



WORKSESSION MEMORANDUM

DEPARTMENT	PRESENTED BY	DATE
Administration	Christy Doon - Interim City Administrator	October 3, 2023

ITEM

Chaffee Housing Authority Applicant Interview

BACKGROUND

Per the Intergovernmental Agreement creating the Chaffee Housing Authority, the City of Salida is responsible for appointing two board members. A call for applicants was sent out to the public in August and September. The City received interest from one applicant – Salty Riggs.

Attached to this memo is the submitted application. Staff also reached out to the CHA Executive Director, who provided the following questions, which are asked of other board applicants. These questions are noted below.

1. Please tell us a little bit about yourself, giving a high-level summary of you professionally and personally.
2. Why, specifically, is being on the Chaffee Housing Authority Board important to you?
3. What skills do you have that would contribute to supporting the Housing Authority?
4. How/Why would you best represent the community on the Housing Authority Board?
5. Realistically, how much time per month do you have to contribute to the CHA?
6. What direct housing challenges have you experienced or have heard in direct communication with others in the Chaffee Community?
7. Tell us about a time when you had to make a decisions or plan based on many different viewpoints.
8. Tell us about a time when you worked on a team where there were varying personalities and viewpoints.
9. Tell us about a time when you had to learn something new for your job or volunteer position.



APPLICATION FOR CITY OF SALIDA COMMITTEES, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS

DATE 8/14/23
NAME Salty Riggs
ADDRESS 218 Scott Street
CITY Salida STATE CO ZIP 81201
TELEPHONE # (home) 405 517 4494 (work) _____
(cell) _____
FAX # _____ E-MAIL Salty@betchsalida.org

APPLYING FOR:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Board of Adjustment | <input type="checkbox"/> Salida/Chaffee County Airport Board |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Board of Appeals | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Art Commission |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Preservation Commission | <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Board |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planning Commission | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability Committee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PROST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <u>Chaffee Housing Authority</u> |

Please fill out the following information about yourself and why you are applying for this position. (Attach resume or extra sheets if necessary)

BACKGROUND AND/OR EXPERIENCE (Business and/or Personal):

In 2015, I settled in Salida after three years of living on the road, building trails across the state. This experience developed my skills in advocacy, volunteer coordination, event planning, and leadership. Leaving behind an unaffordable Denver neighborhood, I found a comfortable apartment on G Street in Salida, where community quickly became integral. I worked at local eateries, supported Monarch, and embraced the town's outdoor activities.

When COVID-19 hit, I recognized a familiar cycle: rising rents, friends being displaced, and a lack of affordable housing for the working class. This reminded me of a similar situation I'd witnessed in Denver a decade earlier. I resolved to contribute to solving the crisis and applied for a Chaffee Housing Authority board seat, but my attempt was met with rejection. Undeterred, I founded my own housing authority, BETCH.

Through BETCH, I empowered over 100 working-class individuals to speak out for affordable housing in public meetings. We distributed 50 rental subsidies, preserving affordable housing and supporting essential workers. I focused on community education, backed individual housing projects, and endorsed local ballot measures. I also championed six state-level measures addressing housing issues, including Prop 123. Unfortunately, my efforts to garner local support for Prop 123 fell on deaf ears last year. Ironically, BETCH was excluded from the county wide Prop 123 meeting last week.

On the state level, I advocated for solutions like rent control, tenant rights, land use changes, and affordable housing measures, seeking to combat the housing crisis. Moreover, I worked towards raising income caps across the county to improve housing accessibility. I also stood against state-sponsored employer-influenced housing, aiming to prevent an imbalance of power and a return to a company-dominated Salida.

PERSONAL AND JOB RELATED INTERESTS:

I'm all about that mountain town outdoor vibe. I traveled the state building trails and I chose to settle in this town specifically. The character of Salida is like living in a reality show where every moment has that untamed energy and lasting impact. People move here and follow their dreams. My interests include all things outdoors and Elvis, the love of my life. He's always game for a hike, a toss of the ball, or just some laid-back hanging out.

By day, I'm the program director for the Boys and Girls Club, helping shape young minds and fuel their dreams. The outdoors keep me grounded and remind me of the simple pleasures that matter most, just like how Elvis lights up with a game of fetch or a trail to explore. In the middle of all this action, one thing's clear – I'm aiming for a permanent spot here for both me and Elvis in this bustling mountain community. Just as I'm learning to guide the kids to their dreams, I envision us carving out our own space to keep enjoying the outdoors, mingling at community bashes, and soaking in the vibes of local festivals.

REASONS FOR APPLYING:

My journey, characterized by hands-on experience and tangible accomplishments, underscores my unwavering commitment to affordable housing. Despite this, BETCH is largely omitted from invitations to housing-focused meetings, and I find myself excluded from participation in the Chaffee Housing Authority. Even in their exclusion, I persistently push them to enhance their inclusivity by incorporating public input into their board meetings, restarting committee meetings, simplifying the process for community members to join committees, adhering to their established policies, holding them accountable for contractual obligations, establishing a CORA policy, and acquiring official emails. I hope to bring this dedication to the Chaffee Housing Authority's board.

My unwavering commitment to resolving the housing crisis drives my desire to contribute meaningfully to the Chaffee Housing Authority (CHA) as a member of the board of directors. I believe in steering efforts where they are most impactful, as advised by Becky Gray, and in navigating challenges with resilience and strategic focus. It's unfortunate that in our county, resistance often emerges from within our own ranks rather than from those who oppose workforce housing. I've observed a shift in our organization's culture towards bitterness, influenced by feelings of exclusion and internal undermining from supposed allies.

My leadership style is geared towards solutions rather than overcoming unnecessary barriers. I am more inclined to address the housing crisis head-on rather than diverting energy towards battling for a rightful seat at the table. While I understand the importance of equity work, I've faced the frustrations of being placed in difficult situations, only to be criticized by the very individuals responsible for creating those situations. This struggle is not the one I wish to champion. Instead, I aim to focus on solving housing issues and ensuring that our efforts remain resolute.

As I reapply for a position on the CHA board for the fourth time, my motivation is as strong as ever. My recent experiences have highlighted the crucial need for ethical government operations marked by transparency and accountability. Legal liabilities can be avoided when these basics are in place, allowing us to concentrate on our mission without unnecessary distractions. My vision is for the CHA to evolve into a driving force for affordable housing, not only advocating for effective local policies but also leveraging our "authority" to address tenant-landlord issues. However, for this vision to come to fruition, we must prioritize inclusivity, transparency, and self-accountability, setting an example for others.

It is important to note that my organization, BETCH, is actively distancing itself from local politics due to the challenges posed by organizations that should ideally be allies. This strategic shift allows us to concentrate on broader state-level coalition building for lasting impact. Nevertheless, I firmly believe that my expertise and insights can be a valuable asset in the boardroom of the CHA.

Diversity within the CHA, both on the board and within the organization, is pivotal in tackling the pressing housing crisis. The current lack of diversity among board members, characterized by homogeneous perspectives and backgrounds, has contributed to underperformance, lack of accountability, and a culture of groupthink. Addressing the complexity of the housing crisis requires a multi-dimensional approach, which necessitates a diverse array of viewpoints. Just as a company benefits from directors with diverse professional backgrounds, the CHA board stands to gain immensely from members with a wide range of expertise in housing, urban planning, community development, and individuals who have direct, current experience with the housing crisis in our county.

The synergy of various skills, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives is essential for informed and effective decision-making. Weak governance, often perpetuated by long-tenured directors with personal ties to leadership, can hinder critical thinking and the ability to challenge established norms. However, the introduction of directors with fresh insights, especially those directly experiencing the challenges the CHA aims to address, can spark cognitive diversity and enhance overall performance. Furthermore, the infusion of demographically diverse directors contributes to a rich knowledge base, a robust organizational culture, and an informed decision-making process. As we navigate the complexities of the housing crisis, diverse voices on the CHA board are indispensable in formulating and executing strategies that truly make a difference.

Thank you for applying, Salida City Council

Please return the completed application to:

City of Salida
448 E. 1st Street, Suite 112
Salida, CO 81201
or email to:
Clerk@cityofsalida.com