

**VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 12, 2021**

**Roll Call**

The Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Vermont State Housing Authority, held via ZOOM, was called to order at 10:30 a.m. by Chair Caprice Hover; and upon roll call, the following Commissioners were present: Mary Miller, Vice Chair; Caryn Feinberg, Alex Farrell, Jo Ann Troiano and Cory Richardson.

Staff personnel present: Richard Williams, Secretary/Executive Director; Kathleen Berk, Director of Housing Program Administration; Kelly Pembroke, Director of Finance and Information Systems; Arlene Shorten-Goodrich, Director of Human Resources and Administration; and Tyler Maas, Program Director, ADU program.

**This meeting was called for the purpose of selecting a third-party vendor to administer the VSHA Emergency Rental Assistance Program funded by a grant from the Vermont Agency of Administration from the U.S Department of the Treasury, Emergency Rental Assistance Program.**

Williams began discussing the Appropriations package that was passed by the United States Congress in December 2020. On December 27, 2020, the President signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Bill. This bill provides the State of Vermont \$200 million for Emergency Rental Assistance. That rental assistance includes utility assistance, rent assistance, and housing stabilization for low-income renters. People below 80 percent of the area medium income are eligible for this program. With the previous program, the Rental Housing Stabilization Program, there was a lot of flexibility within the program. Williams adds that there is a less flexibility with this new money.

The Vermont State Housing Authority spent many weeks determining how much money they would be receiving. When the Legislature was back in session, their committees reviewed any grants or revenue the State of Vermont is going to receive and put their stamp of approval on it. Governor Scott put a proposal together recommending on how this \$200 million would be received. The Legislature reviewed that proposal, and the Joint Fiscal Committee approved the proposal that the governor put forth. The Vermont State Housing Authority had no idea how much money was going to be given. The final proposal was \$110 Million will be going to the Vermont State Housing Authority. Up to 10% of that money can be used to cover any administrative fees, including any fees from Vermont State Housing Authority, as well as any third-party vendors. Williams added they did not go out for a request for public proposals. Instead, they received responses from vendors, other Vermont agencies and even through the Legislature.

**The following Resolution was presented to the Board for consideration.**

**WHEREAS:** The Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) has been selected by the State of Vermont to administer approximately \$110 million in federal grant funds under the Emergency Rental Assistance ("ERA") program of the U.S. Department of Treasury; and

**WHEREAS:** in service of this role, VSHA will deliver ERA housing assistance to applicants statewide; and

**WHEREAS:** VSHA requires a comprehensive end-to end turnkey package to operate the Vermont ERA program ("VERAP") in a manner consistent with the ERA program and all applicable U.S. Department of the Treasury requirements; and

**WHEREAS:** in February 2021, VSHA received six proposals from vendors to provide a turnkey end-to-end package that can meet the requirements associated with this role; and

**WHEREAS:** a selection committee comprised of VSHA management staff reviewed the proposals and evaluated them taking into account (a) resources, skills, and experience with respect to technology, marketing, regulatory compliance controls, familiarity with the housing market, and familiarity with federal programs, (b) declared status as a women or minority-owned business, and (c) cost; and

**WHEREAS:** several of the competitors, including WSD Digital, LLC, were closely matched with respect to resources, skills, and experience; and

**WHEREAS:** WSD Digital, LLC was the low bidder.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT:**

**RESOLVED:** that VSHA be, and hereby is, authorized to engage WSD Digital, LLC, 750 Main Street, Suite 327 Harford, CT 06105 for a total fixed cost of \$3,478,428.00 through December 31, 2021 based on the assumption that VSHA will not receive more than 50,000 applications from Vermont Renters prior to September 30, 2021. Additional applications over 50,001 after September 30, 2021 will trigger \$97 per application fee per application.

**RESOLVED:** that the Executive Director is hereby authorized and empowered to take any and all actions necessary or desirable to carry out the foregoing resolution, including without limitation the authority to determine final module and service selection and otherwise negotiate such terms of the engagement as he may determine are in the best interests of VSHA, and to execute any and all agreements or documents as he deems necessary to carry out the foregoing; **PROVIDED, HOWEVER,** that execution of the final contract with WSD Digital, LLC shall be subject to execution of a Memorandum of Agreement with the Vermont Agency of Administration and the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development for administering the funds for EARP (the "Memorandum of Agreement").

**RESOLVED,** the Executive Director is hereby authorized and empowered to enter into the Memorandum of Agreement, with such terms and conditions as he shall deem appropriate in the circumstances.

VSHA interviewed with all of the different vendors. They are all very qualified and some have over 40 years of experience providing rental subsidies. Williams is recommending WSD Digital. They are out of Hartford, Connecticut. They have experience with the previous Cares Relief Fund. They use basically the same platform as this new program and will work with Vermont State Housing Authority to design and manage an end-to-end product.

The cutoff date for the Rental Housing Stabilization Program was December 11, 2020 when around 1,500 more applications were received. The Legislature included in the budget adjustment act another \$2.8 Million. The contract was signed on March 11, 2021. That money should be going to Vermont State Housing Authority by March 15, 2021. Then those payments for the last 1,500 applications will be paid out.

Troiano made a motion to approve the resolution presented above. Farrell seconded. All voted in favor. The motion passed.

There being no other business, the Chair adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,



Richard M. Williams  
Executive Director/Secretary

