

APPROVED
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING
March 18, 2021 3:30 p.m.

Zoom 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 Zoom roll call, board of commissioners: Chairman Mercer, Marie Ryan, Mary Pat Akers, John Grogan, Eileen Mooney attended the entire meeting but her own audio connection didn't function until 3:47 p.m.

Executive Director (ED) Tina Danzy, Assistant to the Executive Director Madonna Meagher
Fee Accountant Sue Honeycutt

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

II EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

a) Executive Director Danzy reported that COVID-19 vaccinations were distributed at all three properties and approximately 45 tenants received vaccinations at all the sites. Executive Director Danzy thanked her staff and the board members Grogan, Ryan, Mercer and Akers who agreed to be volunteers and who helped facilitate the clinics. Daily sanitizing continues on all properties. Executive Director Danzy also stated that although the office is closed to visitors during the continued pandemic, the staff is available Monday-Thursday 9-2 p.m. for tenants and the public through emails, telephone, and in-person visits through the door that has a COVID-19 safety barrier.

b) FINANCIALS: UPDATE:

Executive Director Danzy confirmed the recent PILOT payment to the Town of Great Barrington and stated that the town confirmed the housing authority was paid in full. Director Danzy stated that the office had reached out to the Town of Sheffield regarding the PILOT portion owed for Dewey Court. The Sheffield treasurer confirmed that the town had not sent a PILOT invoice from 2017 on. An invoice from Sheffield was sent to the GBHA for six months in FY'18, (the beginning of GBHA taking over the property as ordered by DHCD) and full amounts for FY'19, FY '20 and FY'21 in the amount of \$9009.00. Executive Director Danzy reported a check was cut from the office and would be sent out to Sheffield.

The January 2021 financial report was included in all board member packets along with the warrant cover sheets for January. Executive Director Danzy reported that the Berkshire Bank balance is currently \$213,306.00.

Executive Director Danzy stated the all Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) audit information was submitted to AUP auditor Gary DePace and that she was waiting for response/recommendations from the auditor.

BUDGET PROPOSAL FY '22

Continuing on the financial report, fee accountant Sue Honeycutt reviewed the FY '22 DHCD budget proposal with the board. The report as presented had a comparison review of the existing FY-21 and changes for FY '22. Highlights that were included in the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) report:

- Subsidy remains level funded for FY '22
- Administrative salaries except for the Executive Director were allowed a 3% increase per DHCD's budget guidelines. The maintenance salaries are based on the Department of Labor salary rates that come out on 4/1 every year and Rich Phair, maintenance supervisor. Accounting fees would be slightly increased
- Property insurance increased substantially
- Health insurance rates expected to increase.

PILOT budget line would increase with the addition of Sheffield to Gt. Barrington

Extraordinary maintenance and budget amounts for flooring replacement, ADA compliant door, and appliances were all that

could be expected with level funding.

Discussion ensued with board member Grogan asking fee accountant Honeycutt for additional explanation of level funding and the additional subsidy of \$35,000. Fee accountant Honeycutt stated that the addition of \$35K (\$5,000 for technology and \$200 per unit) was added to the subsidy in FY '21 but would disappear in FY '22. She added that the proposed budget needed to stick to the same type of project as in FY '21 but some money could be re-allocated in the future.

Fee accountant Honeycutt reviewed the list of questions Mooney had in an email such as: budget level funding being based on the latest rent roll, and increase of \$332 in administration other category, maintenance labor increase of 3% based on labor rates, PILOT would be adjusted to include Dewey Court family units, the answer that Brookside doesn't pay PILOT, driveway repair in category of extensive maintenance, and water/sewer category in budget.

Grogan made a motion to approve the FY '22 annual budget. Ryan seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ryan aye, Mercer Aye. Akers aye, Grogan aye, Mooney nay. Motion passes 4-1

FENTON- EWALD & ASSOCIATES ANNUAL ACCOUNTING CONTRACT: FY '22

Executive Director Danzy stated that Fenton - Ewald hasn't had a signed contract in a couple of years and yet they continued to serve the GBHA on a month to month basis even without a signed contract. Fee accountant Sue Honeycutt gave a brief history of the Fenton-Ewald firm being in business for 35 years and that she, herself, has been working for them for at least 20 years, serving as fee accounting for the GBHA for 20 years. Honeycutt also stated she has clients statewide but serves as many as 15 housing authorities in Western Massachusetts including many in Berkshire County. The accounting firm Fenton & Ewald specializes in housing authority accounting including State reporting and in-depth knowledge of State regulations.

Discussion ensued with Grogan asking specific information of the Fenton & Ewald accounting firm. Fee accountant Honeycutt responded that Mr. Fenton retired, but Teresa Ewald continues as partner and has 10 employees which service two-thirds of the State's housing authorities. Honeycutt continued that there are few fee accountants that service the Western Mass area, and AUP auditor Gary DePace (from Monson) is one of them. Grogan inquired about the AUP and Honeycutt explained that a yearly Agreed Upon Audit (AUP) was generated by a list of questions from DHCD in Boston and an AUP auditor would be assigned to a housing authority. Honeycutt also provided Grogan with clarification on the budget accounting lines.

Additional discussion ensued with Mooney stating that in her (private) contact with Carolina Gonzalez and Laura Taylor at DHCD, she understood that any accounting firm could be hired by a housing authority. Honeycutt agreed, but cautioned using a firm not familiar with housing authority specifications. Mooney then asked a specific question to Honeycutt "Have your financial figures ever been audited?" Honeycutt stated that her financial figures are always audited by the AUP auditor. Mooney then asked "beyond the AUP?" Honeycutt stated "In this agency, no. but I don't know why you would want that expense when you have the AUP [auditor] doing the same thing."

Chairman Mercer stated that fee accountant Honeycutt is responsive and comprehensive and makes herself available to GBHA meetings and answers board questions on a regular basis.

Mercer made a motion to approve the annual Fenton & Ewald accounting firm for FY '22. Ryan seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ryan aye, Mercer Aye. Akers aye, Grogan aye, Mooney nay. Motion passes 4-1

Immediately after the vote, fee accountant Sue Honeycutt responded to accusations made by Mooney regarding her (Honeycutt's) responses to accounting questions and concerns. Honeycutt asked the record (board minutes) to show that she has years of experience, has worked for GBHA for decades and does the best job she can. "I'm extremely accurate and responsible to this agency. To question (my) integrity is upsetting."

Executive Director Danzy stated that she works well with Honeycutt and has never had an issue and questions are always answered promptly.

Bad Debt Write-Off:

Executive Director Danzy asked the board to write off \$3696 for FY '21 regarding a unit with mold remediation. **Ryan made a**

motion to approve the write-off of \$3696 debt owed in FY '21. Mooney seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ryan aye, Mercer Aye. Akers aye, Grogan aye, Mooney aye. Motion passes 5-0

C. MAINTENANCE UPDATE:

Executive Director Danzy reported:

- Stan Pitchko from RCAT resigned and the RCAT staff is down 50%. Phaldie Taliep, Vice-President of RCAT will assist our housing authority until a replacement is hired.
- The Dewey Court termite repair is nearing completion..
- Brookside Manor foundation repair on building 4 & 5 are resuming.
- Rich Phair continues on medical leave until at least April 4, 2021
- Potholes and winter damage to properties will be repaired once winter is complete.
- Partial flooring replacement is scheduled in 10 units throughout the properties. Units selected were based on previous inspections of units and observation by maintenance. All tenants have been notified about the schedule.
- There are turnovers in 2 units at Flag rock. Four active waitlist pulls have been created. One unit has been offered to a local resident, also a veteran.
- Executive Director Danzy received her Certificate of Manager Maintenance. Rich Phair will take the course at a later date due to his injury.

GB Board of Health signed off that mold remediation is now complete in the family unit.

There has been no response from DHCD regarding potential moisture issues in family units. Upon resuming family unit inspections, the maintenance will utilize the moisture meter recently purchased. Executive Director Danzy reported she found an old GBHA lease addendum statement of use regarding tenants agreeing to have proper air flow in their apartments from April - October.

Discussion ensued with Mooney wanting clarification on mold remediation of adjoining units at Flag Rock. Chairman Mercer responded to Mooney's questions clarifying the BOH report.

Executive Director Danzy reported that the majority of tenants have opted to use the NEX-GEN communication service to notify tenants of important notices. The notices can be site specific which cuts down on paper notices, ink and staff time. However, common areas will have posted notices and tenants who need to get a specific notice and have not opted in for NEX-GEN will be notified individually.

V OLD BUSINESS:

a) Review of ED's time sheets:

Discussion ensued regarding a Public Housing Notice (PHN) regarding executive director time sheets. Mooney requested the board to review Executive Director Danzy's time sheets but was not suggesting it be part of a public document, and not requesting to view other GBHA employee time sheets. Mooney suggested that if any board member wanted to see the time sheets they could make an appointment with the ED. Chairman Mercer issued a point of order stating requests by board members should come through the Chair of the board not through an individual's request to the ED. Grogan asked for clarification regarding LHA employees' public records. Chairman Mercer responded that Executive Director Danzy has a contract, reviews employee time sheets, sends the information to a payroll service which enters employee sick, vacation, personal time, that is then reviewed by the fee accountant, and entered into the accounting system for DHCD. While Grogan and Mooney agreed on the keyword of availability of viewing ED's time sheets, no other board members commented and no motion was made and no vote taken.

b) Updates to GBHA website:

Discussion continued from the board meeting on February 11, 2021 on what should be included on the Town website. Mooney suggested that the website should have information tenants might want to look up. Chairman Mercer suggested Mooney provide a list for the board meeting next month.

c) Update on Evacuation and Fire Drills:

Fire Chief Burger would like to have a fire drill in May and would like to have a preliminary meeting in the conference room before the fire drill. He also would like a list of tenants who might need help in case of an emergency, Executive Director Danzy reported that in March there were two fire alarms regarding an attic sensor in one building at Flag Rock and some residents didn't respond to the alarm which caused her great concern. She asked that tenants pass the word to other tenants to take alarms seriously.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

a) OML Complaint.

Chairman Mercer provided all board members with copies of the OML complaint by board member Mooney regarding Madonna Meagher, Assistant to the Director who takes board minutes. Mooney alleges inaccuracies to the January 14, 2021 minutes as transcribed by Meagher. The board members also received a written response by Meagher concerning Mooney's allegations. Chairman Mercer asked for board discussion/comments and neither Mooney nor any board member commented. No vote was taken on resolving the complaint regarding alleged inaccuracies in the approved January 14, 2021 board minutes.

b) Review of Board protocols

Discussion ensued with Akers stating the time constraints placed on the GBHA office staff. (Executive Director hired for 26 hrs a week, an assistant for 18 hours a week, and an office clerk with limited hours). Akers promoted "funneling" board questions through the Chair that can then be directed efficiently to the Executive Director. Akers asked board members to be sensitive to duplication of requisites as the Chair is a volunteer and the ED is 26 hours a week for supervising three properties. Mooney questioned whether her questions and concerns would be passed along to the ED. Chairman Mercer responded that Mooney sending individual emails to the ED is not appropriate. The workflow needs to be efficient.

V. LTO REPORT:

Marlene Koloski, President of the LTO discussed fire drills stating that of the two alarms in March she witnessed one, where tenants did come out of their apartment but stated some did not, mentioning two tenants by name. Koloski had conversations with tenants and those she spoke with had a plan to evacuate in case of fire moreover they did not want to be treated like they were in assisted living.

Koloski then took issue with a statement from a board member at the February 11, 2021 meeting. Koloski was upset her name was mentioned at the meeting as was reference to her daughter, once a resident at Flag Rock. Board member Mooney responded to Koloski's comments citing while she didn't leave her apartment during a fire alarm, she went to her door both times checking for smoke. Mooney also responded that a public record (unspecified) contained names of former tenants regarding mold. Chairman Mercer cautioned all board members to be careful with personal information and to not disseminate private information.

VI. BOARD COMMENTS:

Mooney questioned the Executive Director when the Flag Rock driveway would be repaired. Executive Director Danzy reiterated her assessment from earlier in the meeting, that repairs would be addressed when the weather gets warmer and winter is gone. Mooney had no further comments.

Ryan asked to read a statement (without interruptions or comments) to the five member board regarding their involvement in the day-to-day management of the GBHA. In her own words, while recognizing the potential for being a cohesive board that is capable of good work, Ryan declared that having a single board member micromanaging the GBHA is not productive to the running of the housing authority. Ryan continued, stating that the GBHA Executive Director was hired by the GBHA and that the Executive Director's responsibility is the day to day business which the entire board needs to respect, support, and trust. Harassing by one board member causes stress for employees. One board member shouldn't go "rogue", and an individual member continually requesting account numbers on warrant cover sheets is not productive. While any one board member with concerns is appreciated, no single board member is greater than the board as a whole. It is imperative for a single board member to stop causing issues at every meeting.

Grogan stated that this meeting had been productive. He additionally asked questions about the start of the fiscal year (April 1), if the board meets with DHCD, and questions about O'Brien invoices. (Invoices for snow contract on all properties).

Chairman Mercer asked Executive Director Danzy to present details about the Creative Place Making grant and an update on tenant representation to the board.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM: Board Meeting, February 11, 2021.

Chairman Mercer asked if the board had any changes. Mooney mentioned her notes from the meeting indicated agreement for two steps of Chief Burger's fire/evacuation plan to be implemented such as laminated signage and a common area to meet in an emergency.* **Grogan made a motion to approve the February 11, 2021 draft minutes as amended. Ryan seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ryan aye, Mercer Aye. Akers aye, Mooney aye. Grogan aye. Motion passes 5-0**

VIII. CITIZEN SPEAK:

Resident Jackie Sinico voiced her dissatisfaction with LTO President, Marlene Koloski's comments, claiming a "double standard" of mentioning tenants by name and regarding board/tenant representation.

IX ADJOURNMENT: 5:05 p.m.

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

NEXT MEETING: To Be Determined

Respectfully Submitted,
Madonna Meagher

**Upon review of February 11, 2021 minutes, there was no motion or vote taken by the board to approve two steps recommended by Chief Burger. There was mention of signage and common area to meet in the event of an emergency, and recommendations for a sub-committee, but no explicit agreement as indicated by Mooney's request for a change in the minutes [above] stemming from her notes.*

Documents reviewed: Agenda, draft minutes 2/11/21, Warrant cover pages 1/5/21, 1/11/21, 1/19/21, 1/21/21, January 2021 financial report, GBHA quarterly financial report, Fenton, Ewald cover letter and contract for accounting services, Sheffield PILOT invoice, OML complaint: Mooney v Meagher, Response by Meagher to OML complaint, March 15, 2021 Records Access Officer response to Mooney additional PILOT public records request, 3/12/21 Liebenow letter to Mercer. Mooney's separate emails to board: Attorney Liebel to BOH, 760 CMR 6.09:4 (d), Response to Executive Director Danzy's answers to Mooney's questions, forwarded message re: tenant hiring regulation and email regarding PILOT.

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.