

APPROVED
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING
December 16, 2020 7:00 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 7:07 p.m. In attendance by telephone roll call, board of commissioners: Chairman Mercer, Eileen Mooney, Marie Ryan, Mary Pat Akers,
Executive Director Tina Danzy, Assistant to the Executive Director Madonna Meagher

Public that checked in: Marlene Koloski, President Local Tenants Organization LTO, Joe Merola, Vice-President (LTO), Joanne Iarocci, Miclelle Loubert, Nan Wile, Jackie Sinico

II APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM: Regular Meeting 9/23/20.

Chairman Mercer asked the board if there were additional changes or comments regarding the corrected September 23, 2020 meeting. Mooney stated that she hadn't looked at them. Akers made a motion to approve draft minutes of 9/23/20. Ryan seconded the motion. **Roll call vote: Ryan aye, Mercer Aye, Akers aye., Mooney abstain Motion passes. 3-1**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM: Regular Meeting October 13, 2020 board meeting.

Ryan made a motion to approve the 10/13/20 minutes. Akers seconded the motion. **Roll call vote: Ryan aye, Mercer Aye. Akers aye, Mooney abstain. Motion passes 3-1**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM: Regular Meeting, November 17, 2020.

Ryan made a motion to approve the November 17, 2020 draft minutes. Mercer seconded the motion. Discussion ensued with Mooney stating the draft minutes weren't complete. Chairman Mercer suggested that Mooney provide a list of what she believes are the missing items of 11/17 draft minutes to be discussed at the next meeting. Ryan withdrew the motion.

III EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

a) Executive Director Danzy reported that the COVID-19 protocols in the State have been rolled back to Phase III due to an increase in infections statewide. Chairman Mercer asked Executive Director Danzy about the status of the housing authority family that had tested positive. Executive Director Danzy reported that the family quarantine has been completed. Executive Director Danzy reported that there have been no other confirmed cases reported to the office. Executive Director Danzy stated that she is monitoring the directives from the State regarding COVID-19.

Executive Director Danzy reported the Nex Gen VCP communication application demonstration is scheduled and getting this communication application operational will be helpful in responding to emergencies that affect the tenants.

b) The October financial report was included in all board member packets along with the warrants for that month listing who was paid. Discussion ensued with Mooney inquiring about access to peruse invoices in person, accrued liabilities, payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT), expenditures listed in the October financials, administrative salaries, the travel amount remaining in the budget, and inquiring about the "Actual to Date" listed in the financial report. Chairman Mercer suggested GBHA fee accountant Sue Honeycutt attend the next meeting to address Mooney's budget concerns.

Mooney's financial concerns continued with questions regarding COVID-19 and its effect on rental income/ramifications in case tenants can't pay their rent. Executive Director Danzy responded to the concerns stating the housing authority is experiencing a slight increase in delinquencies and the housing court cases are currently backlogged. However, Executive Director Danzy stated confidence that future rental income would stabilize. Executive Director Danzy mentioned that the housing authority is assisting tenants to apply for funding through local agencies.

c) Regarding maintenance, Executive Director Danzy reported the housing authority continues to have unit turnovers. In regards to Dewey Court and Brookside Manor properties, Executive Director Danzy reported that the termite project at Dewey Court is underway and foundation repair at Brookside has been a slight delay and she is waiting for news when the project will continue. When asked about winter storms, Executive Director Danzy reported that Gary O'Brien is ready to take care of all properties with snow removal.

IV OLD BUSINESS:

Update on the Board of Health (BOH) residential unit matter.

- a) Executive Director Danzy gave an update on the Board of Health issues with a Flag Rock family unit reporting that she is working with DHCD and RCAT to advance the remediation in the unit. There are procurement policies that must be followed as the remediation of the unit could be over \$30,000. Discussion ensued regarding moving the displaced tenant to another vacant apartment. Executive Director Danzy reported that a currently vacant unit is not ready to be occupied and the tenant was offered a motel with a kitchenette but refused the offer. The matter continues in housing court with Attorney John Liebel and Attorney Elaine O'Donnell representing the GBHA. Attorney Liebel updated the BOH regarding the matter. Additional discussion ensued with questions about researching and setting a policy for non payment of rent by tenants who are displaced through no fault of their own and having a professional evaluation done on all family units. Board member Akers responded to the discussion inferring that (researching would be) a burden placed on the Executive Director as she is only paid for 26 hours a week and a part-time staff person of 18 hours a week.

- b) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):

Executive Director Danzy updated the board that the MOU contract had been reviewed by Attorney Liebel and the MOU had been signed off by the Local Tenants Organization (LTO) board. Chairman Mercer thanked Ms. Koloski for her work with the LTO. Discussion ensued regarding a possible typographical error on the MOU showing a GBHA budget allowance of \$36 per unit instead of \$6.00 per unit. Ms. Koloski stated that in her fifteen months of working on the MOU, the per unit cost is \$6.00 a unit with a maximum of \$500, whichever is greater. **Mercer made a motion to modify the MOU with the correction of \$6.00 per unit and a maximum of \$500.00 Seconded by Ryan. Roll Call Vote: Ryan aye, Mercer aye, Akers aye, Mooney nay Motion passes 3-1**

- c) Communication Policy:

At the suggestion of a board member, the communication policy was passed over for a full board to vote on.

- d) Vacation policy.

Passed over.

- e) Survey Disposition:

Chairman Mercer reported that the surveys (returned in 2020) were destroyed/shredded by former board member Cara Becker.

- f) Executive Director (ED) Evaluation:

Mooney requested this agenda item be discussed at this board meeting. Mooney led the discussion, and requested that the board schedule a meeting with Tina (Executive Director Danzy) to informally discuss her job (performance (as Executive Director of the GBHA).

Discussion ensued with Akers inquiring when (informal) evaluations traditionally happen. Mooney responded that it hasn't happened for years to her knowledge and should be done every year. Akers responded that the GBHA had poor fiscal management and lack of continuity with ED evaluations before Executive Director Danzy was hired (first as interim ED, then as permanent Executive Director). Akers continued stating her confusion (understanding) by the obstructions placed by a board member to the Executive Director. Akers listed many fiscal oversights (AUP's audits, audits of the AUP auditor) taking place at the GBHA. Akers noted that the board needs to support the ED and the office and that (in her opinion) the board feels good about the direction Executive Director Danzy is taking the GBHA.

Board member Ryan did not want to have a conversation until COVID-19 is "calmed down". Ryan supported having the conversation when the board and the ED could meet in person. **Mercer made a motion to table an Executive Director discussion/evaluation until COVID-19 is over. Seconded by Ryan. Roll Call Vote: Ryan aye, Akers aye, Mercer aye.**

Mooney nay, Motion passes 3-1

V. NEW BUSINESS

- a) Adoption of Concord Housing Authority policy of reviewing all checks at a meeting before they are sent out.

Mooney made a motion to have board approval of (GBHA) checks before they are sent out. Discussion ensued regarding the Concord policy sent by Mooney to board members. Ryan commented that the agenda of Concord showed that the board approved bills that were paid, not current bills. Ryan stated that for the GBHA to enact a policy (that Mooney is suggesting) was not feasible and could result in late fees for the GBHA as the board only meets once a month. Chairman Mercer outlined the current checks and balance systems currently in place at the GBHA. **No second to the motion was made. Motion fails.** Augmenting the discussion of the board financial oversight at the GBHA, Akers stated that financial numbers have changed drastically from years ago (under previous executive directors). The GBHA financials are in good shape including strong rental collections each month.

- b) Adoption of Additional Financial Control/Oversight policy:

Mooney stated her preference to have her comments on this agenda item during Board Speak.

- c) Bad Debt/Write off

Executive Director Danzy asked the board to approve a write-off in the amount of \$4,924 due to a tenant bankruptcy discharge. **Mercer made a motion to approve a write-off of \$4,924. Seconded by Ryan. Roll Call Vote: Ryan aye, Akers aye, Mercer aye. Mooney aye Motion passes 4-0**

- d) Reinstatement of sick time for Richard Phair:

Executive Director Danzy asked the board to reinstate sick time for Rich Phair (Maintenance Supervisor). Providing some background, Executive Director Danzy stated that at some point during previous tenures of two GBHA ED's, Rich Phair was told he could not accumulate any more sick time so his sick time benefit was curtailed. Discussion ensued regarding the old sick time policy and the current policy. Board member Ryan requested Executive Director Danzy provide an updated version of the GBHA vacation and sick time policies in a complete set.

Ryan made a motion to reinstate benefits of sick days to Richard Phair when it was curtailed. Seconded by Akers. Roll Call Vote: Ryan aye, Akers aye, Mercer aye. Mooney abstain Motion passes 3-1.

- e) Change Order for Dewey Court:

Executive Director Danzy requested the board approve a change order of \$2,500 to conclude/final completion of the safety grant project at Dewey Court. The grant project was completed by Lane Construction. **Mooney made a motion to Approve the \$2,500 change order to complete the Safety Grant at Dewey Court.. Seconded by Akers. Roll Call Vote: Ryan aye, Akers aye, Mercer aye. Mooney aye Motion passes 4-0.**

VI. LTO REPORT:

LTO President Koloski thanked Executive Director Danzy for doing a great job despite the negativity ED Danzy encounters while doing her job. Koloski reported that the Flag Rock children are doing well with schooling, breakfast and lunches are being dropped off for students, there have been no negative comments from parents of school children. Parents are happy with Spectrum giving 6 months of free internet.

VII. BOARD COMMENTS:

- Akers stated that she had received an email from an individual who is a paid subscriber to a local "NEWSletter" whose publisher is a GBHA board member.. The forwarded direct appeal originating from this GBHA board member, was soliciting funds to support taking the GBHA to Superior Court in Massachusetts. Akers challenged the ethics and responsibility of a board member suing the board they serve on and using the "NEWSletter" as a means of disseminating the appeal. Akers quoted the last line of the appeal to subscribers "*This will be expensive so if anyone wants to contribute, I'd appreciate it*". Board member Eileen Mooney stated that the appeal had nothing to do with the NEWSletter. Mooney stated that (GBHA) invoices were being withheld from her.
- Mooney commented on not having on the agenda a discussion about working with Fire Chief Burger on evacuation and fire drill plans.
- Mooney wanted the board to discuss having GBHA policies listed on the website.
- Mooney asked for an update of the Annual Plan.
- Akers stated she wanted to go on the record that it should be known that the Great Barrington Housing Authority (GBHA) is being sued or potentially being sued by a current board member in Superior Court and that there is active

soliciting of funds by a board member to support the lawsuit. Mooney responded to the statement referencing the State Ethics Commission and then stated *"I'm not accepting donations"*. Mooney then stated that the email (that was forwarded to Akers) was from a personal email not from the NEWSletter.

VIII CITIZEN SPEAK:

- Joanne Iarocci, tenant: Ms. Iarocci gave a "shout-out" to Executive Director Danzy for keeping tenants safe during this time of COVID. Ms. Iarocci also gave a "shout-out" to LTO President, Marlene Koloski for her leadership and helping to deliver food to tenants and for her work on getting the MOU completed. Ms. Iarocci also mentioned that the maintenance employees should have sick days. Ms. Iarocci acknowledged receiving the solicitation for a legal defence fund from the board member Mooney either through the NEWSletter or from a regular email. Stating that persons who live in subsidized housing generally are low income, Ms Iarocci did not like being solicited for Mooney to go to court against the GBHA.
- Michelle Loubert, town resident, stated that it is not uncommon for employers to cap employee sick time. Loubert also stated that regarding the solicitation of money for a possible complaint being filed in Superior Court from (board member) Eileen Mooney, Loubert received one herself and the solicitation was in a personal email, not in the publication The NEWSletter.
- Jackie Sinico, tenant , reported having purchased a home security system called "The Ring" and has viewed tenants showing the camera offensive gestures. Ms. Sinico also stated that an issue brought up to Executive Director Danzy was resolved.
- Nan Wile, tenant. Ms. Wile gave a point of information. In the past, warrants have been provided at board meetings and that all back up invoices are not given pro forma or included in a board packet. If a board member has a question about an invoice, that question is discussed at the board meeting and information provided regarding that invoice. Additionally, Ms. Wile appealed to the board to keep the negative rhetoric to a minimum and have more "faith" in people working for housing.

IX ADJOURNMENT: 8:32 p.m.

Ryan made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Mooney. Roll Call Vote: Mooney aye, Akers aye, Ryan aye, Mercer aye. Unanimous

NEXT MEETING: To Be Determined

Respectfully Submitted,

Madonna Meagher

Documents reviewed: Agenda, October financials, draft minutes 9/23/20, draft minutes 10/13/20, draft minutes 11/17/20, Warrant cover page 10/1/20, 10/14/20, 10/28/20, Concord Housing Authority policy, website description of GBHA, communication policy, and DF Lane certificate of final completion

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.