



**NORTHEAST TENNESSEE/VIRGINIA  
HOME CONSORTIUM  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES (Conducted Electronically)  
April 13, 2021**

**Board Members Present:**

- Stephen Freemon, Proxy for Johnson City, TN
- Chad Keen, Board Chairman, Proxy for Bristol, TN
- Jessica McMurray, Proxy for Kingsport, TN
- Ambre Torbett, Proxy for Sullivan County, TN
- Ellen Tolton, Proxy for Bristol, VA
- Irene Wells, Mayor, Bluff City, TN

**Board Members Absent:**

- Sherry Greene, Proxy for Washington County, TN

**Others Present:**

- Bill Forrester, FTDD
- Rene` Mann, FTDD
- Tim Beavers, Bristol, TN
- Cherith Young, Bristol, TN
- Christina Blevins, Bristol, TN

**I. Call to Order**

The Northeast Tennessee / Virginia HOME Consortium meeting was called to order on April 13, 2021 at 10:03 a.m., by electronic meeting by Chairman Keen.

Christina Blevins called the roll and those present/absent are noted above.

**II. Explanation and Approval of Conducting the Meeting Electronically**

Chairman Keen asked Christina Blevins to review the necessity for conducting electronic meetings and Governor Lee's Executive Order No. 16 (extended through April 28, 2021 by Executive Order Number 78) which suspended the provisions of the Open Meetings Act to the extent necessary to allow governing bodies to conduct their essential business by electronic means, rather than being required to gather a quorum of members physically in the same location.

One condition of meeting electronically is that if a member of HOME Consortium or Staff is attending by audio only, they are asked to identify themselves by name and position when they speak.

In order to proceed with meeting electronically, the Governing body should make a determination that meeting electronically is necessary to protect the health, safety and welfare of Tennesseans in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. At this time, it would be appropriate for the members to discuss whether they believe that meeting electronically is necessary and vote accordingly. If the members do not agree that meeting electronically is appropriate at this time, then this meeting should be adjourned until such time as the members can meet in person.

No further discussion was held. Ellen Tolton made a motion to conduct the Board meeting electronically. Mayor Irene Wells seconded the motion. The approval of the electronic meeting was put to a vote and all members present voted unanimously to approve the electronic format of the meeting.

### **III. Approval of Minutes – January 12, 2021**

Chairman Keen asked the group for any amendments or changes to the January 12, 2021, meeting minutes. Seeing none, Ellen Tolton made a motion to approve the minutes as presented from the October 13, 2020 meeting. Chairman Keen seconded the motion. Christina Blevins called roll, all present were in favor except for Mayor Wells who abstained.

### **IV. FTDD Status of Projects – Bill Forrester & Rene` Mann**

**Homeownership:** Rene` Mann reviewed each community balance in homeownership for down-payment assistance. Mrs. Mann noted that the Consortium has received multiple payoffs on previous projects this quarter.

**Rehab/Reconstruction:** Rene` Mann reviewed each community balance for Rehabilitation / Reconstruction projects. Several Environmental Reviews are wrapping up and she is expecting to move forward with projects in Johnson City and Bristol, VA. The waitlist for the program continues to grow.

**CHDO / Partner Projects:** Rene` Mann stated that FTDD has been in contact with Eastern Eight regarding mitigations on the Environmental Review for 2225 Maxwell Avenue. Eastern Eight will have a formal update in the July meeting for the Board.

Mrs. Mann discussed the upcoming People, Inc. potential CHDO project and stated that FTDD will start work on the Environmental Assessment if the Board so chooses to move forward with the presented project. Mrs. Mann noted that Mrs. Blevins will discuss this in further detail.

**Other:** None

### **V. Old Business**

**People Inc. CHDO Project:** Christina Blevins noted that this is a new addition to the agenda as People, Inc. just confirmed their intent and project for the possible use of CHDO funding. Mrs. Blevins recapped the past couple of meetings as People, Inc. had previously presented a possible CHDO project located at 616 Lawrence Avenue, Bristol, VA, and the Board did approve moving forward. Unfortunately, the total after rehabilitation calculations for the property was over HUD's limits and the project was not able to move forward.

A new project from People, Inc. has been identified for the Board to consider. People Inc. proposes to construct a single-family residential unit on Massachusetts Avenue between Montpelier Avenue and Madison Street, on property comprised of two vacant lots (properties further described as parcels 19-11-17-7 and 19-11-17-8) between 1215 and 1221 Massachusetts Avenue, in Bristol, Virginia. The new construction will serve as an affordable rental housing

option for moderate, low, and very low income households. Mrs. Blevins discussed the max subsidy limits for the new construction of \$149,761, she added that People Inc. had discussed using the funding to build a duplex but due to the rise in construction costs, have chosen to only build a single-family unit. Mrs. Blevins asked for the Boards approval of funding up to the max subsidy limits for the presented single unit project. Board discussion ensued on the Eastern Eight CHDO project and Mrs. Blevins noted that the Eastern Eight single-family new construction project had already been approved by the Board, the Environmental Assessment completed and contracts signed. Ellen Tolton made a motion to approve the People, Inc., project as presented. Amber Torbett seconded the motion. Christina Blevins called roll, all present were in favor except for Mayor Wells, who abstained.

## **VI. New Business**

**Bristol, VA Transfer of Funds:** Christina Blevins stated that Bristol, VA is asking the Board to approve a \$15,000 transfer from Homeownership to Rehab/Reconstruction for a possible upcoming project. Bristol, VA has the funds, but the transfer does require Board approval. Mayor Irene Wells made a motion to approve the Bristol, VA transfer. Stephen Freemon seconded the motion. Christina Blevins called roll, all present were in favor.

**2021 HUD Action Plan:** Mrs. Blevins stated that she had emailed the Board the Draft 2021 one-year Action Plan for prior meeting review. She noted that minor grammatical errors have been updated, Anne Cooper with ARCH is working on updating a paragraph and Johnson City's allocation but not carryover was put in the Executive Summary. Mrs. Blevins added that none of the updates change any of the activities or respective 2021 funding amounts.

Mayor Wells asked if Bluff City could receive additional funding. Mrs. Blevins discussed the new allocation of HOME funding through the American Rescue Plan. HUD has informed us that the Northeast Tennessee/Virginia HOME Consortium is looking to receive an additional allocation of \$4,014,832 in HOME – ARP funding. Guidance has not been given at this time, Mrs. Blevins is expecting it in the fall and will bring that to the Board at that time.

Mayor Wells asked the Board to consider allotting Bluff City additional funding, as the flat \$10,000 given is not sufficient to meet the needs in Bluff City. Mayor Wells also inquired about HOME funding through other avenues or if Bluff City could stand alone. Mrs. Blevins noted that if Bluff City was standing alone they would need to go through THDA for HOME funding. Mrs. Blevins stated that the Board can look at the percentages this coming year.

Ellen Tolton asked how the percentages were determined, is it based on population? Mrs. Blevins stated yes, the percentages are determined by population and need. Mrs. Blevins stated that these percentages were put into place several years ago then reviewed the percentages;

- CHDO set-aside – 15% required
- Bristol, TN – 11%
- Bristol, VA – 9%
- Kingsport – 23%
- Johnson City – 27%
- Bluff City – Flat \$10,000
- Sullivan County – 17%

- Washington County – 13%
- Administration – 10%

Chairman Keen inquired about the latest Census numbers. Mrs. Blevins stated that she would be happy to speak to the HUD Field Office and re-visit the % for next year.

Ellen Tolton made a motion to approve the 2021 HUD Action Plan presented with the changes mentioned. Amber Torbett seconded the motion. Christina Blevins called roll, all present were in favor.

**Substantial Housing Rehabilitation maximum allowable grant increase:** Bill Forrester stated that material prices have increased significantly and it's become very challenging for this program to bring project houses up to code for under \$50,000. Contractors are also having substantial difficulties keeping workers. FTDD works with other communities and several have allowed them to increase the max rehabilitation cost due to the material and labor costs. Mr. Forrester provided examples of the price increases. On FTDD's THDA projects they can go above the \$50,000 max but Mr. Forrester feels that \$50,000 is a good number for the Consortium. Christina Blevins added that the current substantial rehabilitation amount is \$40,000, Bill is asking for a \$10,000 increase not including soft-costs.

Ellen Tolton made a motion to approve the Substantial Housing Rehabilitation increase to a max of \$50,000 as presented by Mr. Forrester. Stephen Freeman seconded the motion. Christina Blevins called roll, all present were in favor.

**Conflict of Interest:** Mrs. Blevins stated that in lieu of recent events that have happened in the Consortium area, several meetings have been called with the City Manager, Attorney, and Development Services Director to make sure that we are reviewing our Policy & Procedures and making sure that Conflict of Interest is not being overlooked. The Consortium applications have been updated and now read, *Are either you or your spouse and employee of, or related to any individual who is an employee of, the local government or agency administering this grant? An "employee" includes elected and appointed officials, as well as full-time, part-time, and temporary employees. (Qualified applicants who answer yes to this question may still receive assistance.) YES or NO.* Individuals who have a Conflict of Interest will need to be addressed and possibly need to ask HUD for approval if/when necessary.

Jessica McMurray made a motion to approve the Conflict of Interest statement update in the application. Mayor Wells seconded the motion. Christina Blevins called roll, all present were in favor.

## **VII. Announcements & Adjournment**


Chairman Keen asked if there were any announcements or updates.

Christina Blevins stated that more information on the American Rescue Plan and the additional funding through the Northeast Tennessee/Virginia HOME Program will come soon and she will update the Board in July.

**Next Board Meeting:** Chairman Keen announced the next Board meeting is scheduled for July 13, 2021 at 10am.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

  
Christina Blevins, Recorder

  
Chad Keen, Chairman

