

APPROVED
GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

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BOARD MEETING

Great Barrington Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

Tuesday, September 10, 2019

Meeting held at Community Room, Claire Teague Senior Center

Present: Acting Chair James Mercer, Jackie Sinico, Eileen Mooney, Diane Dillon

Administration:

Tina Danzy, Executive Director, GBHA

Madonna Meagher, Assistant to the Executive Director

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM by Acting Chair Mercer.

OPEN SESSION OR MOVE TO EXECUTIVE SESSION WITHOUT A RETURN TO OPEN SESSION.

Acting Chair Mercer reported that the meeting was to discuss complaints specifically about discriminatory remarks allegedly made by board member Jackie Sinico, which if found truthful, would be considered conduct unbecoming a board member of the GBHA and could result in her removal from the board.

The discriminatory allegations were made by two maintenance workers, Rich Phair and Scott Sheridan, at the Great Barrington Housing Authority in August 2018. At the time of the reported incident, Mr. Phair said he presented a handwritten complaint of the incident to then Executive Director, Vera Cartier.

The news of this complaint came to the attention of Acting Chair Mercer about a month ago. He requested Executive Director Danzy to review the personnel file of Phair to see if the handwritten complaint was there. Executive Director Danzy found no handwritten complaint about Ms. Sinico that was filed in Mr. Phair's folder. A written statement of the complaint dated August 22, 2019 with redactions of the names and address of the tenants allegedly referred to, was presented to the entire board.

Stating that there is no place for hate or discrimination in the Great Barrington Housing Authority, Acting Chair Mercer called this board meeting to discuss the matter in executive session, or if Ms. Sinico opted by her rights under MGL c. 30A, to have the meeting held in open session. Ms Sinico opted for an open meeting. Acting Chair Mercer stated to all in the room that only board members were allowed to speak, this board meeting was not open to citizen speak. Ms. Mooney and a member of the audience questioned why only board members were allowed to speak as this was now considered a public hearing. Acting Chair Mercer further requested that Ms. Sinico recuse herself from any voting since there was a conflict of interest, that she is the person that the alleged complaint was about and if she voted, it would not count. Ms. Sinico refused to recuse herself. Acting Chair Mercer asked Ms. Sinico if she would like to make a statement addressing the allegations.

Ms. Sinico questioned the timing of the written statement by Mr. Phair and Mr. Sheridan since what they were alleging happened over a year ago. She also stated that the Housing Authority board needs one more member and that this complaint was an attempt to get her off the board and have new board members. Ms Sinico denied ever using discriminatory language, stating she has worked her whole life with minorities. Ms. Sinico stated that she believes Mr. Phair has a history of unprofessional conduct and listed his foul language, quick temper, discriminatory language and breaking tenant confidentiality in public places. Additionally, Ms. Sinico repeated a racial slur attributed to Mr. Phair. Ms. Sinico also stated she had a witness, the Flag Rock tenant and LTO President, Marlene Koloski who could corroborate Mr. Phair's unprofessional conduct. Ms. Sinico read a statement from former Executive Director Vera Cartier, which was not handed to the board members for their review. The unverified statement of Vera Cartier (as read by Ms. Sinico) stated that

she[Vera Cartier] didn't recall receiving a handwritten complaint from Mr. Phair. Ms. Sinico repeated that the complaints about her were false, that the incident Mr. Phair alleges never happened.

Acting Chair Mercer asked for additional comments from the board. Mooney questioned the legal basis for the Acting Chair not allowing Sinico to vote. Mooney also stated that all documents are public documents and distributed the unredacted written statement of Mr. Phair to members of the public attending the meeting. Stating this board meeting as a "farce", Mooney made a motion to adjourn. Discussion ensued when Sinico seconded the motion and Acting Chair Mercer reminded Sinico that she could not vote on the motion. The motion was not voted on and passed over.

Acting Chair Mercer made a motion to send the complaint to the Great Barrington Board of Selectmen to review the allegations about Ms. Sinico, to review the documents and if they find it credible, to remove Ms. Sinico from the Housing Authority Board.

Dillon seconded the motion.

2:53 p.m. Sinico leaves the meeting

2:53 p.m. Mooney leaves the meeting

Vote on Motion: Dillon aye, Mercer aye

Motion fails as no quorum

Acting Chair Mercer comments that any board member can bring the issue to the GB Board of Selectmen for their review.

ADJOURNMENT

Without a quorum, meeting disbanded without formal adjournment at 2:54 PM.

NEXT MEETING: SEPTEMBER 17TH 2PM CLAIRE TEAGUE SENIOR CENTER

Respectfully submitted,

Madonna Meagher

Documents reviewed: Agenda, Statement of Rich Phair and Scott Sheridan