Marcia Brown's Concerns
(Email to Teresa Bianchi and John Sexton dated September 27, 2017)

BLACK text = potions of Marcia's email (complete version attached as well)
BLUE text = Response from HFHB

I am emailing you on the advice of John Sexton after we had a brief conversation last evening (after you left the meeting) about several code violations existing in multiple Habitat houses. These situations have been present for over a year without correction.

1. Porch Slope
    a. There is a code for the degree of slope a porch needs to have to carry water away from the structure.
    b. At least one of the houses built in 2016-17 on Wende violates this code.
    c. The porch slope is a safety concern
    d. I know a drain was installed on one porch, however in the winter that is likely to freeze and ice will collect and present a falling hazard.
    e. Response:
        i. 33 Wende did have an issue with the slope of their porch which necessitated a drain to be installed to keep water from pooling.
        ii. The Wende Street homes were the first time we offered poured concrete porches, a maintenance free option for our homeowners.
        iii. There was a learning curve as we perfected the process with each of the homes and have documented those steps for future porches.
        iv. HFHB visited 33 Wende during heavy rains to be sure the drain is working and it was.
        v. HFHB has talked with the family several times and they have confirmed that the drain is working.
        vi. As long as water is draining there will be no standing water to freeze.

2. Step Rise Height
    a. There is a code for the maximum rise for a step.
    b. All the houses built in 2016-17 on Wende violated this code originally.
        i. Some have been corrected with a wooden pallet-like step
        ii. At least one that is still too high.
        iii. The pallet built to correct the violation is really the cheapest, most unsightly way of doing the job.
    c. The step height is a safety concern
    d. Response:
        i. The poured concrete porches did have a slight height difference from what is code.
        ii. The step (pallet) built was the first, best option in solving the height difference.
        iii. We have not had any complaints about the appearance.
        iv. We had one complaint from 33 Wende about the size of the step (they wanted it bigger, but once we showed them how a bigger step could potentially be unsafe, they agreed their current step was preferable)
        v. All the steps are the same height so it is unlikely that one is still too high.

3. Wall not plumb
    a. There is a general workmanship code that is violated by the wall at 33 Wende that is not plumb.
    b. Apparently, since my conversation with the City Building Inspector, someone from that department has looked at the wall and decided it's OK
    c. It is painfully apparent and will adversely affect the future resale of the house.
    d. Response:
        i. One of the walls at 33 Wende is not plumb.
        ii. Most of the work in our homes are done by volunteers –some skilled but many are unskilled. There are a lot of imperfections as a result of our volunteer work force.
        iii. As long as the imperfection does not compromise the structural integrity of the home, it is felt the wall is not an issue. This was verified by the City Building Inspector certifying the house.

4. Foam Installation
    a. Although not a code, there are manufacturer's recommendations on the installation of the exterior 2-inch foam insulation.
    b. It needs to be print side out and right side up because the manner in which the foam is extruded makes water and condensation flow in a certain direction.
    c. Since many sheets have been incorrectly installed, moisture will then be directed toward the frame of the house instead of away from it.
    d. However, it doesn't matter how the foam is installed if house wrap is installed over it. This is a $100 fix that takes about an hour of labor.
    e. All the houses built in 2016-17 and so far in 2017 are affected by this.
    f. Response:
        i. We have written documentation from the manufacturer stating it does NOT matter what side is facing out OR if the boards are upside down.
        ii. As per the manufacturer, the only reason there is writing on one side is to make it easier for the inspectors to see what material was used on the house.

5. Board Responsibilities
    a. I am very distressed that the Board last evening did not seem particularly concerned that there are code violations in houses we have sold to families, especially after just having reviewed the Memorandum of Board Obligations earlier in the meeting.
    b. The Duty of Care requires oversight of the organization's activities.
    c. The Board Member Commitment Form asks that we act with integrity, and that is why I am pursuing these issues.
    d. The Commitment also says I will represent the organization in a positive manner, but I am not sure I can continue to do that if these substandard construction practices do not change.
    e. Answers:
        i. Any Board Member, Staff member, volunteer, or other person interacting with HFHB my raise concerns or suggestions about the actions of the affiliate.
        ii. The affiliate is committed to responding to any concerns and has a procedure for documenting what topics are causing the concern (i.e. giving us enough detail and specifics to understand the problem).
        iii. A work request form is initiated by a call or emailing our Family Services Manager who will document and track the concern through completion.

6. Personal concerns
    a. I used to be proud of the houses we built, but in the past 4-5 or so years, the quality has taken a sharp turn in an undesirable direction.
    b. Families do not seem to be important, just the number of houses and closings we do.
    c. What we are doing is unethical. We are supposed to be a Christian organization, but what I see in what the families are forced to accept, and the calculated discouragement of bringing these problems to light, do not meet my Christian standards. People should not be treated this way, and it is the people, both homeowners and volunteers, who should be the organization's priority.
    d. Responses:
        i. As per the answers above, there are no code violations in the houses as constructed
        ii. HFHB feels the issues you brought up were resolved with workable solutions and to the homeowner's satisfaction.
        iii. HFHB does not feel there are any safety concerns that were left unaddressed. HFHB will not knowingly let a family move into any home that has safety issues.
        iv. Talent and experience of the current Habitat Buffalo Construction team:
            1. In speaking with affiliates in NYS and around the country, as well as, with vendors and city inspectors, our team is highly praised and admired.
            2. They are always looking for new ways to offer our homeowners more economical options for their new homes and research building techniques and architectural advances to stay current with the industry. Like any case where someone tries something new, mistakes may be made, but they are repaired.
            3. Our volunteers are not professionals, but no one intends to compromise the quality of our homes or our reputation.