

**Brookline Housing Authority
Board of Commissions Meeting Minutes
September 15, 2020
By Teleconference
4:30 PM**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Jacobs at 4:30 PM. Those present included: Ms. Dugan, Ms. Katz, Ms. Sullivan, and Ms. Cohen.

1. Board Reports

Ms. Katz noted Patrick's celebration for 9/25 is being planned; invitations will go out soon.

2. Executive Director Report

Mr. Alperin reported the following:

- Additional reports were provided this month; e.g., Rent Collection vs. Budgeted Rent Collection which should be helpful. Additionally, future Vacancy reports will be improved by adding columns which note the number of vacant units ready to rent vs. the number of vacant units which are not market ready. This should help the commissioners discern where in the process units may be held up from leasing.
- **BHA reclassification:** The BHA is no longer classified as a public housing agency in the public housing assessment system and will no longer receive a PH assessment score. We are now considered a RAD agency (due to the hard work of BHA staff to convert our Federal public housing program.)
- **New Payroll system:** As of September 1st, Harper's will be used for third party payroll. Commissioners who need to access any payroll related details will be set up with logins as appropriate. Some bugs are being worked out as we run dual payroll systems until October 1st. With the new tax quarter, we will be on the Harpers payroll system and not using our Finance Department internal resources for payroll processing.
- **90 Longwood Flood:** Moving costs due to the flood were over budget, but costs were recouped in a broader insurance claim. The BHA should receive approximately \$3,200 (because the office renovation is fully funded from the insurance claim) after the deductible is paid and third-party invoices are paid.
- **New Digital Work Order pilot program:** Over the next 2-4 weeks, the new program will roll out and residents should soon see this positive results. Eventually, Maintenance staff will receive their work orders via tablets, instead of having to go to 190 Harvard Street. Although this will increase efficiency and accountability, an office clerk will still have to put work orders out into the field.
- **Chromebooks for BHA students/residents:** The BHA has been in close touch with Brookline Public Schools (BPS) and Steps to Success (STS) to discuss how to provide laptops and Internet connections for all residents of BHA properties; to make sure kids have the tools they need to learn this fall. BPS will distribute a Chromebook to every student of the school system who has not yet received one.

- **Internet access grant:** The BPS received a grant to provide eligible families a \$99/month reimbursement for Comcast Internet Essentials or RCN Internet Essentials; both of which serve all BHA properties. Families must complete a Financial Assistance Form demonstrating financial hardship, either through the schools or STS.
- **STS donation:** Headphones were donated for children whose home environment may be noisy and need them for quiet study.
- **Long term reduced cost Internet solutions:** The BHA continues to look at low cost or free ways to provide Internet in our buildings. An introductory meeting with a company called STARRY (that the Cambridge Housing Authority and Boston Housing Authority have contracted with) will hopefully lead to an innovative antenna solution to provide low cost or free Wi-Fi in our buildings.
- **Financial report to commissioners.** Page 11 of the PDF is a summary. The key accounting statement after the report (1st quarter through June 30, 2021 FY) are pages 13-14 which is a consolidated report to actual reports of the entire set of programs. Intent is to provide these reports quarterly; important to provide additional info to commissioners especially during time of COVID.

Questions from Commissioners:

- Mr. Jacobs asked if the new Digital Work System can evaluate how quickly orders are completed. Mr. Alperin said it will collect good data about when a work order goes in, is started by someone and when it is completed.
- Mr. Jacobs, regarding Elderly vacancies, asked how we begin to think about holding vacancies vs. leasing them and future relocation resources at our other senior developments. Mr. Alperin said there is no clear answer, and he welcomes Commissioner's input. We need to think about a relocation resource for Col Floyd and will likely bring the Board a request to hire a relocation consultant in a few months.
- Ms. Cohen said revisiting the issue when plans for Col. Floyd are more developed and a relocation consultant hired, might be more appropriate.
- Ms. Katz asked what the driver is behind vacancies, or to what degree the State's centralized waiting list is causing issues? Mr. Hernandez, Director of Leasing Housing, said CHAMP continues to be a challenge. We have figured out how to better process applications, but challenges remain internally to make sure units are market ready. Applications and Property Management staff are working closely with Maintenance staff to make sure the goals of all three departments align. There should be some improvements regarding vacancies starting next month, and quite a few applicants have been lined up.
- Mr. Jacobs said though we are a few years away from a construction start, it would be helpful to know the turnover rate in our senior developments. Mr. Hernandez agreed it's important to stay on target and manage the number of vacancies. At 61 Park, we learned 18-20 vacant units are needed for "hotel" units available for residents to move into. This worked a little too well and we now have close to 30 vacancies. It's a moving target and lessons have been learned.

- Mr. Alperin said in terms of Col Floyd, we will be sensitive about leasing Federal elderly units. For example, if we have nine vacant units at Federal properties, it's easier for us to lease units next at Sussman House or Kickham apartments (than Colonel Floyd) because we won't have to relocate someone in the midst of a construction project.
- Ms. Maffei added that since 90 Longwood and 61 Park are no longer Federal properties, residents cannot be relocated there. The only way to get into these properties is through the waiting list with a 12-month se.
- Mr. Alperin noted the reason units didn't turn over as quickly previously was Maintenance was focused on sanitation due to the pandemic. However, Mike Lymon is now responsible for turnover work, and is now accountable to ensure maintenance is being completed in a timely manner.

3. Brookline Housing Resident Association Report

President, Jaymmy Colon, reported:

- She is going door to door, getting resident emails and is creating her own database. Last month there was a question as to where she got the financial data; it was from the March 2020 package on the operating budget approval.
- There is usually only one maintenance staff member per 40 units, and there is supposed to be two per building. Some jobs require two maintenance men.
- Signs to tell the Fire Dept where the gas shut off is are missing and must be replaced.
- There are some serious tenant maintenance issues from last year, about which she will speak to Mr. Baronas separately. With all the construction, there are many rats and roaches at all developments, and it is out of hand.
- She thanked Maintenance staff for their response to gas leaks; they did a great job.
- Mr. Alperin said, with regard to the Board package, they need to see demonstration of a valid election of a tenants' organization. The BHA is happy to provide her with any email needed to provide that information.
- Ms. Colon said elections are now held every 5 yrs. She will send docs and the latest election results to Mr. Alperin.

4. Consent Agenda

Consent Agenda Vote to approve Consent Agenda Items 5.A. thru 5.E. which were read individually by Mr. Jacobs:

5 A. Approval of Minutes Vote to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on August 11, 2020.

5B. Change Order #1 Vote to approve Change Order #1 in the amount of \$9,925 for the emergency generator replacement at 22 High Street. The contract with South Shore Generator Service, Inc. will increase from \$36,765 to \$46,690.

5 C. Change Order #2 Vote to approve change order #2 for Walnut St. Balconies Repairs Project to the contract with Drizos Contracting LLC for an extension of time to complete the project.

This is a no cost change order that will extend the contract completion date by 38 days to September 21, 2020. BHA's architect at Garofalo Design Associates Inc. has approved the change order.

5D. Change Order #1 Vote to approve change order #1 For HSV Retaining Wall to the contract with Woodall Construction Co.

5E. Janitorial Contract Award Vote to award a contract for janitorial services at the Federal and State Public Housing properties to Star Building Services (SBS) in an annual amount of \$48,800 for an initial three-year term with the option to extend the contract for an additional two years at the BHA's sole discretion.

Sharon Cowen, Director of Modernization, said Item 5D the HSV retaining wall, was put on the agenda, but isn't going through because the full documentation isn't available. Mr. Alperin clarified that Item 5D should be pulled from the consent agenda.

Mr. Jacobs confirmed that there were now only consent agenda items 5A, 5B, 5C, and 5E.

On a motion from Ms. Katz and a second from Ms. Sullivan, the consent agenda was unanimously approved.

6. DHCD Executive Director Contract

Vote to approve the required DHCD Executive Director Cover Sheet and Contract as prepared by the BHA's Counsel Michelle Randazzo

Mr. Alperin said this contract is consistent with the previously signed offer letter signed between himself and the BHA and voted on at the June BOC meeting. The Commissioners must vote on this contract in order for the BHA to submit the contract and the vote to DHCD. It is a budgetary requirement to be in conformance with the requirements of housing authorities and housing authority executive directors. Mr. Alperin clarified that the term of this contract (because we are in the middle of the year) runs through March 31st of 2022 (a partial year plus a full year contract with DHCD).

A motion to approve was made by Ms. Katz and seconded by Ms. Sullivan.

7. Architectural Contract Award

Vote to approve additional services from BWA Architects in the amount of \$6,614 for design related work for COVID mitigation efforts in the Brookline Housing Authority office space at 90 Longwood Avenue.

Mr. Anderson explained the extra services are for two design elements related to COVID mitigation in future office: UVC lights that scrub the air of active viruses by emitting a UV light, and an architecturally designed "sneeze guard" clear plastic partition that goes on top of the reception desk.

A motion to approved was made by Ms. Sullivan and seconded by Ms. Katz.

8. Contract Award Other Business

Vote to award contracts in the amount of \$5,750 each to Dominion Due Diligence Group ('D3G') to provide preliminary assessments for Sussman and Kickham Apartments of whether they will qualify as Section 18 Demo/Dispo or should continue to be planned as RAD applications.

Ms. Maffei said D3G was engaged to do preliminary obsolescence reports for Walnut/High & Col Floyd. They are considered the best in the business and were recommended by BHA attorney, Rod Solomon. We were going to go straight to obsolescence studies for Walnut/High & Col. Floyd because we felt they would qualify. Due to the \$12,000 cost, we are instead engaging D3G for preliminary reports for Sussman and Kickham (at just under \$5,750 per property) as to whether they will quality as a Section 18, in which case, we'd go forward with the full obsolescence report. Col. Floyd and Walnut/High are likely tear downs. This is likely not the case with Sussman and Kickham. There is another way to do the Section 18 program that gets you the higher value Section 8's and the 110% of FMR rather than the RAD rates without demolishing the properties.

A motion to approve was made by Ms. Katz and seconded Ms. Sullivan.

9. Rejection of Bids. Vote to reject the bids for the courtyard renovation project at Egmont St. due to the bids exceeding the available DHCD budget.

Ms. Cowen said quite a few bids were received. The first low bid accidentally omitted some of the play equipment and had to be withdrawn. After further review of the second low bid, it was determined it exceeded the available budget and wasn't in the public interest to accept it. We agreed to reject these bids and need the Board's approval for a formal rejection. The goal is to bid the project in January for a Spring start.

Mr. Jacobs asked if the scope of the project will be modified when it goes out to bid or will it be the same? Ms. Cowan said that she and the engineer will work with DHCD to look at the available budget and probably tweek the scope. Will have a base bid and a couple of alternates and may look at using different materials and play equipment.

A motion to approve the rejection was made by Ms. Katz and seconded by Ms. Sullivan.

10. Contract Negotiations

A vote to authorize the Brookline Housing Authority to enter into negotiations with Davis Square Architects ('DSA') to determine mutually acceptable contract terms and costs for the first two phases of the comprehensive planning, design and construction administration services for the demolition and redevelopment of Col. Floyd Apartments.

Ms. Maffei reported an RFP as a qualifications-based solicitation was put out in July for a design team. The top ranked firm invited is then invited to submit a cost proposal and we negotiate terms. Our intent is to engage Noble Wickersham again to help draw up the contract and negotiate the terms. There was a good response to the RFP. The selection committee consisted of Mr. Alperin, Mr. Anderson, Ms. Maffei and Mr. Jacobs. Out of the eight proposals, Davis Sq is the strongest (very familiar with MA QAP, strongly regarded by DHCD, familiar with Brookline's 40B process). The committee feels very good about making this recommendation and the larger excerpt from their proposal will be mailed to the BOC.

Mr. Alperin added that if the hiring is successful, it will be 3-4 months to come up with plans for of how to best design, demolish and build a new project at Colonel Floyd. The BHA will communicate as soon as possible with the public about how those plans are unfolding.

A motion to approve was made by Ms. Sullivan and seconded by Katz.

11. Modernization Update

Director of Modernization Sharon Cowan, said there's a lot going on, and projects are moving along toward completion. The primary project is the restart of construction at Sussman on the fire alarm project, which should be completed within a few weeks. After that, the Egmont bathroom fan project will restart.

12. Resident Services Report

BHA Director of Resident Services, Danielle Mendola, reported that the Resident Services team is focusing on connecting residents, community partners and resources to be prepared for the opening of school. They worked closely with the Brookline Center for Mental Health and Steps to Success to distribute 150 backpacks and conduct school supply drives. There will be another distribution for younger children (backpacks, PPE masks and headphones) to cover all BHA children. They have also been working hard with the BPS to coordinate Internet connectivity and access to technology for all families, and are applying for a Town grant to provide free internet, tablets and one-to-one assistance to ensure seniors also have access to technology.

Ms. Mendola added the Tech Goes Home 18-hour computer class (which helps residents get free devices and learn the skills to use them) wrapped up. The program will expand this Fall to be available in Spanish, English, Russian and Mandarin, and Grace Watson, Director of Next Steps, is now managing the project.

Ms. Katz asked how many households who have completed program since the program's start. Ms. Mendola said somewhere in mid-sixties, and that most everyone graduates who participates.

Mr. Alperin added that in addition to tech programs, Resident Services has been working on census reports. Residents are also encouraged to vote and to participate in free Town flu clinics this Fall.

13. RAD Report

BHA Director of Redevelopment, Maria Maffei

There are some problems with the 61 Park project; construction is behind schedule and off-budget. It is delayed until at least the second half of March. Perhaps providing them with additional vacancies might help move schedule along. The first stack of units is now complete, COVID supply chain delays have slowed down, and landscaping is underway. The front lobby and community room will be turned over and completed shortly.

Mr. Jacobs asked why construction at 61 Park being held up. Ms. Maffei said Plumbing & HVAC may be lagging and holding up other trades. She will be holding a meeting this week with Colantonio regarding how to rectify this.

Mr. Alperin said we're at least five months behind schedule. Each month of delay is costing the BHA approximately \$7,500 in construction interests and tax credits. It will have a material impact on our finances, and it will unfortunately be a later delivered project. We are getting to the point where we should start really getting worried if the project slips any further.

The construction at 90 Longwood (framing, electrical) and the relocation of residents are well under way. The abatement of the eighth floor was just completed and the seventh floor will be relocated next week.

There is have an RFP pending for a development consultant at Col. Floyd. There has been a lot of response and a recommendation may be brought to the BOC in October. An RFP will also be issued for relocation services, and Ms. Maffei hopes to bring a recommendation to the Board in November. Commissioners are open to holding an additional interim meeting in November, if necessary, to keep the project schedule at Col Floyd and get a team in place to meet zoning and financial targets.

14. Other Business

Catherine, a BHA resident of 27 years, lamented that the Grandparent Support Group (previously sponsored by the Brookline Mental Health Center) is no longer meeting. Many grandparents are tasked with raising grandchildren (many of whom struggle with mental health issues). It would be helpful to have such a group again and more attention needs to be paid to this important issue. Ms. Mendola, Director of Resident Services, is working with BMHC to address needs/gaps in BHA services. COVID presents a problem regarding community gatherings.

Mr. Alperin asked this resident to reach out to him. Multigenerational parenting is an important issue to consider and he would like to see what the BHA can do better and find ways to collaborate. Ms. Mendola is happy to also follow up.

Kelley Pope, a resident of the Walnut St. apartments said now that the new road by the development officially open and wanted to know when trees be planted. The development no longer has the privacy fence that they used to have. Many of their trees had to come down, but the Town doesn't plan to plant new trees until Spring. Privacy fencing is needed in the backyard as the development is fully exposed. She asked for the BHA to get some new saplings in. Mr. Alperin said the BHA doesn't have control over what can be planted in this area, but will contact the Town regarding their plans and to advocate for residents. A portion of land (old parking lot) was taken by the Town to facilitate Gateway East project, but the backyard is believed to be BHA property. Ms. Pope and Mr. Alperin will make a time to do a walk about of the property, and it would be helpful if Ms. Dugan (also a resident of the development) joined them. Mr. Jacobs said there are some BHA site plans that reference development which might be helpful.

The Board confirmed that the next meeting will be held by teleconference on Tuesday, October 13, 2020 at 4:30 PM via Zoom

16. Adjournment Vote

On a motion from Ms. Katz and a second from Ms. Sullivan, it was unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 5:49 PM.