

**APPROVED**  
**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING**  
**GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING**

April 1, 2020 2:00 PM

Telephone remote participation per Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Provisions of the Open Meeting Law

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Mercer called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. In attendance by telephone, board of commissioners:

Mercer, Sinico, Mooney, Becker, and Ryan

Executive Director Danzy, Assistant to the Executive Director Meagher

Fee Accountant, Sue Honeycutt

Public: Joe Merola VP Local Tenant's Organization, Nan Wile, Michelle Loubert

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM: February 18, 2020 & March 26, 2020.**

Chairman Mercer suggested that Mooney expedite her concerns/comments about the February draft minutes by sending them to Madonna and then she'd pass them to the board to save time for all board members to receive accuracy in reviewing the audio tape of the meeting. Mooney refused. Mooney wanted to have her comments done at the public meeting. Chairman Mercer commented that that could still happen, just that the board would have more information and this could expedite the meeting. Mooney commented that she's trying to keep things transparent. Mooney suggested tabling the discussion of the February 18, 2020 minutes. Chairman Mercer made a motion to table the discussion of the February draft minutes seconded by Ryan, **Roll call vote Mercer aye, Mooney aye, Becker aye, Ryan aye, Sinico aye. Motion Passes**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT::**

Executive Director Danzy reported that there are tenants being tested for the coronavirus and wanted to stress the importance of social distancing. Executive Director Danzy continues to see senior tenants socializing and not keeping the recommended 6 feet of each other. She urged tenants to take the State guidelines seriously and self-isolate. The office will continue to send updates on State information and the office will continue to reach out to tenants by phone to see if they need anything. Regarding the budget, the Dewey bank balance is \$29,622.07 and GBHA bank balance is \$100,544.23. Executive Director Danzy reported that invoices are up to date and checks were mailed out over a week ago and she expected more checks to be mailed out within a week. Mooney questioned the supply budget and whether the extra \$200 is needed for the coronavirus. Executive Director Danzy mentioned that that amount is in the proposed budget and if we elect to use it for coronavirus we could. Fee Accountant addressed the Mooney question that the supply budget money begins April 1, 2020 (FY21) so no money was used in the FY 20 budget.

Executive Director Danzy asked the board to vote on writing off uncollected \$350 as bad debt from a former tenant who had been evicted. The tenant was sent a letter to repay the \$350 and they did not pay it. Sinico made a motion to write off \$350 debt seconded by Ryan. **Roll call vote Mercer aye, Mooney aye, Becker aye, Ryan aye, Sinico aye. Motion Passes**

Executive Director Danzy reported that the South County housing authorities were awarded the Resident Services Coordinator (RSC) \$50,000 grant for a minimum of 3 years. GBHA will be sharing a RSC along with Stockbridge and Lee HA's. Executive Director Danzy will be working closely to implement the grant with Stockbridge Executive Director Andrea Lindsay. Executive Director Danzy reminded the board that the RSC was discussed previously (Minutes of 10/15/19, 1/21/20 & 2/18/20).

Executive Director Danzy received official approval from the state to do the 667 recertification from yearly to bi-annual. Lease addendums will need to be sent to each 667 tenant to be signed and set back to the office and placed in the tenant file. This addendum clarifies that the tenant understands they will not have to recertify every year but once every two years. If tenant incomes change, they will be able to have adjustments made between recertifications as has been the policy.

#### BUDGET REPORT:

Fee Accountant Sue Honeycutt highlighted the FY21 budget stating DHCD is giving 10% increase to our bottom line equaling \$43,128 additional funds to the budget and it increases the housing authority subsidy. Dewey Court will no longer be separate, there will be no separate budget statements from Dewey. There is a new DHCD salary schedule, increasing the Executive Director by 3% and the Assistant to the Executive Director is allowed a 3% but extra hours were given for increased duties, and an administrative clerk position has been budgeted for 12 hrs. @ \$16 hr. Honeycutt provided an overview of how a budget presentation works. Honeycutt and the Executive Director met to discuss what the Executive Director needs in her yearly budget. Honeycutt then formulates the budget. Honeycutt sent the FY21 proposed budget to the board members electronically to look over and respond with questions. Fee accountant Honeycutt asked the board for its issues/concerns/questions for discussion at this meeting. Continuing with the highlights, Honeycutt mentioned the maintenance labor is based on the department of labor rates so the rate is fixed. In the FY21 budget DHCD allowed the \$200 per unit exemption which is \$22,400 extra and \$800 for 689 and a \$5,000 technology exemption for upgrades in technology for example hotspots for tablets etc.

Honeycutt explained that it can be hard to compare between FY20 & FY21 because FY21 is now combining Dewey. Travel is increasing because of training, accounting fees are decreasing because of combining Dewey, with extra money in the budget an increase in materials and contract costs were now possible. Mooney wanted to see a breakdown of the Administrative "other" to which Honeycutt replied that that was given in the report. Mooney replied if she got that breakdown, she wasn't understanding what she was seeing, Mooney wanted more details. Fee accountant Honeycutt explained that she did provide the breakdown with an admin tab that shows publications, dues and fees, conferences, training, postage and telephone which was entered into the state budget as required by DHCD. Mooney stressed that the board needed more detail and that DHCD did not require that. Honeycutt spoke of the difference between municipalities and the housing authority. This is the way budgets are always presented, Honeycutt reminded the board that a budget is just a projection of what might be spent, the budget can be more "fluid" with items. Ryan commented that the budget is reflecting what monies might be needed for travel and conferences but if Mooney wanted specifics, she should make an appointment with the office to see the specifics of what was spent on what meeting or conference. Ryan stated that specifics on travel and conferences and training can't be predicted ahead of time. That the staff may need emergency training to handle the COVID-19 crisis. Mooney then commented she was looking at her computer and did not see the [administrative other] breakdown fee accountant Honeycutt reported to have sent her. Board member Becker responded to Mooney stating that the spreadsheet that was sent to all board members had many tabs at the bottom that had breakdowns in each category. Becker then explained to Mooney how to click on the bottom tab to find the specifics she is looking for. Chairman Mercer then asked Honeycutt to report on legal fees for housing authorities in general in the proposed budget. FY20 the GBHA had to hire attorneys but DHCD has pilot attorneys that represent the GBHA at no fee. Honeycutt left \$5000 in the category as a buffer. Court fees and sheriff fees are budgeted in 4190 administration. Becker asked if pensions are included with benefits and Honeycutt said yes.

Chairman Mercer made a motion to approve the proposed FY21 budget as presented, seconded by Ryan. **Roll call vote; Sinico aye, Ryan aye, Becker aye, Mercer aye, Mooney nay. Motion Passes 4-1**

Executive Director Danzy said she would need everyone's signature on the form approving of the budget. Discussion ensued on how to get all original signatures on one sheet when the office is temporarily shut down. Executive Director Danzy would discuss the situation with DHCD and ask for guidance.. With no other questions

for the fee accountant, Honeycutt disconnected from the meeting at 2:35p.m.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

Regarding the Executive Director tenant survey, Chairman Mercer continued the discussion from the March 31, 2020 board meeting and recapped the discussion from the February 18th board meeting. To obtain a valid tenant sample for the Executive Director's job performance evaluation, Becker and Mooney drafted the resident evaluation, we've collected all the returned surveys in sealed envelopes, in looking at the big picture there are still board member evaluations, peer evaluations and a self evaluation from the Executive Director. Chairman Mercer mentioned that there have been comments made to the public by HA board members (outside of the board meeting) regarding how the evaluations were sent out and coding. Chairman Mercer asked that the board work as a board so information given to the public is clear and factual. The documents are received, coded in the corner to ensure a valid sampling that is returned. Chairman Mercer recommended someone like Becker or Ryan, non tenant board members, to open the sealed returned survey, cut off the coding, and notate if the response was a Gt. Barrington and/or Dewey family or elder. Then the survey results can be tallied by Mooney and Becker. Sinico disagreed with Chairman Mercer completely stating the main objection was the coding and the survey should be resent to tenants. Mooney agreed with Sinico and disagreed with Chairman Mercer and suggested resending a new survey to every tenant without any code. Mooney then stated another question should be added to ask the tenant where they live. Mooney stated that the board voted, and the minutes {not specified which board minutes on what date} did not reflect that tenants could respond anonymously. Chairman Mercer responded that the board decided to have tenants sign if they made a comment, but if they just entered numbers they didn't have to sign. Ryan disagreed with Mooney and Sinico regarding giving total anonymity in tenant responses, stating that if a tenant makes a comment, they need to own it; anyone could say anything for no reason just because they don't like someone. Ryan suggested that because she knows nothing about the coding, she herself could open the sealed envelopes, cut off any codes before Mooney and Becker receive them for tallying. Therefore, no board member would know what survey came from whom.

**Chairman Mercer made a motion to accept the returned sealed surveys and have Ryan open them, cut off any identifying codes, write down if it's family or elder and where the property is, and hand over the surveys to Mooney and Becker for tallying. Seconded by Ryan.**

Discussing the motion, Becker asked if there was a possibility of making blank copies available for the tenants who wanted to send in the evaluation but might have felt intimidated as Sinico reported. Discussion ensued regarding keeping the returned surveys but giving an opportunity for non-responding tenants with Becker stating that this tenant survey is just ¼ of the total Executive Director's performance evaluation thereby eliminating the all or nothing approach. Mooney discussed an amendment to the motion, to delete where the survey is coming from. Chairman Mercer argued that knowing what property and what group is being serviced (family/senior) is valuable information for the board to know. **Mooney's stated amendment to the motion: "only the facilities names, nothing further would be used"** Becker second. Sinico aye, Mooney aye, Becker aye, Ryan aye, Mercer aye **Unanimous Amendment to the motion passes.**

#### 2:55 p.m. Teleconference muted for 16 seconds

Michelle Loubert from the public interjects a point of order asking if there was deliberation while all the public listening was muted. Ryan reported that all phones were muted and no deliberation took place.

**Ryan asks for a vote on the original motion with the approved amendment. Roll call vote: Sinico nay, Mooney nay, Becker nay, Mercer aye, Ryan aye Motion fails. 3-2**

Mooney made a motion to send out a new survey, including original directions, with a question that says please state which facility where you live. Discussion ensued regarding what version of the survey Mooney was addressing. Becker suggested to have further discussion with both versions of the survey at the next meeting. Mooney agreed to Becker's suggestion.

OLD BUSINESS:

Nothing discussed by board

3:03 p.m. Board Member Becker leaves the teleconference

LTO REPORT

None

BOARD SPEAK:

Mooney asked how the office is handling debit card and payroll information.

CITIZEN SPEAK:

Joe Merola, VP of the LTO praised Executive Director Danzy for doing a wonderful job.

Michelle Loubert requested the times board members leave the meeting and the accidental mute on the meeting be noted in the minutes.

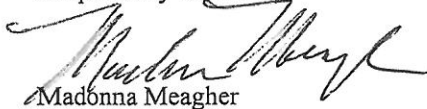
ADJOURNMENT: Chairman **Mercer made a motion to adjourn was seconded by Sinico.** Vote: Roll call

Unanimous approval 5-0 3:06pm

NEXT MEETING: April 8, 2020: by phone conference 2:00 PM

Documents reviewed: Agenda, FY21 proposed budget, minutes of Feb.18th and March 26 minutes., February budget; 4001, 4009, 689. Open meeting law complaint

Respectfully Submitted,



Madonna Meagher

Pursuant to MA General Laws Chapter 30A, Section 20 (e) (f), meetings of the Great Barrington Housing Authority are regularly recorded. Any member of the public wishing to speak at the meeting must receive permission of the Chair. Listed agenda items are those reasonably anticipated by the chair which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.