



A stronger Illinois begins at home

HOUSING ACTION ILLINOIS
2025 General Membership Meeting
October 16, 2025
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions: Darsonya Switzer & Laura Olvera Yarza, Co-Chairs, and Sharon Legenza, Executive Director
2. Adoption of 2024 Membership Meeting Minutes: Darsonya Switzer
3. Election of Directors: Slate presented by John S. Herring, Sr., Chair, Board Development Committee

For a 3-Year Term Beginning January 2026:

- Paula Bush, North West Housing Partnership
 - Kurt W. Kuyawa, Citizens Bank
 - Sarah Leys, City of Rockford Community & Economic Development Department
 - Brigitta Mac-Rizzo, Jackson County Housing Authority
 - Jennifer Taff, DuPage and Chicago South Suburbs Habitat for Humanity
4. In Memoriam: Bob Campbell, Zion Development: Presented by Sharon Legenza
 5. Recognition of Service: Presented by Laura Olvera Yarza, Co-Chair & Sharon Legenza
 6. IL Community Reinvestment Act in Action: presented by Jane Doyle, Senior Regulatory Policy Associate, Woodstock Institute, and James Miller, Capacity Building Associate
 7. Announcements: Sharon Legenza
 8. Closing: Darsonya Switzer, Co-Chair

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

HOUSING ACTION ILLINOIS
2024 Annual Membership Meeting Minutes

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel & Conference Center
Bloomington, Illinois
Thursday, October 17, 2024

Darsonya Switzer, Co-Chair of Housing Action Illinois' Board of Directors, called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.

I. Welcome & Introductions: Ms. Switzer opened the meeting by welcoming members and guests to Housing Action Illinois' Annual Membership Meeting and introducing Housing Action's Board of Directors. Executive Director Sharon Legenza then introduced Housing Action's staff.

II. Adoption of 2023 Membership Meeting Minutes: Ms. Switzer asked for a motion to approve the 2023 Membership Meeting Minutes as presented.

John S. Herring from the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living moved to approve the minutes as presented. Bob Campbell from Zion Development seconded the motion. The membership subsequently voted "yes" unanimously, and the motion passed.

III. 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 2025:

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

For a 1-Year Term Beginning January 2025:

Brigitta Mac-Rizzo, Jackson County Housing Authority

Mr. Campbell called for a motion to approve the Board slate as presented. The motion was brought by Isaias Solis from Erie Neighborhood House and seconded by Laura Olvera Yarza from Community Partners for Affordable Housing. The membership subsequently voted "yes" unanimously, and the motion passed.

IV. Recognition of Service: Co-Chair Carl Wolf asked the membership to celebrate and thank Shelly Richardson from the Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois for her six years of dedication and service on Housing Action Illinois' Board. Mr. Wolf also recognized National Service Director, Willie Heineke, for his 10 years of service with Housing Action Illinois. The membership thanked Ms. Richardson and Mr. Heineke for their outstanding service to the organization.

V. Hot Topics and Trends. Ms. Legenza introduced the topic of technology and how it is impacting the field, and then passed the podium to Maria Flores, Housing Action's Development Coordinator, to discuss how groups are using Artificial Intelligence (AI). Ms. Flores called upon members to share their perspectives and challenges within their work. She then welcomed James Miller, Housing Action's Capacity Building Associate, to the stage to discuss My Path to Home (MPTH), an online platform to connect renters and prospective homebuyers to their nearest HUD-approved housing counseling agency. Mr. Miller announced plans to make MPTH available nationwide and answered questions from members and guests. Ms. Legenza thanked the staff for their presentations.

VI. Postcard to Future Self: Ms. Legenza introduced the *Postcard to Future Self* and invited members and guests to fill out a postcard with action items they would like to see or take in the future. These postcards will then be mailed back to the person in the spring 2025.

VII. Announcements: Mr. Wolf announced the date for Housing Action's Annual Benefit, which will happen on April 24, 2025, in Chicago, and informed attendees that there will be a 50/50 raffle during tonight's reception.

VIII. Closing: Mr. Wolf called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Darsonya Switzer from Dove, Inc., moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded, and approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 1:10pm.

Board Slate Candidate Brief Biographies

Paula Bush has been a dedicated leader in affordable housing since 2008 at **North West Housing Partnership**, where she now serves as Executive Director, providing organizational leadership and strategic vision. A HUD-Certified Housing Counselor, she holds an Executive Certification in Home Modification from the University of Southern California and is an alumna of Northwestern Kellogg School of Management. Recognized for her expertise in federal and state programs such as CDBG and HOME, Paula frequently advises municipalities and housing organizations on program development and administration. She serves on the Housing Authority of Elgin Housing Program Committee and the Board of Directors for Housing Action Illinois. Paula received the Leadership and Innovation Award from the Oak Park Regional Housing Center for her contributions to affordable housing.

Kurt W. Kuyawa is a Senior Vice President at **Citizens Bank NA**. Kurt has been in commercial real estate for thirty years. His experience spans the commercial real estate spectrum, including middle market, institutional, and public REITs, on a national scale. He presently serves as Chicago Team Lead for Institutional Commercial Real Estate. This role includes business development and portfolio management for an office of ten people. He previously served as CRE Credit Officer for the REIT and Institutional Real Estate platforms, managing an \$8B portfolio. Kurt received a Master in Business Administration from the Dominican University in 1996, and his Bachelor of Science from Northern Illinois University in 1987. Kurt is a past member of the Illinois Mortgage Bankers Association, a former Chairman of the Income Property Committee, and a former Board Member.

Sarah Leys is the Director of the **Community & Economic Development Department for the City of Rockford**, where she leads initiatives to strengthen housing stability, economic growth, and community engagement. She oversees gap financing for development, manages Low-Income Housing Tax Credit applications, and coordinates the city's Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice. Since joining the city three years ago, Sarah has managed the Neighborhood Development division, securing new funding for homeowner rehab programs and leading Thriving Communities Technical Assistance housing planning efforts. Previously, she was Executive Director of NW HomeStart, a HUD-certified Housing Counseling agency, and chaired the Internal Policy Committee for the National NeighborWorks Association, educating Congressional staff on neighborhood revitalization. Her collaborative leadership emphasizes public input and inclusive policy planning.

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.

Jennifer Taff, Executive Director of **DuPage and Chicago South Suburbs Habitat for Humanity**, has been with Habitat for 13 years and has an extensive background in nonprofit and advocacy for affordable housing. With a background in advocating for traditionally disenfranchised groups such as individuals with disabilities, veterans, and disinvested communities, Jennifer's passion for her work is undeniable. She holds an MA in Psychology, is a certified Quality Mental Health Professional, and currently holds her QLO certification. Jennifer's community involvement consists of currently serving on the board of directors for Housing Action Illinois and HOME Together LLC. Previous community involvement includes holding the offices of President of Glendale Heights Chamber of Commerce, President of the Hanover Park Community Resource Coalition, and member of the Cultural inclusion Diversity Committee of Hanover Park.