

Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation
Minutes of the Meeting of the Management Committee
April 10, 2023

A meeting of the Management Committee of the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (“RIHousing”) Board of Commissioners was held on Monday, April 10, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the main office of the Corporation, 44 Washington Street, Providence, RI 02903, Conference Boardroom and via telephone conference call.

Carol Ventura, Executive Director, opened the meeting and introduced Carl Rotella, Director of Information Technology, who outlined the parameters of the meeting.

Mr. Rotella stated that (i) this meeting would be recorded and available for review on the RIHousing website within 3-5 business days after the meeting and (ii) except for specific RIHousing staff participating telephonically in the meeting, all callers would be muted during the meeting. Mr. Rotella also asked that to prevent any feedback or background noise, telephone participants to please mute the telephone if not speaking. Additionally, Mr. Rotella announced that if during the meeting anyone had technical difficulties with audio or accessing the call, they should call (401) 457-1240.

Next, Corinne Myers, General Counsel, provided additional guidance for the meeting. Ms. Myers stated that the meeting was being held in person with all members of the Management Committee appearing in person and specific RIHousing staff participating via teleconference. Members of the public were invited to access the meeting in person or via teleconference according to their preference. Additionally, members of the public could visit the RIHousing website to view the agenda and information on the actions being taken and in the event the teleconference was interrupted, staff would stop the meeting until audio was restored.

Ms. Myers also stated that Committee Chairman Thorsen would preside over the meeting and requested that any Commissioner or staff member state their name prior to speaking for the benefit of listeners and to mute the phone when not speaking. She then invited Committee Chairman Thorsen to call the meeting to order.

A quorum being present, Committee Chairman Thorsen introduced himself and officially called the meeting to order at approximately 3:12 p.m. Committee Chairman Thorsen then invited Ms. Ventura to proceed with the roll call of Commissioners in attendance.

Ms. Ventura conducted a roll call of Commissioners participating in the meeting. Commissioners participating were: Committee Chairman Thorsen; Robert Craven, Designee for General Treasurer James Diossa and Stephen P. McAllister.

Stefan Pryor, Secretary of Housing, was also present.

RIHousing staff participating were: Carol Ventura, Executive Director; Kara Lachapelle, Chief Financial Officer; Anne Berman, Director of Real Estate Development; Amy Rainone, Director Government Relations & Policy; Elizabeth Bioteau, Director of Strategic Initiatives & Partners; Corinne Myers, General Counsel; and Carl Rotella, Director of Information Technology.

Members of the public were also present via teleconference.

The following matters were then discussed by the Committee.

1. Approval of Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting Held on September 6, 2022

Committee Chairman Thorsen asked for a motion and a second for the approval of the minutes of the Management Committee meeting held on September 6, 2022. A motion was made by Commissioner Designee Craven and seconded by Committee Chairman Thorsen.

There being no discussion, Corinne Myers, General Counsel conducted a voice vote of the Commissioners for the approval of the minutes of the Management Committee Meeting held on September 6, 2022.

The Commissioners voted to approve the minutes with two (2) votes in favor, Commissioner McAllister abstaining, and zero (0) nay votes.

Ms. Myers then officially stated for the record that the following was adopted:

VOTED: That the minutes of the Management Committee Meeting held on September 6, 2022, are hereby approved.

2. Recommendation for Approval of Engagement of Consultant for 2023 Continuum of Care Program Competition (Housing Innovations LLC)

Committee Chairman Thorsen introduced Elizabeth Bioteau, Director of Strategic Initiatives & Partners who gave the presentation.

Ms. Bioteau said that this request was for approval to engage Housing Innovations LLC to develop an application for the 2023 Continuum of Care (“CoC”) competition, a grant program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”). RIHousing serves as the collaborative applicant on behalf of the Rhode Island Continuum of Care (“RICoC”).

CoC grants provide funding on a competitive basis to support rental assistance and supportive services projects for the benefit of persons experiencing homelessness. The RICoC is required to submit an application for CoC funding annually. For the first time, the RICoC anticipates it will need to renew its Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (“YHDP”) funding during the CoC competition as well. The RICoC anticipates that a supplemental notice of CoC funding will be made available, and this firm would be prepared to support the RICoC’s application in that event as well.

Housing Innovations LLC will commence work in April or May 2023 and complete the relevant elements to allow for submission of the RICoC’s application at least two business days before HUD’s deadline. The precise deadline is unknown until the competition is issued by HUD, but the deadline is anticipated to be during Fall of 2023. The training elements of this scope of work are anticipated to continue after the HUD deadline and the firm will support RIHousing with related training and technical support through March 2024.

RIHousing issued a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) for a qualified firm to develop an application for the 2023 Continuum of Care (“CoC”) competition on February 17, 2023. The RFP was posted on the RIHousing website, the State of RI Division of Purchasing website, social media, and sent to RIHousing’s RFP notification list via an email announcement. RIHousing received one (1) proposal in response to the RFP from one (1) qualified firm, Housing Innovations LLC.

A committee consisting of RIHousing staff from the Executive division conducted a review of the proposal in accordance with the ranking criteria set forth in the RFP. The committee is recommending approval of the firm Housing Innovations LLC.

The engagement is expected to last for twelve (12) months, during which time Housing Innovations LLC will prepare the RICoC response to the competitive funding opportunity issued by HUD.

Following the presentation, Committee Chairman Thorsen asked for a motion and a second to recommend to the Board of Commissioners Approval of Engagement of Consultant for 2023 Continuum of Care Program Competition (Housing Innovations LLC).

A motion was duly made by Commissioner McAllister and seconded by Commissioner Designee Craven.

Commissioner McAllister inquired if RIHousing is familiar with the firm and has prior experience with their services. Ms. Bioteau confirmed that the Corporation has worked with the firm in the past.

Committee Chairman Thorsen wanted to verify that the maximum expenditure for the service is \$20,000. Ms. Bioteau confirmed that amount.

Commissioner Designee Craven asked Ms. Bioteau if Housing Innovations LLC was the sole respondent to the RFP.

Ms. Bioteau responded that Housing Innovations LLC was the only applicant.

There being no other comments, Committee Chairman Thorsen conducted a voice vote of the Commissioners. The Commissioners unanimously voted to approve the motion.

The recommendation for Approval of Engagement of Consultant for 2023 Continuum of Care Program Competition (Housing Innovations LLC) was unanimously approved.

3. Recommendation for Approval of Pre-Qualification of Municipal Technical Assistance Firms

Committee Chairman Thorsen invited Amy Rainone, Director Government Relations & Policy to give the presentation.

Ms. Rainone stated that the request seeks authorization to establish a roster of pre-qualified firms able to provide a range of technical assistance to municipalities, with a goal of increasing their capacities around the planning, production, or preservation of affordable housing.

In 2021, the General Assembly created the Housing Production Fund by adding an additional real estate transfer tax on transactions over \$800,000. The fund received an initial appropriation of \$25 million which may be used for financial assistance for the planning, production, or preservation of affordable housing and technical and financial assistance for cities and towns to support increased local housing production. Of the initial allocation, \$5 million has been made available for municipal technical assistance, which the RIHousing is responsible for administering and is the focus of this RFA.

In January 2023, RIHousing issued a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) for firms capable of providing the below-identified technical assistance to municipalities on an as needed basis:

- Needs Analysis
- Updating land use and permitting requirements
- Developing model zoning ordinance
- Infrastructure capacity assessment
- Public engagement and education
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The RFP notice was posted on the RIHousing website and the website maintained by the State of Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Purchases. In addition, the RFP was sent by email to more than 400 partners, organizations, consultants, and municipalities.

Overall, RIHousing received proposals from twelve (12) unique firms, with all respondents proposing to provide one or more of the activities noted above.

A selection committee comprised of RIHousing staff (the “Review Committee”) reviewed the responses in accordance with the criteria set forth in the RFP and determined whether respondents were qualified to perform the required services. Based on this review, it was determined that one respondent did not meet the criteria for providing services. RIHousing seeks approval to include the following eleven (11) firms on its roster for municipal technical assistance:

- Anser Advisory Consulting, LLC
- Barrett Planning Group LLC
- Camoin Associates, Inc.
- Horsley Witten Group, Inc.
- HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University
- Innes Associates Ltd.
- Libra Planners
- Ninigret Partners, LLC
- RKG Associates, Inc.
- Stantec Consulting Services Inc.
- Weston & Sampson Services, Inc.

The selected firms will appear on RIHousing’s roster of pre-qualified municipal technical assistance firms for a period of three years. Municipalities will identify firms directly from this list to determine which firm can best meet their needs and will then apply to RIHousing for financial support for the eligible services to be provided by the selected consultant.

Finally, Ms. Rainone said that the Review Committee recommends that the Board of Commissioners approve the creation of a roster of qualified providers of municipal technical assistance.

Committee Chairman Thorsen thanked Ms. Rainone for the presentation and asked for a motion and a second to recommend to the Board of Commissioners Approval of Pre-Qualification of Municipal Technical Assistance Firms.

A motion was duly made by Commissioner Designee Craven and seconded by Commissioner McAllister.

Mr. Pryor, Secretary of Housing arrived at approximately 3:16 p.m.

Following the motion, Committee Chairman Thorsen asked if anyone had questions.

There being no discussion, Chairman Thorsen conducted a voice vote of the Commissioners. The Commissioners unanimously voted to approve the motion.

The recommendation for Approval of Pre-Qualification of Municipal Technical Assistance Firms was unanimously approved.

4. Recommendation for Approval of Engagement of Consultant for the Update of Design and Construction Guidelines (Utile, Inc.)

Committee Chairman Thorsen asked Anne Berman, Director of Real Estate Development to present the request.

Ms. Berman explained that RIHousing seeks approval of the engagement of a consultant to assist with the evaluation of and update to the RIHousing Design and Construction Guidelines (the “Guidelines”).

The Development Division underwrites and finances a wide variety of development projects. Integral to the process are the Guidelines which are used to (i) establish clear and consistent construction standards and (ii) establish a predictable process for proceeding from preliminary approval to construction completion. The Guidelines have not been substantially reviewed and updated for over 15 years, and as an outgrowth of the strategic planning process, it was determined there is a need to revise, reorganize and consolidate the Guidelines. The goal is to create Guidelines that are user-friendly, and address innovation, current construction systems, climate change, resiliency and energy efficiency goals to create smart, cost effective and durable housing.

In December 2022, RIHousing issued a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) from qualified vendors to (i) review and update the existing Guidelines, and (ii) conduct stakeholder engagement to inform the updated Guidelines. Notice of the RFP was posted on RIHousing’s website, and the website maintained by the Rhode Island Department of Administration’s Division of Purchases. RIHousing also sent the solicitation to architects and consultants in our current database.

Five (5) firms submitted proposals in response to the RFP. Three (3) proposals included both the Guideline update and the stakeholder engagement. Two (2) proposals were for the stakeholder engagement only. An internal selection committee reviewed the proposals and evaluated them in accordance with the criteria outlined in the RFP. The selection committee scored the responses based upon factors including the vendor’s professional capacity, fee structure, and ability to perform within time and budget constraints. An attachment setting forth the scoring matrix for the vendors’ proposals was provided as part of the April 10, 2023 Management Committee package.

Following review of the bid documents, interviews with the top two scoring respondents, and the selection committee’s evaluation of all proposals based on the selection criteria, Utile, Inc. (“Utile”) was selected to provide both stakeholder engagement and revisions to the Guidelines. The selection committee felt that based on Utile’s plan for stakeholder engagement, their approach to the Guideline revisions, expertise in current industry practices and energy efficiency issues, and their understanding of the complexity of the assignment, they were the highest scored proposal. Utile was not the least expensive proposal; however, the committee determined that the proposed fee is commensurate with Utile’s proposed scope of work. And equally important, the committee was concerned that the proposal with the lowest fee was not comprehensive enough given the proposed goal of the RFP.

The engagement is expected to last approximately six (6) months. RIHousing seeks to enter into a contract with Utile to (i) review and update the existing RIHousing Guidelines, and (ii) conduct stakeholder engagement to inform the updated Guidelines.

Following the presentation, Committee Chairman Thorsen asked for a motion and a second to recommend to the Board of Commissioners Approval of Engagement of Consultant for the Update of Design and Construction Guidelines (Utile, Inc.).

A motion was duly made by Commissioner McAllister and seconded by Commissioner Designee Craven.

Commissioner McAllister noted that the two (2) respondents were awarded identical scores and asked what the deciding factor was for the selection of Utile, Inc.

Ms. Berman said that the interview was the determining factor. Utile, Inc. has expertise in land use regulations, has a staff of eight (8) or nine (9) members that are focused on energy conservation and a solid plan for stakeholder engagement. Ms. Berman then mentioned that Hayley Kenyon, Manager of Construction was present and could speak to the reason the Committee chose Utile, Inc.

Ms. Kenyon reiterated that the interview process was extremely positive and that the company utilizes a holistic approach to crafting the guidelines.

Committee Chairman Thorsen then wanted to know where the company was located.

Ms. Berman responded that Utile, Inc.'s headquarters are in Boston, however, they have an office in Providence, a few feet from RIHousing.

Commissioner McAllister mentioned that the contract is for six (6) months and asked when staff expects the completion of the process. Ms. Berman replied that she hopes the task to be completed by September. The RFP process was delayed by approximately six (6) weeks due to the fact that no firms responded to the first RFP.

Commissioner Designee Craven asked if there's a possibility that the firm will require an extension. Ms. Berman said that once the process commences, staff will know if an extension is required.

Stefan Pryor, Secretary of Housing inquired what staff envisions to be a priority for the update of the guidelines. Ms. Berman said that Development does not have preconceived notions, however staff wants to streamline the guidelines to incorporate some of the State's goals, be more user friendly and allow for innovations for modular homes and cost effectiveness.

Following the discussion, Vice Chairman Thorsen conducted a voice vote of the Commissioners. The Commissioners unanimously voted to approve the motion.

The recommendation for Approval of Engagement of Consultant for the Update of Design and Construction Guidelines (Utile, Inc.) was unanimously approved.

Vice Chairman Thorsen then introduced and officially welcomed Stefan Pryor, newly appointed Chairman of RIHousing's Board of Commissioners to the meeting.

5. Recommendation for Approval of Engagement of Coordinated Entry System Evaluation Firm (HCH Enterprises, LLC)

Committee Chairman Thorsen invited Elizabeth Bioteau, to present the request.

Ms. Bioteau stated the request was for approval of HCH Enterprises, LLC to conduct an independent evaluation of the Rhode Island Statewide Coordinated Entry System (“CES”) on behalf of the Rhode Island CoC (“RiCoC”). RIHousing serves as the collaborative applicant on behalf of the RiCoC.

The Coordinated Entry System is a state-wide initiative to match households experiencing homelessness with an intervention that will most effectively end their homelessness as quickly as possible. The RiCoC, the Rhode Island Department of Housing, Crossroads Rhode Island, and the Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness currently work in partnership to design and implement the most effective system possible. The RiCoC is required to evaluate intake, assessment, and referral processes at least annually.

HCH Enterprises, LLC will provide a third-party independent CES evaluation to support ongoing program implementation and performance. The evaluation will also report on U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) compliance with CES standards, and national best practices in program development and implementation.

Additionally, HCH Enterprises, LLC will focus on the following areas to inform strategies to address ongoing challenges in CES that include but are not limited to:

- Access and implementation in outlying areas of the state and strategies to better implement CES to best serve these areas
- Evaluation of efficacy of the RiCoC’s prioritization for shelter and housing and case conferencing practices; this includes evaluation of the RiCoC’s Crisis and Housing Assessments
- Evaluation of barriers to accessing shelter for high acuity, long-time unsheltered households
- Evaluation of the RiCoC’s Rhode Island Statewide CES Policies and Procedures Manual
- Evaluation of data quality related to the CES
- Evaluation of accountability within the CES system – make recommendations on how to strengthen, if needed, the current governing and implementation structures overseeing CES.

On January 26, 2023 RIHousing issued a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) on behalf of the RiCoC for a firm qualified to conduct an independent evaluation of the Rhode Island CES. The RFP was posted on the RIHousing website, the State of RI Division of Purchasing website, social media, and sent to RIHousing’s RFP notification list via an email announcement. RIHousing received one proposal in response to the RFP from one qualified firm, HCH Enterprises LLC.

A committee consisting of staff from the Leased Housing and Rental Services and Executive divisions and staff from the Rhode Island Department of Housing conducted a review of the proposal in accordance with the criteria set forth in the RFP. The committee is recommending approval of the firm HCH Enterprises, LLC.

Following the presentation, Committee Chairman Thorsen asked for a motion and a second to recommend to the Board of Commissioners Approval of Engagement of Coordinated Entry System Evaluation Firm (HCH Enterprises, LLC),

A motion was duly made by Commissioner Designee Craven and seconded by Commissioner McAllister.

Secretary Pryor inquired who the consultant is coordinating with. Ms. Bioteau said that the consultant is coordinating with RIHousing, the Department of Housing, and other CoC providers. There is a

steering committee that is responsible for overseeing the process and will initiate periodic check ins to ensure the process is efficient.

Ms. Ventura mentioned that RIHousing also included industry best practices as a component of the engagement.

Committee Chairman Thorsen stated that he had some concerns regarding the homeless situation recently faced by the State. He did not want to hold up the process for the engagement of the consultant, but he did want the record to reflect that there are barriers and safety issues when placing the homeless. Committee Chairman Thorsen emphasized that there needs to be more flexibility in the process and a more efficient procedure to alleviate stumbling blocks.

Commissioner McAllister asked Ms. Bioteau if she had any concerns since only one (1) entity responded to the RFP. Ms. Bioteau verified that RIHousing has utilized the services of HCH Enterprises, LLC in the past and has been satisfied in their data skills and evaluation abilities.

There being no additional questions, Corinne Myers, General Counsel conducted a voice vote of the Commissioners. The Commissioners unanimously voted to approve the motion.

Ms. Myers then stated that the recommendation for Approval of Engagement of Coordinated Entry System Evaluation Firm (HCH Enterprises, LLC) was unanimously approved.

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Committee Chairman Thorsen asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was duly made by Commissioner McAllister and seconded by Commissioner Designee Craven to adjourn the meeting.

Corine Myers, General Counsel then conducted a voice vote of the Commissioners. The Commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:32 p.m.

In closing, Committee Chairman Thorsen thanked everyone for participating.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Ventura
Secretary and Executive Director