



Housing  
Action  
Illinois

A stronger Illinois begins at home

**HOUSING ACTION ILLINOIS**  
**2024 General Membership Meeting**  
**October 17, 2024**  
**12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

**Agenda**

1. Welcome & Introductions: Darsonya Switzer & Carl Wolf, Co-Chairs, and Sharon Legenza, Executive Director
2. Adoption of 2023 Membership Meeting Minutes: Co-Chair Darsonya Switzer
3. Election of Directors - Slate: Presented by Bob Campbell, Chair, Board Development Committee

**For a 3-Year Term Beginning January 2025:**

- Nick Dodson, Heartland Continuum of Care/Heartland Housed
- John S. Herring, Sr., Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living
- Cornell D. Lurry, Midland States Bank
- Horacio Mendez, Woodstock Institute
- Carl Wolf, Respond Now

**For a 1-Year Term (Filling Open 2025 Seat)**

- Brigitta Mac-Rizzo, Jackson County Housing Authority
4. Recognition of Service: Presented by Co-Chair Carl Wolf & Sharon Legenza, Executive Director
  5. Hot Topics & Trends: Sharon Legenza, Executive Director
  6. Postcard to Future Self
  7. Announcements: Co-Chair Carl Wolf & Sharon Legenza, Executive Director
  8. Closing: Carl Wolf, Co-Chair

*Scan the QR code in the program book or on the table tents  
for Membership Meeting Materials.*

**HOUSING ACTION ILLINOIS**  
**2023 Annual Membership Meeting**

**DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel & Conference Center**  
**Bloomington, Illinois**  
**Thursday, October 19, 2023**  
**12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.**

**Minutes**

Darsonya Switzer, Co-Chair of Housing Action Illinois' Board of Directors, called the meeting to order at 12:16 p.m.

1. **Welcome & Introductions:** Ms. Switzer opened the meeting by welcoming members and guests to Housing Action Illinois' 2023 Housing Matters Conference. She introduced Housing Action's Board members, and Sharon Legenza, Executive Director of Housing Action Illinois, introduced Housing Action's staff. Ms. Switzer also thanked our conference sponsors.
2. **Adoption of 2022 Membership Meeting Minutes:** Secretary Niccole Clements asked for a motion to approve the 2022 Membership Meeting Minutes as presented.

*Bob Campbell from Zion Development moved to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded. The membership subsequently voted "Yes" unanimously. The motion passed.*

3. **Financial Report:** Treasurer Kurt Kuyawa provided an overview of Housing Action's Revenue and Expenses from fiscal year 2022, noting that the organization was in good financial health.
4. **Election of Directors:** Bob Campbell, Chair of the Board Development Committee, presented the slate of proposed Directors to the membership for their votes.

For a 3-Year Term Beginning January 2024:

- Shalonda Bedenfield, FHLBank Chicago
- Jackie Newman, Springfield Housing Authority
- Laura Olvera Yarza, Community Partners for Affordable Housing
- Darsonya Switzer, DOVE, Inc.
- Margaret Wooten, Reach CDC

For a 2-Year Term (Filling Open 2022 Seat)

- Jennifer Taff, DuPage Habitat for Humanity & Habitat for Humanity of Chicago South Suburbs

*Mr. Campbell called for a motion to approve the Board slate as presented. The motion was brought by Niccole Clements from PNC Bank and seconded. The membership subsequently voted "Yes" unanimously. The motion passed.*

5. **Recognition of Service:** Ms. Switzer asked the membership to celebrate and thank two Housing Action staff members who have milestone anniversaries this year: Capacity Building Specialist Bibian Cristino, who is celebrating 10 years of service, and Executive Director Sharon Legenza, who is celebrating 15 years at Housing Action. Director of Capacity Building David Young assisted with the presentations.

6. **Our Programs and Accomplishments:** Bob Palmer, Policy Director, spoke about our advocacy, public education and organizing programs, including highlights from the year. Mr. Palmer introduced Katie Eighan from the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County, who talked about advocacy that resulted in historic increases in state funding to end homelessness. David Young, Director of Capacity Building, provided an overview of our capacity building program, including recent successes with our Housing Counseling Intermediary, CMS Guide 3.0, My Path to Home, and housing counseling training. Finally, Willie Heineke, National Service Program Manager, described the growth in our AmeriCorps VISTA program, and plans for the future.

7. **Feedback from the Field:** Ms. Legenza thanked the staff for their presentations, and invited members for feedback or questions. Chris O'Hara from the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County, asked a question about AmeriCorps funding, which was responded to by Ms. Legenza and Mr. Heineke. No further questions were asked.

8. **Announcement:** Ms. Switzer announced the date for Housing Action's Annual Benefit, which will happen on April 18, 2024, in Chicago.

9. **Closing:** Ms. Switzer then called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

*John Herring from the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded, and approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 1:10pm.*

## **Housing Action Illinois Proposed Board of Directors Slate**

### **Candidate Brief Biographies**

**Nick Dodson** is the Housing Navigator for the **Heartland Continuum of Care**, where he works to expand affordable housing opportunities while also developing strategies that promote housing equity and stability. In this role, Nick collaborates with community organizations and stakeholders to address homelessness and expand access to affordable housing opportunities. Nick is a proponent of inclusive decision-making, believing all voices deserve a place at the table when shaping the future of communities. Within the Heartland Continuum of Care, he played a key role in launching two groundbreaking initiatives: the Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund and the Persons with Lived Experience Collaboration Policy. The latter ensures that individuals with lived experience are fairly compensated for their time, expertise, and contributions when participating in boards and committees. In addition to his housing work, Nick serves as the Chair of the Sangamon Valley Sierra Club, an environmental conservation and advocacy organization that leads efforts to protect the environment and promote sustainable policies across Central Illinois. Nick is also the keyboard player and vocalist for the Emo Alternative Rock band The Junior Varsity, which sold over 40,000 albums, played over 600 concerts internationally and had music placement in video games and television. Nick is dedicated to leveraging his skills and experiences to serve his community, advance housing justice, and promote environmental sustainability.

**John S. Herring, Sr.** is the Executive Director of the **Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living**, where he advocates for individuals with disabilities. Mr. Herring is a native of Danville, IL. He has been in administration for over twenty-five years, and he has been an advocate for teens, adults, families, and homeless male veterans. His goal continues to be assisting individuals on their journeys to become self-sufficient in their struggle for equity and equality in work, school, housing, transportation, and health care. In his current position, he wants to make Illinois a “Best Practice” State for Centers of Independent Living. Mr. Herring is also a Pastor in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and a community activist. He and his wife, Patricia, have three children and six adorable grandchildren.

**Cornell D. Lurry, Sr.** is the Regional Community Development Relationship Manager for **Midland States Bank**, where his primary role involves establishing, cultivating, and maintaining community economic development relationships with key stakeholders and community centers of influence in the bank’s local and regional markets. With over 20 years of experience in finance and management, he has expertise in customer relations, call center operations, business banking, employee development, financial planning, regulatory compliance, sales, and training, especially in consumer and residential lending platforms. Cornell holds an Associates in Arts Degree from Joliet Junior College and a Bachelor of Science in Management and Marketing from Chaminda University of Honolulu. In addition to his professional work, Cornell is actively involved in several boards and committees, including Housing Action Illinois, Workforce Investment Board of Will County, Will County Center for Community Concerns, Cornerstone Services Inc., Joliet Junior College Foundation, Joliet Township High School CEO Program, Kankakee Riverfront

Society Inc., Spanish Community Center, and the Southland Development Authority Nominating and Governance Committee. He also galvanized the creation of the Community Builders Network of Will County, which aims to foster housing solutions throughout the county.

**Brigitta Mac-Rizzo** serves as the Executive Director of the **Jackson County Housing Authority** (JCHA), where she oversees a portfolio of 758 public housing units, 12 rural development units and 663 Housing Choice Vouchers. She is spearheading efforts to expand housing in Jackson County to the agency's statutory limit of 840 units. Under her leadership, JCHA has increased occupancy, improved voucher utilization, and secured additional funding for resident self-sufficiency programs. Brigitta is committed to leveraging her expertise in real estate, finance, and housing management to foster vibrant, economically empowered communities. She relocated to Jackson County, Illinois in 2019 with her husband Dr. David Mac-Rizzo, who now serves as a Regional Director of Operations for Highlight Healthcare in Woodstock, Illinois. Prior to joining JCHA, Brigitta held senior roles at the Housing Authority of New Haven, where she was responsible for financial management, RAD conversion planning, and internal controls for various housing programs. Brigitta's career spans over 20 years, with extensive experience in strategic leadership, fiscal management, contract negotiations, and public relations. She holds an MBA in Finance and an MPA from the University of New Haven and is currently pursuing a Master of Real Estate Development from Georgetown University. She is also a licensed realtor, a certified public housing manager, and a certified financial specialist. Brigitta serves as an active member of several professional organizations, including the Illinois Association of Housing Authorities, the Carbondale NAACP, and the Cairo Housing Task Force.

**Horacio Mendez** is the President and CEO of **Woodstock Institute**. Mr. Mendez, an experienced executive with expertise in policy, regulation, finance, research, and strategy, brings his insider knowledge of the industry, his track record as an expert researcher, and his sharp policy analysis skills to Woodstock's extensive research and policy advocacy that seek to address the racial income and wealth gap. Mr. Mendez moved to Chicago from Alameda, California. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Economics from Santa Clara University and a Master of Arts in Economics from San Jose State University. Most recently, Mr. Mendez was Managing Director of Corporate Social Responsibility for the Americas at MUFG Union Bank. Prior to that, he held executive positions at Rabobank and the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. He also spent seven years as a Senior Fellow, Economic Opportunities Program, with the Aspen Institute.

**Carl Wolf** has been the Executive Director of **Respond Now** since June 2006. During that time, he has expanded the agency to include SNAP Outreach, a Permanent Supportive Housing program, Rapid Re-Housing, and Housing Counseling services, as well as maintaining its Homelessness Prevention and Food Pantry work. He has worked in social services since 1998. His experience includes working with migrant farmworkers in job training and education services. He has also worked in job training programs in Gary, IN. Carl received his Masters in Social Work from IU Northwest in 2005. He sits on the board of the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County and the First Unitarian Church of Hobart, IN. Carl and his wife, Stephanie, live in Hammond, IN. They have raised two children who have left the nest to find their way in the world.