January 29, 2020 Agenda Item #1

REPORT TO THE COMMISSIONERS

FROM: Sharmarke Issa, Commissioner / Chair, Executive Director Search Committee

SUBJECT: Recommendation of Finalist and Appointment of Executive Director / CEO

Previous Directives: On July 24, 2019, the Board's Chair, acting on behalf of the Board of Commissioners, authorized the formation of an Executive Director Search Committee in response to Executive Director / CEO Greg Russ's decision to leave MPHA employment for opportunities elsewhere.

Resident Council Review/Recommendation: This Report will be discussed with the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) immediately prior to the Board's January 29, 2020 special meeting.

Budget Impact: N/A

Affirmative Action Compliance: N/A

Procurement Review: N/A

RECOMMENDATION: Pursuant to its authority under the Restated Bylaws of Minneapolis Public Housing Authority in and for the City of Minneapolis Article II Organization, Subsection D; and Section 420.90(1), Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, it is recommended that the Board of Commissioners review, interview and thereafter appoint Abdi Warsame as the Agency's Executive Director and principal operating administrator effective on a mutually agreeable effective date, subject to confirmation by the Minneapolis City Council. It is further recommended that, upon Mr. Warsame's appointment and confirmation, the Board of Commissioners authorize the Board's Chair, or his designee, to establish the terms and conditions of the Executive Director's employment.

CEO/Executive Director Search
Summary of Search Process

September 2019

- The MPHA CEO/Executive Director Search kicked off on September 25th, 2019. The Search Committee was comprised of individuals who could bring direct input into the search process from MPHA Commissioners, residents, community partners, and the City of Minneapolis. Search Committee members include:
    - Sharmarke Issa, Search Committee Chair and MPHA Board of Commissioners Chair
    - Judge Jim Rosenbaum, MPHA Commissioner
    - Cam Gordon, Minneapolis City Council Member
    - Andrea Brennen, MPHA Commissioner
    - Abdi Salah, Mayor's Representative
    - Tamir Mohamud, MPHA Commissioner and MPHA Resident

September through October 2019

- Between September 25th and November 1st, discovery meetings were conducted by CohenTaylor to understand the key competencies required for the role of CEO/Executive Director. Over 50 stakeholders were identified in total for phone or in-person discussions. Key stakeholders included:
    - MPHA Board of Commissioners
    - MPHA Leadership Team
    - MPHA Assistant Director Group
    - MPHA Regional Property Managers
    - Minneapolis City Council Members
    - Community Partners
    - Resident Advocacy Leaders
    - MHRC Executive Director

- In addition to the aforementioned 1:1 or group stakeholder discussions, discovery was also conducted with all MPHA staff members via a staff survey. Of MPHA's 300 employees, 60 responses were received. Survey questions were specific to ideal competencies, style, and culture-fit of the new Executive Director.

November 2019

- A resident survey was conducted to gain the residents' representative voice around the attributes desired in the new CEO/Executive Director. Important highlights include:
    - The survey was hard-copy mailed to 500 randomly selected households in public housing and 500 randomly selected households with housing vouchers on November 21st.
    - An electronic survey link was also available for any other resident who wished to participate.

    - The survey was available for translation and/or interpretation to accommodate those needing language assistance
    - Of the 1000 residents surveyed, 101 survey responses were received.
    - Chair Issa, along with search committee member Tamir Mohamud, attended the MHRC Board Meeting on Thursday, November 21st to share an update on the search process, as well as to distribute and collect resident surveys.
    - The results of the survey were grouped into themes and used to guide the selection process during candidate interviews.
    - Candidates were interviewed against the top three desired attributes that emerged from the resident survey, including: their commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; their ability to serve as a trusted and credible leader; and the strength of their communication skills.

- The Position Profile was finalized on November 7th. The profile served as a tool to market MPHA's brand, the organization's history and profile, and the key competencies agreed upon by the search committee. The following is a list of those competencies identified, which provided direction to the CohenTaylor team for sourcing and recruiting candidates:
    - Education: Bachelor's degree, preferably in Public Administration, Business Administration, or a closely related field, or a combination of education and experience as may be deemed acceptable as equivalent by the Board of Commissioners. Master's degree preferred.
    - Professional Background: Leadership experience in a large and/or complex organization; working knowledge of government regulations and/or economic development; prior experience working with elected bodies and with a board; demonstrates cultural competency; is relatable to stakeholders and residents.
    - Commitment to Diversity: A visible, authentic leader for ALL employees, partners, participants, and constituents. Committed to opportunities to support diversity in the workplace, creating a culture of collaboration and equity. A genuine leader of public housing in Minneapolis and a keen awareness to the diversity of cultures served.
    - Commitment to Service: Responds timely and aptly to the needs and requests of MPHA's internal and external audiences. Extends courtesy, friendliness, and overall respect to others.
    - Relationship Building: Serves as the external face of MPHA in connecting with local community leaders, constituents, potential partner organizations, and national affordable housing leaders. A collaborator who can expand partnership relationships to further serve constituents.
    - Problem Solver: Envisions processes and methods to consistently achieve goals. Determines resources and structures most likely to deliver desired results. Has the experience and ability to work within a highly regulated environment.
    - Interpersonal Communication and Teamwork: Listens well and is open and responsive to others' perspectives. Develops, values, and manages strong working relationships as critical to effective results. Possesses keen self-awareness and excellent communication skills. Able to lead and inspire a highly collaborative leadership team.

- Leadership: Decisive and pragmatic leader. Strong people leadership skills. Demonstrates confidence, coaches and develops staff. Able to lead the organization through complexity and change.
- Strategic: Demonstrates the ability to develop, analyze, synthesize, and manage complex information into solutions as a visionary leader of the organization. Has a visionary outlook to inspire support for the funding and housing needs of low-income residents. Leads innovative program development.

November through December 2019

- Communications between the Search Committee and CohenTaylor regarding the search process and progress included bi-weekly search update calls, held on November 7, November 21, December 5, and December 19.
- Items for discussion during these calls were inclusive of: progress regarding number of candidates and feedback from MPHA employees and staff, various resident and partner organizations, and national thought leaders. The Committee responded to questions from prospective candidates during this process.

January 2020

- A Candidate Slate Review meeting was held on January 2nd. Information regarding the content of that meeting is as follows:
  - CohenTaylor formally presented 7 candidates to the Search committee
    - 5 Short List Candidates (Presented):
      - All candidates on the short list were local
      - 2 female | 3 male | 1 internal candidate | 2 diverse
    - 2 Long List Candidates (Discussed; but not formally presented):
      - 1 local | 1 national

- During Candidate Review, CohenTaylor presented a summary of their research during the past three months. They summarized their proactive recruiting outreach activities. They reached out to well over 250, both locally and nationally. The candidate pool over the course of the search was broadly representative of diverse and underrepresented communities.

- Network and recruiting data for the MPHA CEO/Executive Director search included:
  - 55% local / 45% national
  - 30% diversity outreach

- Candidate materials included a candidate resume and summary (a written assignment completed by candidates allowing them to write against the required competencies from their career experience). Verbal reports were provided by CohenTaylor regarding candidates' career history, fit against the competencies, overall leadership and personal style.

- The Search Committee selected 3 candidates to advance to 1st Round interviews. 1st Round Interviews were held on January 6th at the CohenTaylor office. Information regarding the outcome of those interviews are as follows:
    - The Search Committee selected 2 candidates to advance to 2nd round interviews.

- 2nd Round Interviews were held on January 8th at the CohenTaylor office.
- After the completion of 2nd round interviews, the Search Committee met to review additional information on the candidate the Committee was considering as a finalist.
- After discussion on these items, the Search Committee members again reviewed the Key Attributes and unanimously agreed to recommend Abdi Warsame as a finalist for the Executive Director/CEO position to the MPHA Board of Commissioners.

- A brief biographical summary about Abdi Warsame follows.

This Report was prepared by Lisa R. Griebel, General Counsel, with the assistance of Brenda Shepherd, Human Resources Manager. For further information, please contact Ms. Griebel at (612) 342-1395 or lgriebel@mplspha.org.

Abdi Warsame

Abdi Warsame was born in Somalia and grew up in the United Kingdom of Great Britain, where he studied and attained a BSc in Business and a Master's Degree in International Business. He moved to Minneapolis in 2006, shortly landing a job in the financial sector.

Mr. Warsame was the founder and spokesperson for the Citizen's Committee for Fair Redistricting, which took part in the redistricting process that aimed to create a more equitable and representative political map of Minneapolis, with the intent to create better opportunities for all residents of the City. The Citizen's Committee lobbying was a historic success and today's current map of the City including Wards 6 and 9 are a testament to their hard work.

After emerging as a strong voice in the community, Warsame was urged by friends and neighbors to run for public office. With their support, he was elected to the Minneapolis City Council in November 2013. In winning the seat, Warsame became the first Somali-American elected to the council and the first in the nation to win a municipal election.

Mr. Warsame was the former Board Chair of the Cedar Riverside-Neighborhood Revitalization Program (CR-NRP) as well as the Executive Director of the Riverside Plaza Tenants Association (RPTA).

As a public servant, Warsame focuses on the city's most pressing issues: Jobs, Housing, Safety and Community Development.

Abdi Warsame is a Somali-American and a practicing Muslim. He lives with his family in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis.

Abdi Warsame
620 20th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55454

December 7, 2019

CohenTaylor Executive Search Services
MPHA@cohentaylor.com

RE: MPHA Executive Director

Dear Sir or Madame:

Please accept this letter and the attached resume as my application to serve as the Executive Director of the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA). My life story, educational background and job experience makes me an ideal candidate for this position. I can think of no greater opportunity than to lead an organization committed to preserving and improving public housing for Minneapolis's lowest income residents. It would be a noble mission to lead an organization with a tremendous history of helping those most in need.

As a child refugee who grew up in public housing in London, England, I understand firsthand the important role that public housing plays to the wellbeing of low-income individuals and families. Affordable housing played a fundamental role in my family's ability to forge a path out of poverty. It provided us with financial freedom, independence, stability and security that far too many families simply cannot achieve without assistance. Simply stated, our public housing was our refuge.

With a BS Degree from Middlesex University and an MA in International Business from Greenwich University, I have the requisite educational background to lead and manage the MPHA. I understand finance and how to read a balance sheet. I would also bring strong financial competency as well as extensive experience in running nonprofit organizations to the MPHA. My governmental experience also would be a very important asset in this position.

I have over a decade long relationship with MPHA which started in 2010 when I was the Executive Director of the Riverside Plaza Tenants Association. In that role it was my job to delivered quality, well managed tenants advocacy for over 5,000 mostly low-income families and individuals living in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, many who used MPHA housing vouchers. That experience gave me a great insight into the issues as well as challenges faced by the most vulnerable members of our community. One of the

lessons I have learned is the need for a compassionate, caring and service driven housing agencies that replace the traditional landlord-tenant power dynamic.

Since 2014 when I became a City Council Member, supporting public and other forms of affordable housing have been my top priorities. I authored initiatives and helped enact policies aimed at increasing accessibility to affordable housing and support for tenant rights across the City of Minneapolis, including the Section 8 HCV anti-discrimination ordinance that gave protection to low-income Section 8 voucher holders.

It is clear our city faces an affordable housing crisis-and it will not get better unless dramatic actions are taken. In my six years on the City Council, the city has made historic funding allocations for affordable housing. Now is the time for the City of Minneapolis to restore and make a major new financial commitment of public funds to the MPHA.

The MPHA provides housing for 26,000 Minneapolitans. That's over 5% of all city residents. The 42 high-rise buildings, 746 single family homes and duplexes, 184 townhomes, and properties accessible to MPHA voucher holders are the most important physical assets the City of Minneapolis has to provide housing for its lowest income residents. These assets are precious and must be preserved. At this point in history it is absolutely essential that the City of Minneapolis and other governmental jurisdictions step up and provide government funding for what is the single largest source of deeply affordable housing in the entire metropolitan area.

I have the background, experience and proven record that demonstrates I can achieve results. We know that the MPHA must reposition itself and redevelop its aging properties. This has created apprehension and tension in the community. I helped alleviate the fears and anxiety of MPHA by authoring the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Minneapolis and MPHA, which protected tenant rights for any RAD conversions and other developments that might require relocation. I know that the MPHA must push forward and reinvest in its properties but this must be done with firm leadership and compassionate understanding.

I also successfully added $2.3 million in city funds for 2020 budget for the rehabilitation for the Elliot Twins thereby preserving 174 deeply affordable housing units. I know first-hand the need and importance of public housing and options that must be offered. When the Native American Community housing crisis became apparent in 2018 with the homeless encampment along Hiawatha Avenue, I worked with my colleagues in the city to establish the Navigation Center which was an innovative community partnership to address a homelessness emergency. I also worked on the Stable Homes Stable Schools program. I believe my background makes me uniquely qualified to work with all levels of governments and non-profits to bring renewed energy to the MPHA.

The next greatest asset of the MPHA is it deeply experienced and talented staff of 300 people. Without these people the MPHA simply cannot perform its mission. If selected as the next Executive Director, I would make working with and leading this staff the clearest of all priorities. I know how to work with labor unions and respect the collective bargaining process. It is imperative to create a collaborative and positive work environment. I would energize, enable and empower the staff to transform the MPHA into the leading example of how to provide public housing in our region and the entire country.

The MPHA has a proud history of providing for those most in need. With all humility, I respectfully submit that under my leadership the MPHA will have a great and bright future in serving our residents for generations to come.

Very Truly Yours,

Abdi Y. Warsame