on the people and neighborhood part.

Council Member Bestpitch asked if there was somewhat of a competitive disadvantage due to the local government structure in the Commonwealth of Virginia because other large cities around the country are part of a county and, in some cases, part of a multi-county municipal area where they look at multiple local governments' budgets. He stated that he did not know which cities were awarded the grants.

Mr. Townsend asked Mrs. Goh if there have been any implementation grant recipients in Virginia, to which she replied that there have not. He addressed Council Member Bestpitch saying that, in looking at other applicants that had been awarded, one of the things that is common are large private and public-private investments because funding or financial support comes with being a large urban metropolitan

area. He said that it is a combination of a number of those things in terms of scale and size, form of government and the presence of some well-funded, well-endowed foundations that play a part in that role of the application process and the financing of the plan.

Mrs. Goh added that the Executive Director at the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority told her that they had made a decision not to pursue the implementation grant process; however, she did not know if that was related to any concern that Virginia could not compete due to local government structure.

Mayor Lea stated that, politically, this seemed unfair and wondered if it had ever been challenged.

Council Member Bestpitch replied to Mayor Lea that he was not sure there was anything that could be done about it, but that possibly something could be put together that addresses or at least better explains investment of resources on a per capita basis to present a better argument that Roanoke is competitive.

Mr. Townsend said that the HUD process is very prescribed and there is not a lot of room on the application to present philosophical information so, in some ways, the scoring is not surprising based on how the application is structured and the sequence in which they view parts of the application.

Mayor Lea stated that maybe when the conference of mayors meets in Washington, D.C., this would be something that he could discuss with HUD Secretary Carson.

Mr. Townsend said that it would be great if they awarded seven or eight grants based on total funding and then somehow broke it down so that the competition would

only be between three to six localities of similar size, rather than competing with the entire pool of thirty applicants. He said it is unique in the fact that they lump everybody in the same pot and then do the evaluation of the total pool.

Mayor Lea reminded everyone that there was only seven minutes left in the meeting so Council Members Dykstra and Ferris could ask their questions with that timeframe in mind.

Council Member Dykstra said that she wanted to ask some basic questions of Mrs. Goh about the status of public housing in Roanoke for the general public, specifically regarding a waiting list for Section 8 vouchers. She asked if there was currently a waiting list for people who are looking for housing who are not able to enter the public housing system and, if so, how many were there and what was being done to alleviate it. The second question she asked was regarding the process a property owner must go through to be able to accept Section 8 vouchers.

Mrs. Goh replied that, with regard to the HCV waiting list, there are about 400 people on it as of now; however, RRHA has been under the direction of HUD for several months to not issue any vouchers due to a funding shortfall. She stated that she does not anticipate RRHA issuing vouchers again until at least January 2018, so RRHA will not be able to serve those people on the waiting list this year because funding was short. She said that public housing waiting lists are site-based, so there is not one answer as it depends on where a person is interested in living. She explained that the waiting lists close when there are more people on them than RRHA would be able to house in 6 months and, when a waiting list closes or reopens, it is publicized on the RRHA website as well as in local newspapers. She went on to say that the

shortest time to get into public housing is generally at Lansdowne Park, which has the highest turnover at thirty percent annually and the longest wait time is generally at Morningside Manor where there is a very low turnover and the wait times can be upward of a year. Responding to a question from Council Member Dykstra regarding high demand for Morningside Manor, Mrs. Goh explained that Morningside Manor and Melrose Towers are designated as housing for people who are elderly or disabled, and there is not enough affordable housing in Roanoke for people who are elderly or disabled. She said that when she was talking earlier about the plan to use Operating Fund Financing, it includes building eight additional units that will be senior cottages for addressing that continuing demand for affordable housing for seniors.

Responding to Council Member Dykstra's question regarding the process for a homeowner looking to accept vouchers, Mrs. Goh explained that RRHA has a system where landlords can list their properties so voucher holders would know that they are willing to rent to voucher holders and have the opportunity to choose that housing. She said if a landlord has not participated in the program before, RRHA staff will be happy to discuss the program requirements with them. She stated that basically, there are two major things to which they have to be willing to agree. One is to have the housing inspected to ensure it meets HUD's Housing Quality Standards in order to be eligible for subsidy through the HCV program. She explained that they also have to be willing to sign a Housing Assistance Payment contract with RRHA that has requirements related to things like annual inspections, a commitment not to charge tenant fees outside of the agreed upon rent amount and some other terms and conditions. She went on to say that if any landlord is interested, there is a section on

the RRHA website for prospective landlords that includes contact information for the Section 8 department staff, who will be happy to talk with them about what is required.

Council Member Dykstra asked if there was a shortage in privately owned properties that are available for Section 8 vouchers or across all of the low income housing needs. Mrs. Goh responded to say that RRHA has a pretty high success rate of people being able to lease up with their vouchers; however, the same challenges exist that were discussed earlier in terms of availability of housing in areas outside of high poverty or minority concentration.

Council Member Dykstra thanked Mrs. Goh for her answers to the questions.

Council Member Ferris thanked Mrs. Goh for her report and stated that he had some questions about her highlights regarding the Jobs-Plus program and the \$3 million demonstration grant for Lansdowne Park from HUD for employment and increased earnings. He said that he had somehow missed any prior information regarding this program but wanted to find out more in the parameters of the program.

Mrs. Goh explained that there was an announcement at the time that Jobs-Plus was awarded and that RRHA was one of nine housing authorities nationwide awarded a grant through the very competitive process. She said that Lansdowne Park was the only RRHA development that met HUD's eligibility criteria to apply by virtue of number of units and unemployment rate. She stated there are 300 families or households at Lansdowne Park, and all of those who are able to work are eligible to participate. She explained that approximately 200 are participating in the program at this point. She stated that the most dramatic example of how the program is effective is that the unemployment rate was around seventy percent when the grant was applied for, but

is now at fifty-five percent, a decrease of fifteen percent since the start of the grant.

Council Member Ferris stated that out of 200 participants in the program, that equals to thirty additional people now working. He also asked if the grant was a three year grant to which Mrs. Goh replied that it was a \$3 million, four year grant. Council Member Ferris stated that this equals out to a little less than \$1 million per year, approximately \$750,000-\$800,000 per year.

Mrs. Goh stated that one of the keys to success with the Jobs-Plus program is that RRHA has hired ambassadors who are residents at Lansdowne Park to do outreach and get people to sign up to participate in the program. She added that the most important thing is that Jobs-Plus is the first program RRHA has had funding to implement that meets people where they are, so it's not a prescribed program or a specific track that must be completed. The program is designed to help people get a survival job, move up to a better job, or help them go to community college to get training, along with paying for transportation and childcare. The program allows staff and community partners to assist with removing whatever roadblocks are keeping people from being able to get or keep employment. She stated that this is the most flexible funding for a program RRHA has had to address these kinds of needs and it has been very successful as a result.

Council Member Trinkle thanked everyone on behalf of the City for the work they are doing and the great job with their attendance record at meetings, which was included with Mrs. Goh's report. He stated that whenever the two groups meet, which is not that often, he brings up the issue of senior housing and the long waiting list, so he was glad that RRHA would be building the eight senior cottages. He said that he

knew that Melrose Towers and Morningside Manor are in need of some money infusion into their infrastructures, so to let Council know if there is anything that they can do to help with grants or anything that is focused on senior and disability housing.

Council Member Trinkle went on to say that while the group had talked a lot about partnerships today, he did want to talk about healthcare partnerships, knowing that there is a lot going on in the community with Healthy Roanoke Valley and Child Health Investment Partnership (CHIP) of Roanoke Valley which are doing a lot in the housing areas. With regard to food, there is the Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP) and Feeding America that are doing good work, including markets at three of the public housing sites. He said he hears about how successful these food, nutrition, health, wellbeing partnerships are and wanted to commend RRHA for being able and willing to collaborate with these many organizations on these health, nutrition and wellness innovations.

Mayor Lea said that the group had covered a number of issues in today's conversations, but he wanted Mr. Townsend to address where the City is in regards to the disposition of the Melrose Library.

Mr. Townsend stated that the plan for the Melrose library is to move into the far western end of the Goodwill Center on Melrose Avenue and that they are in the last stages of design. He said he hopes that the project will go out to bid before the end of this year with construction commencing in early 2018. He said that the library should open in early 2019, and that the current library will need to remain in its current location until the new one is built. The City is looking at late 2018, or the beginning of 2019, as to when they would be in a position to schedule the transition out of the

Melrose branch into the new Melrose branch. At this point, they have not identified any continuous City use after the library moves so they will go through an evaluation process to determine what process Council uses to dispose of the property or transfer it for some other use.

Mr. Townsend also reminded RRHA and the Council that the City anticipates starting to update the City's Comprehensive Plan in 2018; this was last done in 2002. He explained that housing is a major component of the Comprehensive Plan and that the update is expected to take a year or longer. He said the Plan will address the next ten to fifteen years for the City. He stated that this process would involve RRHA. Chair Burruss stated that she is looking forward to RRHA participating in the process.

Council Member Bestpitch stated that he had one follow up question in regards to the Melrose Library regarding the discussion about the possibility of extending the road that would connect Salem Turnpike to Melrose Avenue. Mr. Townsend replied that this was a part of the Choice Neighborhoods Transformation Plan and would again be a part of what is submitted to HUD for the next round. He said that in the Choice Neighborhoods plan, Horton Park, which is to the east of the library, would become one of the first housing sites, but the library itself was not specifically addressed, other than the street from Salem Turnpike to Forest Park school.

Responding to a question from Council Member Bestpitch regarding a significant impact on Horton Park if the Choice Neighborhoods grant was received, Mrs. Goh stated that the Transformation Plan included, in order to reduce the concentration and density of housing on the Lansdowne Park site, to develop some housing on Horton Park and replace the park land on the other side of the street.

Council Member Bestpitch said that he had a question from a citizen recently about that, which is why he wanted to make sure to ask.

Mayor Lea stated that he and Vice Mayor Price have been a part of some of the meetings regarding the Melrose library and one of the things they noted was to make sure that the students at Lansdowne Park had access to the new library because they currently have the library directly across the street, which is ideal. He said that, even though it will be moved a little further, they will still have access, which is important.

Mayor Lea thanked RRHA Commissioners for their work and said that one of the reasons he wanted to call the meeting was because, when he and Mr. Townsend were at an education conference in Denver recently, a lot of cities had brought their housing authorities there with them. He said he thought that was interesting, and one of the reasons they attended was that they felt that it was so important to the community. He said one of the housing authorities had partnered with the police department and education and engaged residents in public housing. He explained that some moms were bus ambassadors and would meet the kids on the bus. He stated that, because of time, he would talk to Mrs. Goh about some ideas that he felt were good to really enhance the community, especially in public safety. Mayor Lea thanked everyone for what they were doing.

Chair Burruss thanked everyone stating that it has been a pleasure to be at the meeting and that there was a lot of interesting discussion on some very relevant topics. She said that RRHA welcomes the opportunity, not just for today's dialogue but for ongoing dialogue particularly about some of the key things discussed today.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Smith moved that the meeting be adjourned.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Karnes and upon roll call the following vote was recorded:

AYES: Commissioners Anguiano, Burruss, Garner, Karnes, Smith and Witten

NAYS: None

Chair Burruss declared the meeting adjourned at 10:14 a.m.



Gail Burruss, Chair



Glenda Edwards Goh, Secretary-Treasurer

