

**MINUTES . . . SPECIAL PUBLIC BOARD MEETING . . . MARCH 27, 2023**

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a Special Public Board Meeting session Monday, March 27, 2023 at 4:00 P.M. (INPERSON - HYBRID MEETING). Those present and absent were as follows:

**PRESENT**

Mrs. Iris Linares, Chairperson  
Mrs. Valerie McLendon, Vice Chairperson  
Mrs. Lindsey A Clifton  
Mr. Rogelio Ortiz  
Mr. J. Marc Rittle

**ABSENT**

Also present were: William W. Matz, Jr., Esq., Solicitor; John Ritter, Secretary-Treasurer; Diana Moreno, Assistant Secretary; Staff Members and members of the general public.

**AGENDA ITEM:** Discussion of the RFP Draft to hire a consultant for the Executive Director's search.

Chairperson Linares stated the purpose of this meeting is to request a proposal for professional services for a consultant in hiring of an executive director for the authority. Attorney Matz prepared it for the commissioners at their request as it relates to a sample of what could be done with the RFP. The Board of Commissioners thanked Attorney Matz.

Mrs. Clifton questioned the date offered in terms of the deadline for submissions as they go through the process whether that's enough time for them to have the submission window open. Attorney Matz replied he does not have an answer to that. Although, most of the advertising matters that we would go forward on this could be in place probably within a week or so. You don't want to drag it out too long. Mrs. Clifton agreed. Mr. Rittle commented I'm sure Ms. Moreno can get it out quickly.

Mrs. Linares asked what it the cost for the consultant. Attorney Matz replied he doesn't have a specific but that the Easton Housing Authority hired a consultant from Minnesota, and it costs them just around thirty-five to forty grand. And from his understanding they got two responses.

Mr. Rittle responded that he doesn't think they were overreaching, that it's actually a standard amount. Mrs. McLendon replied that is a lot of money. Mr. Rittle said I wouldn't say more, what does Mrs. Linares think. I don't know if you had a number in mind." Mrs. Linares replied she has no idea what they charge. Attorney Matz said that's his only estimate on it.

Mrs. Lendon said either way it's going to be something like that. Attorney Matz responded that we're going to spend tens of thousands somewhere in that range. Mr. Rittle asked Attorney Matz if they should put a range or not and just let them propose something. Attorney Matz replied I think you let them propose it and you can negotiate at that point if you choose. Mr. Rittle agreed.

Mrs. Clifton stated we don't know what the scope of work for the Easton Housing Authority to know what we are comparing it to. Attorney Matz agreed, it's sort of wide open the way it is here. Some of the scope would include not only receiving applications but vetting applications that we may not want to delegate that much authority in the RFP. We don't know what the responses will be. I think that is a negotiable point and you're going to set that before you engage on the final step.

Mrs. Clifton stated that she appreciates the clarity on how we identified that cost, but it's not the primary factor. That we're not necessarily looking for the most affordable option but that we're really looking at least for the balance of affordable and qualified. But rather, she sees that there's essentially a 60/40 split in terms of the ranking criteria to evaluate the proposals with 60% of the points, going toward qualifications methodologies familiarity and then 40% to cost. And she is thinking about the potential of shifting that even a little more maybe adding five more points each to the methodology and familiarity with HUD sections and going down 10 points on the cost of services piece. She does feel like there's at least some flexibility in the point ranking categories to enable them to really choose the provider that they feel is the best fit for the work that they need them to do as opposed to it being only about the dollar value. She does not feel strongly about the need to change that, but that was the one thing that she noted.

Mrs. McLendon asked do we have people that already know about the methodology and the qualifications that have some qualifications and some familiarity with HUD? Mr. Rittle replied but this is for consultants not the director, consultant knowledge. Mrs. McLendon said she understands but she is concerned about how much it's going to cost the Housing Authority.

Mr. Rittle understood. McLendon stated I'm sure there's people that are inside with a lot of these qualifications who definitely have knowledge of HUD regulations, protocols regulations. Mrs. Clifton replied she thinks the advantage of a consultant is potentially casting a wider net in terms of applicants to the ultimate position. And also, in terms of building, cultivating, and maintaining public trust in the process to know that they're taking steps to really run essentially a national search. She feels given the length of some previous tenures it feels important to make sure that this is as wide open a search as possible for the potential value that a consultant brings for the money that they're spending.

Mrs. Linares commented that her concern is to go through the process to just get a few applicants may not be worth it. Mrs. McLendon stated that she's not ruling out not bringing somebody from the outside, but that there are people at BHA that she knows has the knowledge already on the Housing Authority and HUD regulations. The commissioners have gone to many conferences and from what they hear at the conferences, it seems like each Housing Authority has their basic rules and regulations. They have their own way of doing things that works for that particular Housing Authority. And people that have applied here have knowledge already. So, we have to think do we want to bring somebody in and retrain them in everything. She's been through too many mergers seeing that kind of stuff.

Mrs. Ortiz said it's too expensive. And we have people that could apply for the director's position, and he is certain we can come up with someone who would be fitted for the position. But for BHA to pay for a consultant is too much. He thinks we should do our own consulting. He wouldn't feel comfortable paying that kind of money for a consultant to pick someone to be the executive director for BHA knowing that we already have personal one-on-one communication with people who live in housing, work in housing and we can go by that. Mrs. McLendon agreed.

In addition, he stated that as Mrs. McLendon cited every time, we go to housing conferences they're always praising our board of commissioners and our BHA employees because we do a great job, and for those reasons, he does not want to pay out for a consultant.

Mr. Rittle replied, "how about if there was a cap ranging from twenty to thirty. Mr. Ortiz said that is still expensive. Knowing how many people could qualified that are working with BHA, that have hands on, they already know all the residents and we know what to expect from them.

Mrs. Clifton added that it's not that we don't have qualified internal candidates who are interested in the executive director's job but that it's wanting to make sure that the opportunity is shared widely. So, that the public who have an interest in this process can feel assured that we have opened this to all qualified and possible gifted candidates. The number before us is a point of reference because it's what Easton Housing spent, but we don't know if our scope of work is entirely the same. We don't know what proposals we might get, and it doesn't hurt to at least send the RFP out and see what proposals we get back and what the price points are. We can certainly as a board make an uninformed decision once we see who the candidates for the consulting position are and what they bring to the table in terms of potential skills and connections. While we know what we know here, we don't know what other housing authorities across the country may know. We have some connections to other local housing authorities who might know people and other housing authorities to widen our candidate pool, but she thinks any help and support they can get at making sure this search is appropriately expansive.

Mr. Ortiz stated that someone working for BHA for over twenty years and if they want to become an executive director or an deputy director, he thinks they should have an opportunity at it because they have experience and have been dedicated to BHA for over two decades.

Mr. Rittle reminded the board of the few conversations that led them to this point, and one of the big conversations was about legal protection. And he recalls being in the Florida commissioner's conference and sitting next to Attorney Matz and in a session that was titled "Choosing your next Executive Director" and there was a moment in that conversation that they all looked at each other and all muttered we need to get a consultant, and part of that was the legal protections around the work. He minus perhaps some of the requirements and the HUD regulations but even there they might have a little bit more experience than the average person could probably do the work of being the consultant, but as a commissioner that's a bad idea for me to help do that. He's willing to even spend weekends volunteering time for free to help do a search, but he thinks legally it's a bad idea for me to do that.

He suggested if they run the internal process and then discover that they want to go outside of that scope and then they don't have any additional people? So even if it was a good idea for a commissioner to help volunteer to run the process, he doesn't have the time to actually do it that's the other thing. He's busy running his own organization and so is Lindsey. So, a lot of it has to do with time but there's the legal constraints as well. They've seen the budget and they know for sure they can afford it.

I have seen nonprofit budgets of a whole lot less money than this so I am advocating to do it, forty thousand might be too much so we could institute a cap of thirty thousand. There's too much that could be insinuated in terms of favoritism. There's too much the convenience simulated in terms of our business like this election process that he doesn't really want to go down that legal path necessarily. Unfortunately, it does end up costing money, so he doesn't disagree with that.

Mrs. Linares said we still have to go through the process of interviewing them, and that's not good. Mr. Rittle replied that we're not paying someone to manage that process. Mrs. McLendon questioned Attorney Matz if there was any reason that we couldn't do this ourselves instead of hiring a consultant, bringing people in from the outside without the consultant. Attorney Matz responded you can, but the only question is who, because it really falls back on the commissioners. You're hiring the leader of the organization. You can't default on the administration to assist in the process. They are employees, and you're calling on people to make decisions about their superiors which may or may not be a healthy process for the people in the organization.

Mr. Ortiz said he understand that in the past, we had acting executive directors' and if they did a terrible job, the former executive director which was acting such as Jay Schuster, Eugene Gonzalez and now John Ritter, now if we went through some trouble along those people who did acting, I would have no problem going through a consultant. But so far, I really don't have any complaints about the people who were acting executive director. Because if we felt they weren't doing a good job then I would clearly get a consultant and go to an outside agency to find an executive director. But for now, I would have no real reason to complain about the past or previous executive directors or acting directors.

Mrs. Lindsey replied that in her mind an RFP and using a consultant doesn't say that we don't think that Mr. Ritter is doing an incredible job in his role and that we wouldn't be very happy to consider him as a candidate for the job. She thinks by using the consultant and making sure it's a national search again, is provide us as commissioners with some public relations and legal protection that we have done a full and legitimate search process and not simply passed the baton to the next person in line which is not appropriate hiring process and protocol. And so, in her mind, that is the really important reason for this one time limited expenditure to ensure that the process is appropriate and complete, so that we're setting up whoever is the next executive director whether it's Mr. Ritter or someone else for success because they're not starting with any negative perceptions about how they ended up at the role. But rather that we have done a full search, and we have chosen the most fully qualified candidate I think creates the best new beginning possible in this situation.

Mr. Ortiz stated that Mr. Ritter is taking executive director courses and he's training. He's making an effort to become educated himself even more. He does not agree that they should pay someone thirty-five thousand dollars just to pick a few people. We've had other acting directors become executive directors and I feel good and comfortable that we have a long-term relationship, and we know what we can expect from them. Someone could get this job and they do not know what's going on in this neighborhood. I just feel to be fair that the opportunity must be given to them. But at the same time, we can also look outside within our community for someone who qualifies to be a good director.

Mrs. Linares said we would have to advertise. Mr. Ortiz agreed. Mrs. Mc Lendon said she thought we weren't doing that. Mr. Rittle responded that they have not settled on the job description as of yet, and with or without a consultant they need to agree on a job description. And to have an effective job description they need to go through a mission and visioning process for the Bethlehem Housing Authority. He did read the job description and there are a lot of administrative details, but he said they're missing the purpose, mission, and vision of the Bethlehem Housing Authority and that is a process. We learned in the commissioner's conference that we need to talk together as a team to make sure that we agree with that. For example, is it to advocate for as much affordable housing for as many people as possible in the City of Bethlehem or does that need to be a different statement of some kind. So, we need to go through the process. By the way people hire consultants for thirty grand a piece just to do that, so then we would be talking about sixty grand. We can skip the first thirty and maybe we can come up with that on our own work with the consultant to help us to get a job description, but if we don't, we need to go through several meetings of discussing what the purpose of the Housing Authority is so that when we're interviewing a person we know what we're interviewing for or not.

In addition, affordable housing today is so different than any single point in time in the last twenty years. We need someone who can carry us through a new reality that has not existed in the past, that is a very critical step. And it might be worth looking at our mission and vision which he hasn't seen yet from BHA, and either affirming it or revising it so that while we're interviewing, we know what we're interviewing for. Right now, we're just interviewing for "Do you know the HUD requirements"? That's an accomplishment, it's a very big accomplishment, one that I know for sure that Mr. Ritter understands because I've spent enough time with him. Everything Roy has said is fully true and accurate, but he wants to just step back and take a look at the mission and vision of our organization so that while we do interviews, we know exactly what kind of leader we're looking for in the future.

Mr. Ortiz responded we do have a mission. Mr. Rittle said that is fine. But he hasn't seen it and he's requesting it as a commissioner. Mr. Ortiz stated that when it comes to the consultant, do we have to vote today or are we going to table it until we get more information and get more clarity on the way we are going to be doing things?

Mrs. Clifton stated that from her recollection they as a commission have already voted to approve the process of moving to a consultant, that today they were simply discussing and approving the particulars of the RFP. In the very first meeting she attended, which was an executive session meeting, we did take a group vote and voted in support of hiring a consultant. So, her understanding is that today's meeting was to discuss and make changes to whatever revisions we need to the RFP but she thought we did already vote in support of hiring the consultant. It's just a matter of the document that will guide that work.

Mr. Ortiz responded that this is the first time the cost has been discussed and once again it's too expensive just to have someone look for people to work in BHA. He did not know it was going to be that expensive. He is not in favor of getting a consultant for that price.

Mrs. Clifton said this is a hypothetical number that came. We don't know what proposals they're going to get at what price point, so it's possible they could get a different set of proposals at different price points. That they should at least continue with the process of the RFP to see what proposal they get back and then they can deliberate about both the qualifications of the people and the cost. She thinks that's built into this process and since they've already voted in favor of the process, she thinks they should move forward and see it through to find the right person at an appropriate price point going forward.

Mr. Ortiz said it's too expensive. Mrs. Clifton stated the question before them today is whether they're satisfied with the request for proposals as it is or whether there are changes, they want to make. That is her understanding of the business before them. She asked Attorney Matz if that's correct. Attorney Matz replied that's correct. Mrs. Clifton stated it's her understanding that it's a motion about the RFP. Mrs. McLendon replied if it is a motion about the RFP based on the new information that they received today, she wants to make a motion to suspend the RFP. Mr. Ortiz seconded. McLendon and Mr. Ortiz stated that they did not know that the RFP would cost so much, and that was new information to them. They would rather look for people locally that live within our community and do the best we can possibly do.

Mr. Clifton replied unfortunately, Mr. Snyder is not in the meeting to run the numbers for them in terms of how much money is sitting in the bank unused that they can put toward this expense because my recollection from previous meetings and finance reports is that there is absolutely funding available to cover this. She is disappointed that he was not at the meeting to be able to affirm that. But there's a motion and a second so she doesn't know if there's further discussion about the motion and the second before we do any voting on it. If they stop the RFP now, they don't know what proposals they'll get and at what price points. She maintains that if we go forward with the RFP it is possible, we will get a proposal at a lower price point but we don't know if we don't put it out to see who's available and what services they can offer. Even if they have to scale down a little on the scope of work for the savings if they get a really qualified person who can work efficiently and at a price point that they set then she thinks they could still have the legal protections and the national networking that feel really important without going to a budget level that the commissioners are uncomfortable with.

Mr. Rittle commented that he feels this means more work for him as a commissioner, which is not what he signed up for when he accepted the role of commissioner. So if we don't vote for the RFP, then we're going to have to ourselves in public session go through the job title of executive director and what this looks like. Today, he printed up a sheet of things that he feels are missing from the job description, but these are things that need to be discussed. Be I don't know if they're relevant according to what our new applied mission and vision is which we need to discuss which could be done through a consultant. And I feel like there's more sort of uphill work that I will be which I'm happy to do because I think it's important for the community of Bethlehem but there's a lot of work that we need to do in terms of what the purpose and scope is of this position. That I want to have a very serious discussion about, and a consultant would help neutralize the sort of players around the table in terms of I think they could help us have that discussion in a more in a better setting in some ways. We could submit to them, and they could compile the results and they could bring it back to us and then they could put it out to the community in terms of who wants to apply for the position. But he feel he'll have to steer that process at least for the things that he's interested in seeing a little bit more.

Mrs. Linares asked and what are you looking for, could you give us an example? Mr. Rittle responded he doesn't know what our current mission and vision is so, he doesn't know exactly what is within that scope or not. He thinks that the Bethlehem Housing Authority should be a champion and advocate and leader in the City of Bethlehem for affordable housing and that could mean a lot of things. That means partnerships across the Lehigh Valley. We have the Northampton Housing Authority which has buildings in the City of Bethlehem. When was the last time we spoke with them? We need to have conversations with them that need to be in our mission and vision in terms of how we operate as an authority moving into the next century. And those are things that we sort of need to see, so I just added the word leadership in almost every single opportunity that there was in the definition of the examples of work.

And the required knowledge and skills community leadership demonstrated practice and building partnerships, established leadership abilities things like this. You're all fine with them right away then we could cut corners, but I would rather have more of a robust discussion with you all as commissioners to make sure that we agree on what that is. And consultants often have the skill set of being able to do this in a neutral setting, so it doesn't seem like I'll just say like myself and also Lindsey were brought on by a different Mayor than other commissioners. As he continues to mention the commissioners conference in Florida which obviously, this was an impactful time into him as he referenced it many times, where sometimes it could be construed that we're working for the Mayor but in fact we're not. Mrs. Linares said it was not supposed to be political.

Mr. Rittle replied a consultant neutralizes that. Mrs. McLendon said, but we were all under a difference. Mr. Rittle responded but he's just saying this thing that some people might be thinking that he doesn't want that to be any of the motivation for any of the decisions that get made. And that a consultant is able to render that neutral which I believe is the reason why we said we need a consultant for this so for all of those reasons, he will be voting to continue with the process of an RFP.

Mrs. Linares asked Mr. Ritter has other housing authorities reached out to him. Mr. Ritter responded Northampton County did come to BHA requesting us to take over some of their properties to maintain them. At that time, it was not to their advantage, so we did not. Other than that, we have had no contact from any other Housing Authority.

Mr. Rittle commented that this isn't the interview. That these are things that we would want to see in a job description. Mr. Linares asked what was the other. Mr. Rittle responded that he said the reasons as to why he'll want to continue the RFP.

McLendon asked if the job descriptions come from HUD. Attorney Matz responded that's the HUD profile. So, all he did was take our profile of what they expect to oversee as a template of an executive director for Housing Authority's.

Mr. Rittle reported that it's a very good job description. But there's work to be done in terms of pulling through from each one of the commissioners in what they want to see in the city. What is the vision for the Bethlehem Housing Authority. How does that get represented in the description. That's needs to happen, and he would rather pay someone to do it.

Mrs. Clifton responded to Mr. Rittle' point. Her logic is that he is the most professionally qualified among the commissioners to help potentially navigate and facilitate a process. He already named both the public perception and the legal complexities of a commissioner doing that work. "I think in my mind said for no other reason than us as commissioners we are not professionally qualified to run a national search for an executive director process. None of us I think has this level of human resources experience. It is our process, but I think we would benefit ourselves by having someone with some professional experience help guide us so that we do the work really well." And again, she thinks we would be doing a disservice if we don't go forward with at least the process of receiving proposals because we don't know what the proposals are. We're just pulling one example from one neighboring city and sort of projecting that number across the entire array of possibilities which again may not be what happens in our experience. And if they do get a bunch of proposals back that are very expensive there's nothing in that says they have to choose one of them. In fact, it indicates they we do not have to choose any of the proposals that are submitted, there's nothing in the proposal that binds us to have to spend that amount of money. It is only a tool that would benefit as a starting point. So, she passionately feels that this is the right next step towards at least giving us all the information to be able to make an informed decision about whether we get a proposal that feels like the right fit at the right price point for us or not.

Mrs. Linares commented what would be the time period. Mr. Rittle responded we've already wasted how many months. It'll take longer if we want it to be right, and it's a process. And we'll have to meet to discuss everything. And he realizes it's taking a lot longer than we thought it would take. Mrs. Clifton added that the deadline that Attorney Matz has in the draft to receive proposals is the end of April so at the end of April we could see the proposals review them and then make a decision about whether we want to pursue any of them or not.

Mr. Rittle said we could be doing interviews by the summer. Mrs. Clifton thinks if this were any other, either corporate entity or nonprofit entity, having a qualified party to lead the search for the next executive director is totally common practice. This is not sort of anything out of the ordinary. That even in the Presbyterian denomination when churches are looking for a new pastor there's a national search process so just because the pattern at BHA has been without a process you hand the position from one interim director to the new director to the next overtime, she thinks that's maybe that's even a stronger case for implementing a process this time to interrupt that pattern because in her mind that's not necessarily a healthy process to always operate in that way. It doesn't mean that we might not have the best candidate for the job here, but we don't know if we don't cast the net wide and do the national search and then we can really celebrate that like maybe Mr. Ritter is the right exactly best fit candidate for us. But again, she thinks we don't know that and can't build the communities trust if we don't sort of cast the net wide and really look carefully at the qualifications, look carefully at the mission and vision all of those things.

Mrs. McLendon stated that they're not against looking for people from the outside. She just thinks that they don't need the RFP. Mrs. Clifton said she doesn't know how they'll get a pool of national candidates, and how do we do the mission, vision and job description work that needs to be done without some support. She added that as Mr. Rittle said, he doesn't have the bandwidth to be able to help facilitate that work for us as a board. She thinks we need the support and expertise in order to do this process and do it well. "But I do think we can absolutely find a balance between the professionals' expertise and support us as the board needs to do this well. And doing that at a price point that feels more reasonable."



Mr. Rittle said obviously, we'll do it if we don't have a consultant. Mrs. Clifton agreed it will be done. She just feels like she should be allowed to make her case. Mrs. McLendon added, and you do have the right. We're not trying to silence anybody. Mr. Rittle said I do think it means more work and we will be paying someone to do some of that more, he just wants to remind everyone. It does not come without a cost. Mrs. Linares said he's, our solicitor. Attorney Matz said I'm here for the commissioners. Mrs. Clifton said if we're finished with discussion, the first thing we need to do is vote on the motion on the floor. Attorney Matz said to repeat the motion.

Mrs. McLendon made a motion to suspend the RFP.  
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes -McLendon/Ortiz/Linares and Nays- Clifton/Rittle

Mr. Rittle said they need to have a discussion about their mission and vision so that they can agree on a job description. Mrs. Linares agreed. Mr. Rittle indicated he doesn't know how many meetings they'll need to accomplish that. Mrs. Linares asked can they start now. Mr. Rittle disagreed saying we need the materials gathered in terms of what our mission and vision is. He'd like to see the history of that. And then he thinks they should have a strategic planning meeting. He doesn't mind helping with that, but he really feels uncomfortable with the job description without understanding their strategic direction. He added that would have been the first thing to ask the consultant to do. Mrs. Linares agreed they need to have a strategic planning meeting.

Attorney Matz asked will this be a public meeting. Mr. Rittle stated he thinks at this point everything should be as public as possible. He doesn't feel good about being a commissioner leading a strategic planning process, but he doesn't feel good asking someone else to lead such a thing so maybe they can just start with getting the materials, sending them out and they could meet in two weeks. It could just be an item on the agenda where they can discuss it. And if there's consensus right away then great and if there's need for further discussion about the mission and vision, they'd have to figure out what to do at that point in time. Ms. Moreno may be able to send it to us. Mrs. Linares suggested maybe Ms. Moreno could handle some of that.

Mr. Rittle stated that he feels very strongly that he needs to understand who we are as an authority. He does not understand it from many of the materials he's received so far, except to understand that we are arguably good at functionally operating a Housing Authority. "Is that what we want to keep doing for the next, of course, so that's why he'd like to sort of review it." But he feels we can do a job description until we understand that. "I'm only speaking for myself; I'm not even putting the motion on the table so you can all contradict me and go in a different direction."

Mrs. Clifton said she also had notes on the job description, and she agrees it lacks any sense of vision, as far as leadership skills and competencies. Mrs. Linares asked when you say vision, what exactly do you mean by that? Mrs. Clifton said she's new and still getting to know our Housing Authority, but her sense is that we are a Housing Authority that is in a strong financial position and primarily interested in maintaining that financial position as status quo and maybe not so interested in innovating in applying for and participating in HUD kinds of grant programs that are inviting this Housing Authority to try different models for housing. That there's a history of sort of business as usual.

And business as usual is good, we're meeting a lot of resident needs with our public housing and she thinks her sense is that our Housing Authority could be innovating, could be partnering with the city, could be partnering with nonprofits, could be partnering with churches with land who have an interest in developing housing for folks who need affordable housing. As Mr. Rittle said some clarity on, what kind of growth we hope for our Housing Authority over the next five to ten years and sort of beyond the like the particulars of HUD's five-year plan, I think there needs to be some sort of bigger picture vision for what this Housing Authority looks like a decade from now. Does it look like the exact same properties that are just renovated? Does it look like additional properties? Does it look like a choice of neighborhood programs? And she believes to have some clarity on that is going to dictate the kind of leader that they feel they need to make that vision come to life. As Mr. Rittle mentioned, the mission and vision has got to be clear in order to make sure they get the right person in the executive director's role. And right now, the job description as it is, is just sort of the HUD basics, it's about the administrative work. It's sort of all the practicalities without any of the vision, any of the leadership skills and competencies, and any sort of ideas about growth or partnership.

Mrs. Linares said, "she thinks that vision has stopped because we ran out of properties. Where we can't build anymore, otherwise we probably would build somewhere. We don't have anything.

Mr. Ortiz stated that the City of Bethlehem wanted to buy some properties and Lehigh University overbid them maybe by a little bit. And knowing that there's a housing crisis in South Bethlehem and in Bethlehem, it's a shame that the colleges are building more for the students and it's taking away from the residents of Bethlehem. They don't seem to care about the residents that have been living there for years. He does not have any faith in the colleges out here when it comes to purchasing rights. And all they want is to get their housing and that's all they care for they don't care about the regular person that has been living out here for generations for over 50/60 years. And all they're doing is selling them out. He apologized for expressing himself that way. He believes it's unacceptable and they don't care about the South side. It was disappointing to know that we could have used that property for affordable housing, but it did not happen. The residents are slowly getting kicked out of their neighborhood and they're building more luxury apartments which they can't afford. "It's sad. It's just sad that that it's all about the money. Business as usual." And I know it didn't go good for the mayor either. I know he was upset because they overbid a little, and you know people need to open their eyes. That's why I would rather keep it in the house. Mr. Rittle mentioned that the Housing Authority wasn't in that discussion at all. Mr. Ortiz said there is a housing crisis. Mr. Rittle agreed.

Mr. Rittle commented that the passion Mr. Ortiz has for housing in the community of Bethlehem is exactly what he wants to see in an executive director and in every single one of the commissioners. And he thinks it's really critically that they look at the kind of bureaucratic descriptions of what a director should do as he wants to see that passion. And I want to interview for the passion and so it's exactly like right at this point, "I'm interested in having you interview for the job because I think it's like I think it's what we need to see. It's important they sit down and take a look at the mission and vision because for example one of the things I put down was the word advocacy. Mr. Ortiz said I'm not only talking on BHA behalf I'm talking about our community. Mr. Rittle said I'm trying to bring it back home.

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If advocacy was in our mission and vision, then we would have actually had a role in getting involved publicly in the discussion between the City and Lehigh University. And so, if the Housing Authority comes in, and has something to say, I think that actually could be a powerful thing. So, what is the role for advocacy for affordable housing from a Housing Authority. So right now, we don't have it, it's not in the expectations of any leader in the Housing Authority right now. Do we want it to be in the future is the question.

Mr. Ortiz said that's all wonderful. And has talked to the mayor various times and has communicated about an ordinance for developers who want to build housing throughout the City of Bethlehem of twenty percent for low-income housing to help the people of the city.

Mrs. Linares said she agrees with his vision. Mr. Ortiz said that they need to make some adjustments, if not they're going to have more homeless people under the bridge. They don't even have shelters for people out here. It just sad.

Mr. Linares asked Mr. Rittle what was the other legal thing in the job description? Mr. Rittle, I'm not prepared to talk about the job description because they don't have the mission and vision yet. Mr. Linares replied we'll get it from Mr. Ritter. Mr. Rittle said to send it before the next meeting and request it to be an agenda item in the next board meeting. Mr. Ritter will be sending the vision statement to the board of commissioners.

Officer Moises requested to speak to the board. Mr. Rittle said I don't know if we're allowing public comments or not. Mrs. Clifton stated she thought the RFP was the only formal piece of business on the agenda.

Attorney Matz said public comments should be restricted. Mrs. Linares apologized.

There being no further business to transact, Mrs. Linares declared the meeting adjourned.

*John Ritter*

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**John Ritter**  
Interim Executive Director