HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES of SW Washington

Connecting people to homes, hope and opportunity. ***Jennifer Westerman, CEO***

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
September 28, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.
In Person and Zoom

PRESENT:
Chair Marchelle Knapp
Vice Chair Sue Lantz
Commissioner Rayleen Aguirre
Commissioner David Vasquez
Commissioner Dixie Kolditz
Secretary Jennifer Westerman

ABSENT:
Commissioner Allan Rudberg

STAFF:
Elizabeth McGarry, Executive Assistant
Cecilia Larson, Rent Assistance Program Manager
Lisa Lopez, Finance Director
Gina McConnell, Supportive Services Assistant Manager
Katie Bonus, Director of Operations
Alex Wallis, Finance Manager

PUBLIC: Erik Halverson

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

   a) Chair Knapp called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm.

2. **CHANGES AND ADDITIONS TO AGENDA, IF ANY:** yes

   Grammatical changes were made on Resolution 26-12, an email was sent out with the updated Resolution 26-12.

3. **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION:**

4. **FINANCIAL REPORTS:**

   a) Ms. Lopez provided financial reports for August 2026 for HOSWWA, Lilac Place, and Sunrise Village as provided in the Board Packet.

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

a) *Commissioner* Aguirre *made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Vice Chair Lantz seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.*

6. STAFF REPORTS

a) **Voucher Status**: Ms. Larson gave the Voucher Status Report as provided in the Board Packet.

Ms. Larson expressed her sincere appreciation for the outstanding support staff provided on the day the waitlist opened. She noted that 900 applications were submitted within the first six hours and that, by 12:00 p.m. on the 28th, a total of 2,170 applications had been received. Staff were outside assisting applicants with completing the application on their phones as well as having our Board Room full of staff helping on their laptops. It was encouraging to see so many people grateful for the help and pleased with the level of support available.

Ms. Larson also noted that we began the invitation process, we had invited 100 applicants to start the eligibility process. Today, we identified that many of the applicants are elderly or seniors. We also found that most have not responded to email communications, although letters were mailed as well. Additionally, we identified applicants who live at Campus Towers, The Vintage, and other larger senior housing communities to determine whether we can use space at those locations to provide assistance on-site. We will also begin calling applicants to inform them that an email and letter has been sent and that we will offer assistance with the process if needed.

b) **Property Summaries**: Ms. Bonus gave an update on the Property Report as provided in the Board Packet.

c) **Supportive Services Division**: Ms. McConnell provided an update on the Supportive Services Division, as outlined in the Board Packet.

Commissioner Kolditz inquired about the Agency's methods for sharing and promoting success stories about the individuals it serves, as well as information regarding its programs and services. Secretary Westerman demonstrated the Agency's website and directed the Board to the Impact page, where success stories are published. She reported that the Agency's Story Committee is actively developing additional stories for publication. Secretary Westerman further explained that the Agency uses these stories to support its advocacy efforts, distributes them through appropriate channels whenever possible, and we also

included stories in our annual report.

7. CHAIR AND SECRETARY REPORTS

a) **Secretary Report:** Secretary Westerman provided an updated Secretary report as provided in the board packet.

Secretary Westerman noted that she was recently informed of another USDA property in Long Beach that will soon reach the end of its affordability period. The property representatives contacted our Agency, and we will follow up to determine when the property is expected to be placed on the market. She also reported that two additional projects in Pacific County are expected to exit their affordability periods, although the timing remains unknown.

8. NEW BUSINESS:

a) Board action: Motion to Approve Resolution 26-12 Fair Market Rent

HUD just published the Fair Market Rent FY 2027. We are asking the Board to approve the FMR at 110% for Cowlitz County and leaving the remaining counties Pacific County, Wahkiakum, and Lewis County at 100%.

A change was made during the meeting as there was a typo, under Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, it should say: by the Board of Commissioners of Housing Opportunities of SW Washington that the Section 8 Rent Assistance Department is hereby authorized to implement the new FY 2027 Payment Standards at 110% for Cowlitz County and 100% for Pacific Wahkiakum, and Lewis County.

Commissioner Aguirre asked how much the change would cost in the long run. Ms. Larson responded that the cost would not be significant. Secretary Westerman stated that the calculation had not yet been completed and would be difficult to determine. However, an estimate could be developed because not everyone advances to that level immediately; some individuals remain at their current level until their annual review. The agency will need to determine which individuals are expected to advance. She added that it would be easier to estimate the cost for new participants based on how they lease up.

Commissioner Kolditz made a motion to approve Resolution 26-12 Fair Market Rent. Vice Chair Lantz seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

b) Board Action: Motion to Approve Resolution 26-13 Annual Budget for Fiscal Year 2027

Commissioner Aguirre asked how the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) is calculated. Mr. Wallis stated that the COLA is calculated using an established formula and is reviewed monthly. He noted that the current projected adjustment is approximately 3.5%.

Secretary Westerman stated, we had mentioned in the past that we might have to dip into cash to invest. Our Facilities Manager is retiring as well as our Director of Operations and Business Analyst. We are planning to have six months of overlap to train the new employees.

Chair Knapp expressed appreciation for the organization's forward-thinking approach to filling these positions. She further remarked on the significant growth the organization has experienced over the years.

Commissioner Aguirre inquired about the provision granting the Chief Executive Officer authority to make adjustments among individual budget items within the overall approved budget, not to exceed $20,000 per transaction. She noted that the phrase "from time to time" is somewhat vague and requested additional clarification. Secretary Westman explained that the intent is to allow for routine operational adjustments without requiring Board approval for every minor expenditure. For example, if a contractor is needed and the associated contract amount is $5,000, the CEO would have the authority to execute the contract without bringing the matter before the Board, helping to ensure projects and operations continue moving forward efficiently.

Commissioner Vasques stated that it is great to see the numbers go up. He remarked that $2 million over six years is very impressive and that when a company grows at that rate, many changes are taking place. He stressed the importance of strategic planning and having the right people in these positions to help stabilize and continue growing the Agency.

Vice chair Lantz made a motion to approve Resolution 26-13 Annual Budget for Fiscal Year 2027. Commissioner Kolditz seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

c) Board Action: Motion to Approve Utility Allowance for Year 2027

We are asking that you approve the utility allowance schedules provided by Nelrod FY 2027.

Commissioner Aguirre made a motion to approve Utility Allowance for Year 2027 Commissioner Kolditz seconded the motion. Passed unanimously

9. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** No

10. **EXECUTIVE SESSION, IF ANY:** No

11. **ADJOURNMENT:**

    a) The next regular meeting will be Monday, November 23, at 4:00 p.m.

    b) Chair Knapp adjourned the meeting at 5:25 p.m.

Board Approval of Minutes:

10-26-2026

Marchelle Knapp, Chair **Date**

10/27/26

Attest: Jennifer Westerman, Secretary **Date**