

**Lee County Housing Authority (LCHA)
Board of Commissioners Special Meeting**

A meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Lee County Housing Authority (LCHA) was held on **April 17, 2025**, at **10:30 am** at the Community Center, located at 14073 Whitebirch Way, North Fort Myers, Florida, 33901. Notice of this meeting was duly posted.

ATTENDANCE: Chairman Robert Norris
Vice Chairman Robert Ortiz
Commissioner Christine Sardina

ABSENT:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Norris brought before the board the minutes from the December 2, 2024, board meetings. Having reviewed the minutes, Chairman Norris inquired if there were any corrections, additions, or deletions required. Chairman Norris entertained a motion to accept the minutes. December 2, 2024, Vice Chairman Ortiz made a motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Sardina.

Financial Reports – Vicki Collins, CPA

Enclosed for your review are financials, i.e., Balance Sheet, Income Statement for first five months of the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025.

PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAM

The Public Housing Program budget to actual for the five months ended February 28, 2025:

	Budget	Actual	Variance
Pine Echo	(110,375)	(190,210)	(79,835)
Barrett Park	(32,416)	(77,055)	(44,639)
Total PHA	(142,791)	(267,265)	(124,474)

The Public Housing Program was over budget \$124,474 for the first five months of the fiscal year. When the budget was presented to you, I noted that public housing was projecting losses for the year due to maintenance costs to maintain the units during the transition to RAD. Five months into the year, on average, 41% of budgeted costs should have been incurred. All categories of the budget were equal to or below this threshold at February 28, except Maintenance and Operations, it was at 95%. Some of the large expenditures have been.

Pine Echo removal damage	October 2024	\$ 55,333	debris and large downed tree
	November 2024	10,800	repair Hurricane Milton fence
		39,000	14 unit muck out and make ready
Barrett Park removal demo/Dispo request	October 2024	\$ 5,167	debris and large downed tree
	November 2024	27,000	environmental Assess, Sec 18
	February 2025	<u>56,150</u>	Complete remodel per insurance
Total		<u>\$ 193,450</u>	

At February 28, 2025, Public Housing had operating cash of \$1,095,953.

Chairman Norris asked, in terms of remodeling or rehabbing those 14 units, since HUD asked us to take the residents from the Punta Gorda Housing Authority for the time being. Are we being reimbursed for the 14 units?

Vicki responded no, because HUD said that since we got these subsidies, we are already supposed to maintain the units.

Chairman Norris asked how we could justify that to the people on the waiting list trying to get in, and all of a sudden, the residents from Punta Gorda get in, have an emergency?

Mr. Goodson responded yes, it was emergency housing, which caused them to be moved to the top of, which HUD will allow those kinds of exceptions, and in this case, HUD called and asked if Lee County Housing Authority (LCHA) could the residents being displaced.

Vicki mentioned, Diana, those units have already been taken offline, or are not available to rent? You had to put them back online in order to lease them up for the Punta Gorda resident.

Diana responded yes, that is correct.

Mr. Goodson mentioned that it is because we are making the transition to the RAD conversion, we don't have to relocate more families than we need to. As families were moving out, we were not leasing those units back up because the relocation costs are really expensive. We could renovate those empty units first, and then move other families into the units.

Chairman Norris asked are they still in the units, the 14 families?

Diana responded, we had six families. Only six chose to come to our agency, and out of those six, five of them have moved out. We only have one remaining. We have a total of 17 vacant units.

Chairman Norris asked about the expenditure, which was \$56,000, and it states completely remodeled per insurance request.

Vicki responded, we got reimbursed about \$53,000, so it was reversed. That shows up in the income section.

SECTION 8 PROGRAM

The Section 8 program budget to actual for the five months ended February 28, 2025:

	Budget	Actual	Variance
Administration	38,333	42,522	4,189
HAP	0	(76,578)	(76,578)
Total Section 8	38,333	(34,056)	(72,389)

For the first five months of the fiscal year, Adm performed \$4,189 better than projected, and the HAP program has spent \$72,578 more than budgeted.

As of February 28, 2025, Admin Fee Reserves were \$587,442.

HAP (Housing Assistance Payments) Reserves at February 28, 2025, were \$(76,578)

HUD Held HAP Reserves are about:

HCV	\$ 98,000
MS	<u>\$170,000</u>
	<u>\$268,000</u>

Chairman Norris asked, given the policies that are coming out of DC, how is that going to affect us in terms of the request that is being made?

Vicki responded, our reserves are our money that is held by HUD, so there shouldn't be any issue with that. It's not asking for additional money, this money that HUD issued is money your account. A number of years ago, HUD decided to hold funds in their accounts and earn the interest, and if we need any funds, we have to ask for it. It shouldn't have any impact. Mr. Goodson, do you know something I don't know?

Mr. Goodson responded no, and that is a good explanation. Those funds, a few years ago, were typically held in the housing authority's account. HUD wants to earn the interest and then just disperse it. I think it's within two days of when you make the request, HUD has to wire funds to your account. Those are our funds, they are just holding them in Washington. When you look at all the cuts that are being proposed in Washington, the Section 8 program is going to be the one program that's probably not going to be hit nearly as hard as some of the other programs. We have all come to the same conclusion. HUD is still going to continue to push you to get out of the public housing program and get into the Section 8 program, which is why we are making the RAD conversion. We made that decision a couple of years ago.

Diana mentioned that I've already had an email conversation with our field office regarding our HCV program and lease up, and they have already told me to stop leasing up. So, as of now, we are not leasing up any regular vouchers. We will still lease up our special vouchers, like VASH, FUP, and mainstream, and will continue to lease as we have referrals and vouchers available. In our regular HCV program, we are halting the lease.

Mr. Goodson mentioned for Attorney Scott's benefit, let me just point out, in Vicki's presentation, when we talked about the 17 vacant units, that's not typical of us. We are always at 90 to 100% occupancy, and you probably caught that we are purposely maintaining the number of vacant units as we go into this RAD project. I don't want you to think that we have a lease-up issue.

Department Head Reports- Diana Jones, PH/HCV Supervisor

Housing and Maintenance Reports:

Diana Jones reviewed the reports and stated the average rent at Pine Echo is \$278.76 and \$397.40 for Barrett Park. The occupancy rate for Pine Echo is 100% and for Barrett Park is 100%. Maintenance had completed 48 work orders for Pine Echo and for Barrett Park 74.

Diana stated that five out of six residents from Punta Gorda had moved out, and one is permanently housed. Even though they had to sign a one-year lease for our policy, we did release them because it was a temporary relocation.

Chairman Norris asked if the residents from Punta Gorda take care of the units?

Diana responded I don't think there was much damage.

Luis stated that the only thing he found was that the appliances were not cleaned.

Chairman Norris asked if the units were damaged, can we collect from their security deposit?

Diana responded yes, we can collect from the security deposit.

Section 8 Reports:

Diana stated that she had a conversation with HUD in regards to our lease-up. HUD will tell you to lease up, and then they will say stop leasing up, you are over budget. Our Mainstream vouchers, we have 93%, it should be the last round before we reach our full lease up on that program. With the VASH program is 32%, the VA has been extremely proactive in getting clients to us. By May 1, 2025, we should be at 34%, which will only leave one vacant voucher available. For the FUP program is 13% still the same, no matter how many times I reach out to DCF, their turnover staff, which I cannot keep up with who I need to talk to and the information is just not being related.

Deborah asked what does FUP stand for?

Diana responded to the Family Unification Program. When people have either aged out of foster care or families that have had their children removed due to inadequate housing, then the agency DCF and Lutheran Services are partners to take referrals so that they can introduce their clients into our program.

Diana stated that she had reached out to HUD because it does affect our overall lease-up. I have reached out and asked if there is a way to decrease the number of vouchers for the FUP program,

because we have 25, and I think as long as I have been here, I don't think we've had more than 15 families on the program.

Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) reports:

Diana stated that we had a couple of graduates in the Public Housing program. We had two residents who became homeowners from public housing. One Section 8 participant who graduated, not a homeowner, but she did finish school and found full-time employment. I do have one application for public housing and four applications for Section 8.

Resident Services- Elizabeth Jackson, ROSS Coordinator

Elizabeth stated that we are still partners with Dr. Ella Piper Center Senior Computer Class. Ms. Julia teaches our computer class and the cell phone classes. We still partner with The Bread of Life Ministries and BJ's bread pick-up. We continue to donate fresh fruits, vegetables, bread, and pastries. Cross Point Church played a key role in organizing Breakfast Bingo sessions. On April 5th, we did breakfast bingo, and during the GO Saturday with the youth, the Maranatha Dancers taught the kids a variety of dance styles. We are in partnership with the Department of Children and Families to help residents obtain essential SNAP and TANF benefits. I have a list of several upcoming events. The first event is the Family Initiative Health Fair. If you are not doing anything, please feel free to come out and join us. Good news, we were awarded the Ross Grant effective June 1st, 2025, for 3 years. As I stated prior, HUD wants us to have 50 participants due to move-outs, and I have 48.

Chairman Norris asked is it the same budget as before, or did it have an increase?

Deborah responded it's a small increase, maybe about 5% more than what it was the previous year.

Executive Director Reports, Marcus D. Goodson

Mr. Goodson stated, I have a couple of updates. You know that Attorney Kenneth Thompson, our legal representative for the last 20 years, has announced his retirement and will no longer be working with the Housing Authority to provide legal services. We started doing some research on local firms that we thought could provide the legal representation that we need as a Housing Authority. One local firm stood out Attorney Kristie Scott, who is here with us this morning with the Light Path Law firm. She provided me with quite a bit of information on her resume and bio, which was shared with you. Chairman Norris and I met with Attorney Scott and spoke with her about what we needed at LCHA, and we felt like she brought everything that we needed and more to the table. I wanted to present her to you this morning, so you can ask any questions you may have. With that intro, I will turn it over to Attorney Scott to share with us anything that she would like to share.

Attorney Scott responded I am honored to be in this position to be able to speak with you this morning, Mr. Chairman, executive director, and board members. I want to give you just a little bit of background. The basic thing that I think is most important for a public board is moving forward with an attorney who has some experience, and that's something that I do bring to the table. Before founding my law firm five years ago, I worked with another firm that was founded

by our former mayor of Fort Myers, and at that firm had a lot of government work. I sat through board meetings for Lee Health at the time we were their board council, and I'm very familiar with dealing with public boards. I also worked with the City of Fort Myers and even helped restructure their legal department. At one point, I thought about becoming a board-certified government lawyer because we were doing so much government work. There is a lot of board work that we do that is centered around HOAs and things of that sort, which is somewhat related to some of what you all do. I am familiar with some of the programs that you all offer because I'm very involved in the community. My firm is a firm of four lawyers, so it's not a solo practice, it is a fast-growing, moving, and shaking law firm here in Fort Myers that's well respected.

Chairman Norris stated I have met with Ms. Scott and took a look at her resume. I was impressed, not only with her background, in terms with how she communicated certain information. I think that we can do very well by selecting her law firm.

Mr. Goodson stated that we need to take action on this agenda item, and if approved, Attorney Scott is going to get me a copy of an agreement with Chairman Norris as a signatory. As you know, on our development deal, we still use Saxon and Gilmore as our legal representation, but Attorney Scott and her firm will be involved at some level. Their role here is to represent the board, the housing authority on these more local matters. Attorney Scott, we have five board members, but we only have three active board members. All board members are appointed by the governor. Because we only have three active board members, we meet quarterly, and not monthly.

Chairman Norris entertained a motion to approve the contract for Light Path Law, P.A. Commissioner Sardina made a motion to approve the contract for Light Path Law, P.A., seconded by Vice Chairman Ortiz. The motion carries.

Mr. Goodson stated that the Central Avenue project is moving forward. I'm working with Sandra Ryan at Lee County Government. We were going to go to the county commissioner meeting last week for approval of the \$604,993 for Central Avenue renovation, but there were some environmental review questions that have not been answered yet. They pushed back the meeting to May 7th, 2025, to get it officially approved by the county commissioners. We have a scope of work that has been prepared by Dave Moore. There was a question about replacement costs, so when dealing with these funds, we must meet a 75% replacement test. We did a calculation, and we are at about 43%. Sandra emailed me this morning and said that they reviewed our analysis and approved it. Now we know what kind of environmental review we have to complete on Central Avenue. The city also performed a lead-based paint test back in 2009-2010. The city is looking for that documentation; if they can't find the documentation, then we'll have to have another lead-based paint review. Once we get the environmental review completed and the county commissioners approval on the 7th, then we will issue our bid packet. We will advertise on our website and schedule a walk-through.

Chairman Norris asked what year the building was built.

Diana responded in 1978. Lead-based paint was banned at the end of 1977.

Mr. Goodson stated that we have an date on the Pine Echo project. We are looking at a June 30, 2025 closing date for the financing for this project, and we anticipate construction starting about two weeks after closing. It is a 12 -15-month construction time that we are scheduling in terms

of when the project will start and is completed. The project should be completed by September of 2026. For Barrett Park, we are still trying to secure funding. Once the funding is there, we can demolish and then build back a three-story mid-rise for seniors and three mid-rise building for families. I'm still working on the request for emergency Section 8 voucher request from Washington.

Vice-Chairman Ortiz asked before construction starts on the RAD conversion, will there be another tenant meeting for RAD?

Mr. Goodson responded yes, probably several meetings.

Diana stated that at least one more, and we will have the relocation team available at that meeting so that all the questions about relocation can be answered.

Vice-Chairman Ortiz asked now, in the past couple of meetings, they had asked for suggestions. Are those suggestions going to happen, or are they just going to be put off to the side, and nothing is going to be done with them?

Mr. Goodson responded that every suggestion that we have recorded is going to be considered. Some may be included, and some were probably already in the scope of work. There may be some that are outside of the scope that we may be able to include or may not; it's all budget-driven, but we'll look at the list of suggestions and then we'll check off the ones that are going to be included in the scope.

Diana stated that every one of the meetings that we've had so far, where I've taken all of the suggestions from everybody, was forwarded to the development team.

Vice-Chairman Ortiz asked if landscaping is part of the RAD?

Mr. Goodson responded yes, absolutely. There are trees that are dying that we are concerned about that will be removed.

Vice-Chairman Ortiz asked are we still going to get sprinkling systems installed in Pine Echo I?

Mr. Goodson responded I don't think that's going to be included because it's too expensive and they get damaged. We prioritize inside improvements to units and impact windows for hurricane seasons. We just want to make sure we are prioritizing health and safety improvements for our residents.

Capital Improvements

There were no reports

Other Business/Board of Commissioners Comments

There were no reports

Attorney Report(s)

There were no reports

Public Input/Comments

There was no one to be heard.

The next meeting will be May 15, 2025

ADJOURNMENT: Having no further business to discuss, Commissioner Ortiz made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:49 a.m., seconded by Commissioner Sardina. The motion carries.

ATTEST	 _____ Yaritza Damiani, Executive Assistant	8/25/25 _____ Date
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