

APPROVED
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING

June 17, 2020 3:30 p.m.

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

I CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mercer called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. In attendance by telephone roll call, board of commissioners: Chairman Mercer, Eileen Mooney, Cara Becker, and Marie Ryan
Executive Director Tina Danzy, Assistant to the Executive Director Madonna Meagher

Public: Marlene Koloski, President Local Tenants Organization
Sue Honeycutt, fee accountant

II APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM: Regular Meeting 5/21/20, Executive Session 5/21/20

Chairman Mercer asked the board if they had changes or comments regarding the May 21st board meeting draft minutes. With no further discussion from the board **Ryan made a motion to approve the draft minutes of 5/21/20. Seconded by Becker. Roll Call Vote: Becker aye, Ryan aye, Mercer aye, Mooney aye. Motion passes unanimous.**

Chairman Mercer asked the board if they had changes to the draft minutes of the executive session held on 5/21/20. With no further discussion, **Ryan made a motion to approve the draft minutes of the 5/21/20 executive session. Seconded by Becker. Roll Call Vote: Becker aye, Ryan aye, Mercer aye, Mooney abstain. Motion passes 3-1.**

III EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Executive Director Danzy updated the board on the housing authority's COVID-19 response. All properties are being sanitized daily including weekends. Tenants who have become lax in their safety protocols are encouraged to maintain social distancing and wear face masks. The maintenance staff continues to respond to only tenant emergencies.

Executive Director Danzy reported the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) continues to be concerned with opening up housing authorities citing the target population of elders who could be at risk for getting coronavirus. DHCD shipped masks that were distributed to tenants at all three properties. Discussion ensued whether or not there have been confirmed cases of COVID-19 at the properties. Executive Director Danzy has written to tenants to inform her if they are COVID-19 positive but it is strictly voluntary. Stating the Centers for Disease Control has guidelines for this pandemic, Chairman Mercer asked if the state had also implemented guidelines, and if they hadn't should the board make recommendations. Executive Director Danzy reported that the common rooms continue to be sanitized at all properties, and Rich Phair and Scott Sheridan are working on weekends to clean and sanitize and a cost savings to the housing authority. It was cheaper to pay them overtime to clean than to hire a vendor for weekend service.

The Resident Services Coordinator (RSC) grant previously discussed at the board meetings of 10/15/19, 1/21/20, 2/18/20, 4/1/20 and 4/8/20 generated additional questions by Mooney. Executive Director Danzy explained to Mooney that the GBHA is not the lead agency on this grant. The Stockbridge LHA is. Stockbridge Executive Director Andrea Lindsay is collaborating with the south county LHA's. Director Lindsay is in charge of hiring personnel for the RSC position and has hired former GBHA office clerk Karen Lewis to work 15.5 hrs a week beginning June 29, 2020. Mooney questioned the "full time" position and Executive Director Danzy stated that the Stockbridge is choosing to have two part time positions instead of one full time position.

Executive Director Danzy reported that the GBHA bank balance was substantial with over \$260,000. She noted that balance included the \$54,618.77 payout from mostly closing out the Dewey Court account although there is still \$4,500 left in the Dewey account yet to be transferred to GBHA account. Executive Director Danzy reported that all invoices are paid up to date.

Executive Director Danzy reported that security deposits are continuing to be deposited as incoming tenants are housed. Mooney had multiple questions about security deposits. Executive Director Danzy reported that there were approximately 60 residents with escrow accounts. Many tenants that do not have security deposits are long term residents where no security deposit was taken when they signed their lease. Executive Director Danzy is working with Berkshire bank to set up a master account that will tally all the individual escrow accounts.

Year End Budget Forms and Certification:

Sue Honeycutt, fee accountant from Fenton, Ewald and Associates provided the board members with FY20 financials. She reported that the year end financials look good. Discussion ensued with Mooney asking what non-routine expenditures were. Honeycutt suggested that Mooney take a look on the second page where there was a breakdown of non-routine expenses, (above and beyond expenses). In FY'20 multiple vacancies cost the housing authority in repairs, the apartment fire at Brookside, as well as many appliances that had to be purchased. Honeycutt told the board that GBHA should be in better shape in FY'21. **Chairman Mercer made a motion to approve the year end certification seconded by Ryan. Roll call vote: Becker aye, Ryan aye, Mercer aye, Mooney nay Motion passes. 3-1.**

IV OLD BUSINESS:

Executive Director Danzy presented the board with a draft policy regarding the use of fire pits on the housing authority property. She reported that safety and liability is of utmost importance. Noting that during unit inspections, Executive Director Danzy discovered family units with open fire pits with just rocks surrounding the pit near the tree line. Upon researching the internet for recreational fire pit safety, Executive Director Danzy came across the Massachusetts town of Randolph fire department website featuring recreational fire pit safety. Executive Director Danzy asked the board for approval to pass an amended version of the Randolph eight step guide. It is based on the Department of Environmental Protection regulations, the Massachusetts State Fire Laws & Codes, and the 2009 International Fire Code (IFC). Discussion ensued. **Chairman Mercer made a motion to approve fire pit policy (Danzy policy draft 6/17/20) with modifications and use Randolph's eight step guide as a handout. Seconded by Ryan. Roll call vote: Becker aye, Mooney aye, Ryan aye, Mercer aye. Motion passes. Unanimous**

Executive Director Danzy asked the board to amend 4 sections of the employee personnel policy. Chairman Mercer suggested taking the proposed changes one at a time.

Change #1. Executive Director Danzy focused on the section "Employee Classifications/Hours of work" The sentence submitted for change is: The Executive Director has a full time work schedule and has a separate contract approved by the Board of Commissioners and DHCD. Executive Director Danzy suggested "full time" be changed to "part time". Discussion ensued with Ryan clarifying that the 26 hour work week in Danzy's contract is considered full time. Ryan continued stating that 26 hrs affords benefits whereas under 20 hrs a week is considered part time with few or no benefits. Mooney suggested editing the entire sentence to read: "The Executive Director has a contract approved by the Board of Commissioners and DHCD. **Chairman Mercer made a motion to approve the sentence as Mooney put forth [Change #1] seconded by Ryan. Roll call vote: Mooney aye, Becker aye, Ryan aye, Mercer aye. Motion passes. Unanimous.**

Change #2. Under Employee Benefits, Executive Director Danzy asked the board to approve changes in the *personal days* section. The first paragraph stays the same. Executive Director Danzy suggested changing as written "Employees are not compensated for unused personal leave and personal leave not used in a benefit year is forfeited" to "Employees are not compensated for personal time upon leave or termination however may carry over (3) days per year but not to exceed more than (6) personal days at any given time". Discussion ensued with Ryan questioning rolling over personal days and citing her experience that personal days are usually used first then vacation days. **Mooney made a motion to leave policy as written. No second.** Additional discussion ensued with Ryan clarifying her upcoming motion. If employees leave and haven't used their personal days they should be paid for unused days, but if they are terminated they would not receive those days in compensation.. **Ryan made a motion to change the wording to "Employees are compensated for unused personal time upon leaving but not upon termination and may not carry over personal days into the next benefit year. [change #2] Seconded by Becker. Roll call vote: Mooney aye, Becker aye, Ryan aye, Mercer aye. Motion passes. Unanimous.**

Change #3. Executive Director Danzy asked the board to approve changes in the **vacation** benefits section where she added three additional sentences: "Vacation time will be added on the employee's anniversary date going forward. Employees may carry over a maximum of 2 weeks into their next year. Unused time will be forfeited". Discussion ensued with Ryan suggesting tailoring the wording that was used in Change #2. Ryan suggested deleting the first sentence entirely and the third sentence as well. The second sentence would now read: "Employees may carry over a maximum of 2 weeks into the next year. Employee vacation time may be paid out upon leaving but not upon termination". **Ryan made a motion to approve the rewording of the second sentence (as written above) (Change #3) Becker seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Mooney aye, Becker aye, Ryan aye, Mercer aye. Motion passes. Unanimous.**

The board agreed to the change in the Personnel Policy date change from [April1, 2018} to the current date of this meeting {6/17/20} and deleted the next sentence entirely: "Effective April 1, 2018, benefits in this policy will take effect".

Change #4. Executive Director Danzy asked to board to approve changes in the **sick days/leave** of the benefits section. The current reading of the policy states "Sick leave hours cannot be carried over". Executive Director Danzy suggested: "Sick days can be carried over at a maximum of hours earned per year. For example a full time employee can carry over up [to] (64) used hours into their new benefit year. Sick time however is not paid out at time of leave or termination with exception listed below of a permanent retiree". Discussion ensued with Chairman Mercer mentioning that carrying over sick time is customary with housing authorities. He mentioned that a new law

of family medical leave is 20 paid weeks per employee. Editing Executive Director Danzy's change, the board struck the entire "for example" sentence. **Chairman Mercer made a motion (change #4) to read: "Sick leave hours can be carried forward to a maximum of 20 weeks of paid medical/sick leave. Sick time however is not paid out at time of leave or termination with exception listed below of a permanent retiree".** Seconded by Ryan. Roll call vote Mooney aye, Becker aye, Ryan aye, Mercer aye. Motion passes. Unanimous.

The board agreed to have attorney John Liebel review and approve changes.

Chairman Mercer mentioned that the Executive Director Contract will be submitted to DHCD with the updated personnel policy.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Mercer stated that there was one OML complaint taken out by Madonna Meagher alleging board member Mooney had deliberated with the board as a quorum in April 2020. Chairman Mercer suggested that the board follow the rules that were part of the board training and do what is best for the housing authority.

VI. LTO REPORT:

Local Tenants Organization (LTO) President Marlene Koloski reported that she continues to distribute meals to tenants not only from Berkshire South but also from the Stockbridge purveyor The Lost Lamb. Koloski also stated that tenants have having a problem with board member Mooney. Koloski stated that board members should be held to a higher standard {than regular tenants}

VII BOARD COMMENTS:

The only board member with concerns was Mooney. Specifically she wanted to have a discussion of the AUP audit including payroll and credit card oversight. Executive Director Danzy remarked that the changes in the personnel policy should result in clearing up discrepancies that the audit firm questions such as employee benefits by fiscal year or anniversary date. Executive Director Danzy walked through the payroll steps. Employee time sheets are sent weekly to Adirondack Payroll which contains details of work hours/overtime, sick hours, vacation hours and personal hours. The company produces a spreadsheet that is verified monthly by the fee accountant. Executive Director Danzy stated that all payroll reports are overseen weekly by the payroll company, monthly by the fee accountant Sue Honeycutt and yearly by the audit firm. Discussion ensued regarding the payroll company. Mooney continued with her concerns of financial controls at the housing authority. Chairman Mercer mentioned that he is also concerned with financials and suggested the discussion should be when the board meets in person and with fee accountant Sue Honeycutt. He then suggested Mooney create a list of her concerns for the Executive Director and the fee accountant to look over. Mooney's question regarding who has the surveys for the Executive Director was answered by Becker. Becker has possession of all the surveys. Mooney questioned if the surveys were public records and subject to the retention schedule.

VIII CITIZEN SPEAK:

None

IX ADJOURNMENT: 4:50 p.m.

Chairman Mercer made a motion to adjourn. seconded by Becker. Vote: Roll call vote: Mercer aye, Ryan aye, Mooney aye, Becker aye. Unanimous. Motion passes.

NEXT MEETING: To Be Determined

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Madonna Meagher', written in dark ink.

Madonna Meagher

Documents reviewed: Agenda, draft minutes 5/21/20, Fire Pit draft policy, town of Randolph fire safety guide, personnel policy, FY20 year end budget, OML complaint by Meagher re: Mooney.

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.