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**BUFFALO MUNICIPAL HOUSING AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DELIVERS AN OPTIMISTIC REPORT ON THE AUTHORITY'S
2021-22 FISCAL YEAR AND ITS FUTURE AT THE BMHA ANNUAL MEETING**

Buffalo, NY – Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority (BMHA) Executive Director Gillian D. Brown today told the Authority's Board of Commissioners the "state of the BMHA is getting stronger."

"I have never felt more energized and optimistic about the future of the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority," Brown said.

"From the transformational redevelopment of Commodore Perry, Shaffer Village, and Marine Drive, along with over \$31 million in capital projects to modernize and improve the quality of life at eight of our developments, to massive investments in technology to provide more efficient and effective services to our residents, another year of Authority-wide increased occupancy, and a healthy cash flow balance, the state of the BMHA is getting stronger and there is much to be optimistic about," Brown said.

The executive credited the leadership of the executive team, the vision of the Board, and the day-to-day dedication of BMHA employees across all departments for steering the Authority into the post-pandemic world and positioning it for future success.

"As the largest landlord in the City of Buffalo, we are committed to bringing positive change to the BMHA and the residents we serve, and to remain steadfast in our commitment to community revitalization, and our mission to provide fair, equitable, and safe housing opportunities," Brown added.

For the fiscal year 2021-22, which ended on June 30, the Authority recorded a positive cash flow of \$2.96 million. Key factors in the 211% increase in the year-end cash balance include increased capital funding, COVID supplemental subsidies, and prudent management.

Highlights of the 2021-22 fiscal year include:

- Increased Occupancy: Authority-wide occupancy rates of 95.2%, up from 92.8% in 2020, led by 5.2% increases at Jasper Parrish and Slater Courts, and a 5% increase at the Commodore Perry High Rises;
- Major Capital Investments: \$7 million investment in ongoing capital improvements at Sedita Apartments, LaSalle Courts, Jasper Parrish, and Schwab Terrace, and \$24.1 million in kitchen and bath renovations at LBJ, Msgr. Geary, and 515 Clinton developments, as well as elevator and wheelchair lift replacements at Stuyvesant Apartments slated for 2023;
- Ground-breaking Digital Services: The new BMHA Online Portal had a successful pilot launch. The portal enables BMHA residents to make rent payments, file work orders, and complete the annual rent recertification process using their smartphones and home computers. The state-of-the-art digital portal will be available Authority-wide in November. It also will enable non-residents to apply for housing. The Portal may also be accessed from any of the 15 internet-connected kiosks throughout the City of Buffalo.
- Bridging the Digital Divide: Substantial progress has been made on the multi-year effort to bring internet Wi-Fi access to all BMHA facilities with community rooms or common space. The project, in partnership with Spectrum Communications, has included the installation of fiber optic cable and interior wiring at 17 locations across the BMHA. Residents will be able to start using the free internet cable at those sites by early November.
- Continued Workforce Equity: Minorities now comprise 56% of the BMHA's 139-person workforce. In the 2021-22 fiscal year, 78% of new hires and 67% of promoted staff were minorities. The BMHA also employs 23 residents in full-time positions.
- Transformation of Commodore Perry, Marine Drive, and Shaffer Village: In 2020, the BMHA issued a Request For Qualifications seeking development partners for the largest redevelopment project in BMHA history. Following an exhaustive national search, extensive interviews, and a review by the BMHA and the City's Office of Strategic Planning, three highly-acclaimed developers and development teams were selected and financial terms were reached. A series of resident and stakeholder sessions have taken place for the re-imagining of Perry and the transformation of Marine Drive.

The City of Buffalo has applied for a \$5 million Restore New York grant, as well as dedicating \$1 million in Community Block Grant funding, to be used for the demolition of the long-vacant Perry Homes starting in spring/summer 2023. The cleared site will make way for the construction of new mid-rise, townhome, and triplex residential buildings, incorporating commercial space, as well as extensive landscaping and inviting streetscapes.

The executive director also noted the continuing financial drain from pandemic-related unpaid rent and eviction restrictions.

“This is something we’ve been dealing with since early 2020, and as of June 30, outstanding rents totaled \$3.34 million,” Brown said. “We do expect the situation to improve as more residents get past COVID financial hardships, and the City of Buffalo has committed \$2 million in American Rescue Act funds to assist eligible residents catch up on unpaid rent,” Brown said.

In other annual meeting action, Board of Commissioners Chairman David Rodriguez and Vice Chair Yvonne McCray were both re-elected for another one-year term.

Commissioners also approved contracts with Goodwin Electric Co. (\$2.3 mil), John W. Danforth (\$1.15 mil), Willet Builders (\$2.3 mil), and Allstate General Contracting (\$16.7 mil) for kitchen and bath overhauls at LBJ and Msgr. Geary Apartments, and 515 Clinton.

They also approved contracts with DCB Elevator Co. (\$1.04 mil), Goodwin Electric Co. (\$247,000), and John W. Danforth (\$87,000) to replace an elevator and wheelchair lift at Stuyvesant Apartments.

The Board of Commissioners also approved the request of the Ferry Grider Tenant Council and the Buffalo Most Valuable Parents group to name the community room at Ferry Grider Homes in honor of Shaquelle Walker Jr.

The 3-year-old Ferry Grider Homes resident was shot and killed while enjoying a family celebration on July 4, 2021.

The BMHA will donate a plaque to honor Shaquelle and a dedication ceremony will be held later this year.

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