Executive Director Report

Highlights for January 2021 Board Meeting

A. Administrative

* COVID Response:
  + The construction sites were closed for 3 days due to COVID exposure. In the end, 6 staff members were tested 2 were positive. A review of safety protocols and triaging of information was also done after the incident.
  + The North Store is on track to re-open this Spring, conditional upon the current staff remaining in place and repair work and brand standards being completed. Two staff members were out due to COVID related issures.
  + We extended work from home agreements through the winter and will re-evaluate March 2021. Select staff continue to rotate into the office for essential functions.
* Racial inequity conversations (DEI):
  + Dr. Ursuline Bankhead PhD provided a staff training Friday, November 20, 9-11 am.
  + 3 staff members volunteered to form an affiliate DEI Team. The staff team is currently identifying additional members from the board, Home Team, Homeowners and community members to serve on this committee and help establish goals and benchmarks so that Habitat Buffalo to become more diverse and inclusive throughout the organization.
  + The respectful workplace training, which will include DE&I is scheduled for HomeTeam volunteers on January 20th has been pushed to February. We thought it important to have our first Town Hall meeting with the Home Team volunteers to be a kick-off for the year and build season and go over COVID related changes.
* Facilities Analysis Task Force engaged students from UB to research and present on possible new locations for one or both of the ReStores. Members of this team also interviewed 9 affiliates ReStore Directors with similar markets as Buffalo to determine best practices and identify patterns for success. This data, in conjunction with the information gained from Mark Little, former HFHI ReStore Director, will be extremely helpful in making operational changes as well as potential location changes. I do not expect a full plan to be ready before the end of this FY, but pieces of the plan will be shared by Mike Schaffstall throughout the process.
* Staff Changes:
* New Hires and Promotions:
  + Rick Folger was hired as Program Director to assist in creating repeatable and scalable processes in Family Services, Construction and Mortgage Services. The goal was to hire and train strong managers to take over the programs he help build so that he could move on to new strategic initiatives, thus the new title, *Director of Strategic Initiatives.*
  + Laura Martin is one of those people who has thrived under Rick’s tutelage and is now managing the Family Services Program with basic oversight from Rick. In addition to federal grant reporting, Laura also manages the closing process on all our mortgages and repair loans. As we begin to close more homes and complete more repairs, these responsibilities will break off into a separate FTE.
  + Welcome aboard Jennifer Connelly! Jennifer will start April 15th as our new Construction Program Manager. During the ramp up period to 20 houses, it became clear that the skills for inside construction management and outside field management are best done by two different people. Jennifer will be the inside program manager working alongside Glen Drew.
  + Glen Drew has been promoted from Site Supervisor to Field Manager. Glen will oversee the Site Supervisors, manage the day to day field work and oversee the Logistics Coordinator in getting materials and vendors scheduled. Glen has a background in modular home production and oversee the completion of the modular homes currently being purchased and assist in creating our own modular home building program.
  + Keelan Erhart has been given the permanent title of Operation Manager. After our Director of Operations was terminated, Keelan took on the interim Operations Manager role, in addition to his front desk administrative duties, to give me time to consider the need for an Operations Director. Keelan successfully managed admin and operational responsibilities, as well as, some HR functions. As we begin to build more and add more staff, these responsibilities will break off into a separate FTEs.
  + John Pfalzer was given the permanent title of ReStore Program Manager. He was initially given the interim title while he developed his management and operations skills. He successful led his team through the toughest months of the pandemic, hired and trained the additional team members needed to re-open the North Store and re-freshed the South Store with a new layout, branding standards and quality assurance measures.
  + Stephanie Lawson has been added to the Leadership Team. Stephanie continues to put the mission before herself or her own department to ensure that decisions being made will provide the greatest impact across the affiliate. She has ‘infectious habititis’ and believes in the vision the other leadership team members have for our long term growth. Stephanie’s title is now Director of Development & Communications to reflect the fact that she is now delegating fundraising and administrative functions to her very capable staff so that she can concentrate on higher level development work and affiliate strategy.
* Separations: Bethany Meegan is no longer with us. We are currently recruiting for a new Accounting Manager. We are in a difficult growth position where we need more than just a day to day accounting clerk but aren’t quite ready for a Controller or CFO. Depending on the candidate pool, we may outsource the accounting functions while we ramp back up to our 20 house build pace and can justify a more senior role in this department.

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B. Partnerships:

* The CHODO discussions with the Lackawanna Housing Authority and People Inc are going well. Two new builds are planned for this Spring in Lackawanna and an additional 2 with People Inc. in the fall. These would be fully funded homes.
* The FBCLT homes are all under cover with an estimated CofO date for June. The Land Trust has decided that our missions are too different and will be building rent to own homes with a for- profit builder. Habitat will finish these two homes, sell them to our program participants, and be paid by the Land Trust for our contracting services and the subsidy we provided our families.
* Niagara Falls has agreed to the scope of services we offered. The process lies with me to draft and agreement and a fee structure. This has been on hold due to COVID and recent staff changes.

C. Neighborhood Revitalization Initiatives (NRI)

* Habitat continues to be invited to the Neighborhood Clinics in the City of Buffalo lead by an out of state consulting group. The COB recognizes that it does not have the answers, nor the bandwidth, to push revitalization plans down to community partners so they are asking that the partners who have a vested interest in specific neighborhoods come together to create revitalization initiatives that work together on their behalf. We are participating in the Masten Park and Michigan Street Clinics.
* No further work is being done in NRI until the new construction manager relieves Barry of his interim role in construction so he can return to NRI and repairs.

D. Site Selection: (See Dashboard)

* Finally!!!!! After years of advocating and negotiating, the City of Buffalo has introduced a new plan for dispersing properties more affordably to non-profit developers. They will no longer use the term “Homestead” when discussion this policy but that is the Federal Law that allows the COB to sell property for less than the fair market value. The new policy will have 4 different options that non-profits can select from in order to negotiate a purchase prices. This is still in draft form and the Office of Strategic Planning has asked Habitat to be 1 of 2 pilot organizations to test the process before the launch it to the general non-profit community. We hope to have more affordable term sheets in place by the end of February using one or more of the four options.
* Last week we closed on 3 Busti lots and 2 lots in Baily Green for the new Peace Makers rental home.
* We will soon have a press event with the COB for the demolition and rebuilding of 33 Brunswick in Hamlin Park historic preservation district. This has been an eye sore and community discussion for years and Habitat is now going to help bring it back to productive use.
* Our application to purchase 6 lots located on Emerson Place and Glenwood with the intention of building 16 single family attached townhomes will mostly likely be used in the COB pilot program for its new Homestead policy. We are hoping to own these lots by fall and have appropriate funding in place to launch this project in 2022.

E. Development: (See Dash Board and report)

* The House that Beer Built cards once again sold out this year and our new virtual Hammers and Ales virtual tasting events are also selling out. Ten Thursdays hosted by the brew masters of local breweries with up to 25 people started on 1/21. Guests pick up their tasting package from the brewery during the week which contains 4 beer products and Habitat tasting glasses so they can log into a zoom session to learn about those beers and enjoy from the safety of their own home. Of course each night Habitat will thank participants for not only building affordable housing but build back our local brewers.

F. Volunteer Services: (See dashboard)

* Home Team volunteers continue on site, in the ReStore and office in appropriate numbers based on the task. We will continue to monitor CDC guidelines and adjust as necessary.
* A 4 part education series is being offered to Home Team Volunteers: January -safety and COVID protocols; February - DE&I training; March – Respectful Workplace; and April is Volunteer Appreciation Lunch

G. Construction: (See Dashboard)

* The construction site was closed for 3 days due to COVID exposure which has slowed production but not significantly.
* The 2021 Build Schedule shows an increase in production so we can complete 15 homes in FY22. These homes are made up of mostly new builds and modular and some rehabs already in inventory.

H.         Family Services: (See Dashboard)

* Delinquencies are beginning to increase but not at a concerning rate as of this month (see dashboard)
* All but one new build has closed and permission to begin closing the AHC rehab grant was given this week. We anticipate closing 3 houses a month which will allow us to draw down $28k per house.

I. ReStore

* The North Store is still on track to open this Spring conditional on having enough staff and that repairs and brand standards are improved. The Program has been short staff due to COVID exposures and lack of workforce due to the increased money in unemployment checks.
* See Facilities Task Force update

J. Finance: (See Financials)

* Current Priorities are:
  + 18 month cash flow
  + FY22 Budget
  + 3 year Budget
  + More sophisticated house budgets and accurate job cost reports
  + Draw-down requests and answering questions to FHLB grant projects as well as final LISC properties.
  + AHC New Build Grant Submittal