



## 2021-2023 Commissioners Committee Minutes

In-person Meeting: Thursday, July 13, 2023 | 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. ET

Grand Hyatt Hotel, Washington, DC

Independence Ballroom C, Independence Level (5B) and via Zoom

Staff Liaison: La Tonya Rajah – [lrajah@nahro.org](mailto:lrajah@nahro.org)

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**Lucille Boss, Chair – Presiding**

**Adrian “AJ” Jones, Vice Chair**

Before Chair Boss called the meeting to order, she made a land acknowledgement presentation. The Grand Hyatt, 2023 Summer Symposium location, currently occupies ancestral lands of indigenous tribes, and the land acknowledgement bestowed gratitude and homage to those who served as stewards of the land. – See attached document.

Chair Boss called the meeting to order at 9:17 a.m. and welcomed the committee and guests. Roll call did not result in a quorum. Approval of March 21, May 1, and July 13, 2023 minutes will be added to the October 5 meeting agenda.

**Attendance policy:** Attendance policy was relaxed due to the COVID pandemic, however, as we return to in-person, as well as virtual meetings, the NAHRO attendance policy states if a member has three absences during the two-year term in which they serve, the member can be removed from the committee. Should they wish to continue, based on the type of appointment, regional appointment or presidential appointment, the member will speak to the respective president and note reason for absences and request reinstatement. They will determine whether reinstatement is granted; no alternates or proxies are permitted.

### **Full/Subcommittee Discussions**

#### Full Committee | Lucille Boss

- Fall 2023 National Conference focus area(s):
  - Strategic Plan updates
  - Election for 2023-2025 Officers
- Fall 2023 National Conference session proposal(s) submitted/accepted.
  - [Pathways Out of Poverty: Addressing Social Determinants of Health](#)

#### Advocacy | Renee Smith

- Preparation for [August Advocacy](#) [Action Alert Center](#)
- Advocacy for Commissioners – [launching pilot in August](#)

Ms. Smith encourages the committee’s input on the training. Any committee member interested can audit the training. The training will be available to the membership. Please contact her with your comments prior to the National Conference – [rsmith@ypsilantihc.org](mailto:rsmith@ypsilantihc.org)

#### Communication | Lucille Boss for Char Reavis

- Reminder deadline August 4 - Commissioner of the Year submissions

#### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion | Zella Knight 2 out of 4 DEI sessions are Commissioner-based

- Fall 2023 National Conference session proposal(s) submitted and accepted:
  - [What is Equity? Through the Lens of a Commissioner](#)
  - [Racial Wealth Gap Simulation](#)

- Talking Points - **What is a housing authority?**
  - Public housing authorities contribute to the economic viability of the community.
  - Tailor message to group explaining how the housing authority is relevant to that group. For example, if you are addressing a school board, provide statistics. X number of your teachers or x number of your students have homes in communities via the housing authorities.
  - Housing authorities are important community partners who provide safe, affordable housing for your teachers, staff, and the people you serve. They provide programs such as Family Self-Sufficiency, to assist with furthering educational goals and careers.
  - Break and combat stigmas and perceptions associated with public housing authorities, residents, and poverty.
  - Note scenarios how one problem can cause someone to rely on public housing. Veteran homelessness, etc.
  - Connect/address systems, people and community - break down the stereotypical ideas of school districts, city services, government agencies, communities, law enforcement, etc. regarding what the housing authority (agency) does, resident type, and the community the housing is in.
  - Stress that residents who live in public housing are employed taxpayers who contribute to the community.

**Subcommittee assignment:** Each subcommittee member is to create a talking point script regarding your community and present that script to Chair Zella Knight and Commissioners Committee Chair, Lucille Boss.

**Ask:**

- Housing Authority properties they own and operate were constructed with federal and private funds from community entities to assist community residents. The residents, through housing programs, contribute to the economic viability of the community by creating jobs in construction employment, and other businesses that contribute to the community. It is not a government program with “free” money allocated.
- Here’s how you can refer your families to us....
- Here are the areas you can partner with us.... Community transportation (split cost), internships, scholarships, skilled trade programs.
- National spokesperson to highlight positives and dispel negative stereotypes.
- Use Veteran homelessness and VASH as an example of how to dispel stereotypes. One can be one step from being homeless by way of medical bills, death of breadwinner or breadwinner loses job.

Chair Boss asked the full committee when they are identified as a housing authority commissioner, how do you talk about that?

Talking Points

- The housing authority may be the largest landlord in the municipality.
- Section 8, HCV vouchers are administered in that municipality woven into those communities.
- Sometimes, commissioners are asked how they became a commissioner and onboarding. Sometimes commissioners have to defend properties and have to dispel the negative connotations that surround housing authority properties.

- A commissioner should mention all of the great programs the public housing authority offers. The commissioner is an advocate to provide support, housing program opportunities and education to residents, not to ensure permanent public housing, but as a stepping stone to move out of public housing.
- How to gain access to statistical data to champion the needs of public housing residents? For example, if you are speaking to a school board member, note how many families that live in their district are residents. Have this conversation with staff leadership.
- The public housing can note how many of its former residents are now homeowners, perhaps via the family self-sufficiency programs, etc.
- To alleviate the stigma, provide specific examples of residents who have successfully completed other programs that move them out of public housing or assist them in career development, scholarships, etc. that assist residents.
- Ask agency leadership to bring uplifting stories to the forefront and showcase them.
- Reinforce, not just public housing, stress, collaboration, we, and commissioners as ambassadors a bridge from the agency to the public.
- Include statistics for the city and municipalities, not just the public housing agencies.
- Make sure to tell stories that the commissioner (resident and non-resident) has experienced. First-hand knowledge and experience is extremely important in driving home the value and need for these programs.

How do commissioners interact/engage with residents?

- National night out – visit different communities, i.e. barbeques, etc. and support them.
- Encourage residents to be a part of the process and to become ambassadors also. Resident commissioners play a key role here as they are both and bring additional experience and knowledge to both the residents and the housing agency.
- Describe the board of commissioners makeup, banking, social services, private developers, health field, etc., board goals, networking.
- In come cases, public housing is being replaced with low-income housing tax credits and other financial tools to create affordable and supportive housing.
- History of public housing.
- Joining with law enforcement to provide speaking opportunities, situational awareness and dispel stigmas and stereotypes. Take advantage of all of other city departments, i.e., fire department, ambulatory service, etc.

Please send additional talking points to Lucille Boss - [lucilleboss@me.com](mailto:lucilleboss@me.com) or La Tonya Rajah – [lrajah@nahro.org](mailto:lrajah@nahro.org)

## **Leadership Remarks**

NAHRO President, Patricia Wells

President Wells, applauded work of the commissioners who volunteer for the residents and the community. She encouraged outreach to resident commissioners and newly appointed commissioners in the agency and community as well as other potential non-traditional partnerships with the housing authority. It is essential to lean upon the voice of residents and those new to commissioner work to bring a different and necessary perspective to the table, pertaining to health care, environmental community justice, education, and equity. This is necessary for the next 90 years.

Senior Vice President, George Guy

The Commissioners work is essential and particularly commented Chair Lucille Boss and Vice Chair AJ Jones for their leadership. He receives calls from members who want to either be appointed or re-appointed to the Commissioners Committee. He would like to introduce the opportunity to understand policy, housing authority governance and the role/responsibilities of an effective commissioner.

Chief Executive Officer, Mark Thiele

Mentorship, as mentioned by SVP Guy is key and he too, applauds the committee for its work and to continue outreach via zoom at this meeting to continue to engage and include its members. Serving in multiple perspectives is key and your expertise is critically important.

## **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FOR LEADERSHIP**

Comments

Renee Smith: Thanked leadership for hearing our concern and offering registration assistance for small agencies to attend the Washington Conference and the Summer Symposium.

Fred Banuelos: Each session, when appropriate, should include a commissioner to impart their point of view and expertise.

CEO Thiele appreciated the comment, made a note of it, and advised the timing could not have been better. During the call for presentations, we may be able to work with the presenters to add that suggestion in, if not for New Orleans, definitely for future call for presentations.

AJ Jones: Board of Commissioners should budget for commissioners travel.

## **Regional Reports**

**MARC** – Fred Banuelos – conference in May, Racial Wealth Gap Simulation session was held and will be presented at the National Conference.

**NCRC** – Joe Grisson – Many commissioners were unable to attend their last conference. Program was packed with commissioner offerings. Goal is more outreach to them to participate. Newsletter created – expected launch August. Chair Boss asked if Joe could forward that newsletter to the committee. **Draft link sent via zoom – chat.**

**SERC** – Johnny Johnson – Completed conference approximately 200 commissioners, concentrating on commissioner certification. Training was successful. Hilton Head Winter conference in November, 2023.

**PSWRC** - Lucille Boss - Conference included commissioner sessions.

**PNRC** – Joycelynn Straight- Conference in Portland, April with approximately 200 in attendance. Great attendance, session on rule changes, great networking.

**MPRC** – Phil Bernal – Conference in St. George, UT was successfully attended over 220. Roundtable session with new commissioners. Asked about the commissioners handbook. Next year’s conference will be in Colorado, May 2024.

**Additional Comments**

- Forward regional sessions to La Tonya to add to our suggested sessions along with their status with further discussions for 2024 national conference commissioners track session and use as a regional repository so others can duplicate.
- Regional DEI component on the commissioners resource page.
- Sending letters to congressional staff for 90 days to celebrate NAHRO at 90.

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**Attendance**

**Chair:** Lucille Boss

**Vice Chair:** Adrian “AJ” Jones

**MARC:** Fred Banuelos,

**NCRC:** Renee Smith, Joe Grisson

**SERC:** Johnny Johnson, Brenda Young, Joycelynn Straight

**PNRC:** George Perez

**PSWRC:** Zella Knight, Dirk Hoek

**MPRC:** Phil Bernal

**Guests:** Carol Branham, Nevada, MO; Cody Schmidt, Nevada, MO; Lizette Mill, Housing Catalyst, Fort Collins, CO; Fermika Smith, Commissioner, Vicksburg Housing Authority, Vicksburg, MS, Milton Lawrence, Louisiana

**Absent:**

**NERC:** Richard Conforti, Neil Flynn, Sam Bergami, Nikki Vazquez

**MARC:** John Benton, Dorothy Carty Daniel, Richard Laferte, Bobby Wilson, Angela Reed

**NCRC:** Alanna Conard, Grant Henry, Delois McKinley Eldridge, Gary Valentine

**SERC:** Johnny Johnson, Carleen Cumberbatch

**SWRC:** Susan Ulrich, Gary Allsup, Willie Haynes

**PNRC:** Char Reavis,

**PSWRC:** Homer Hall, Gregory Hartwig, Dirk Hoek

**MPRC:** Barb Cleland, Thomas Jefferson

# Land acknowledgement

I'd like for us to acknowledge that the land on which we gather for this conference, at the Grand Hyatt, occupies the present ancestral lands of the Nacotchtank (Anacostan) people and over time neighboring Piscataway and Pamunkey people, who are present-day-called Washington, D.C. and Maryland's first families. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and extend our gratitude for their stewardship of this land.

The strategic location of the confluence of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, tidewater and piedmont, made the area a major crossroads and trading center for coastal and interior tribes. These river systems and current national parks are where the Piscataway, Pamunkey, the Nentego (Nanichoke), Mattaponi, Chickahominy, Monacan and the Powhatan cultures thrived. The village of Nacotchtank (from which the name Anacostia is derived) was the largest of the three American Indian villages located in the Washington area and is believed to have been a major trading center. The people of Nacotchtank, or Anacostans, were an Algonquian-speaking people that lived along the southeast side of the Anacostia River in the area between today's Bolling Air Force Base and Anacostia Park, in the floodplain below the eastern-most section of today's Fort Circle Parks. A second town, Nameroughquena, most likely stood on the Potomac's west bank, opposite of what today is Theodore Roosevelt Island. Another village existed on a narrow bluff between today's Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and MacArthur Boulevard in the northwest section of the city. Today, roughly 4,000 American Indians live in present-day Washington, D.C.

We thank the members of the Native Indigenous Peoples, sovereign nations and people of the African and Caribbean diaspora for their centuries-long contributions and continued stewardship of the area and for their innumerable contributions throughout the greater Washington region and beyond.

We acknowledge the legacy of the ancestral homelands and traditional territories of Native Indigenous Peoples from which they were dispossessed and the systemic erasure of their complex and unique histories and cultures. We further recognize the role of land dispossession as a means to expand slavery across North America. We acknowledge the heritage of the African and Caribbean diaspora and acknowledge the violent reality of slavery and forced labor of Black and Brown bodies that built this area.

Washington, D.C. has a rich history of Black culture and influence despite centuries of economic disinvestment, police violence, and lack of voting representation in Congress. We honor and celebrate their resilience and continue to see the importance of this land and its history that is home to people of many diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

We commit to continuing to learn about the history and ongoing impacts of colonization, and to actively work toward decolonization and the restoration of land and resources to Indigenous peoples. I commit to integrating a land and labor acknowledgement into our events and activities, and to using our platform as housers to advocate for policies and practices that promote equity, justice and dignity for all.