

Minutes of Aug. 3, 2022, GBHA Meeting

The Great Barrington Housing Authority board met Aug. 3, 2022, at 2 p.m. via Zoom and telephone. The meeting originally was scheduled for July 27 but because of Zoom problems, could not be held.

Chairman John Grogan called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. but it was delayed for perhaps five minutes because of background noise.

Call To Order: Present by roll call were Mr. Grogan, treasurer Phil Orensten and Eileen Mooney; director Tina Danzy; Shaw Izikson of the Berkshire Edge; Tenants' Organization president Marlene Koloski; and six others.

Executive Director' Report: Tina Danzy's report was taken first. She said one application was received for the advertised temporary position of seasonal worker but the applicant was not considered a viable candidate. A luncheon cookout was held for Flag Rock residents with several contributions from local vendors and tenants.

Ms. Danzy reported on the progress of scheduled inspections and repairs. She said the state Department of Housing and Community Development has preliminarily approved repair funds for septic lines at Dewey Court and alarm panels at Brookside Manor. The panels have gone out to bid.

There is one vacancy, at Brookside.

Tom Boyer, project manager for RCAT, told maintenance supervisor Rich Phair that a brook, not on Flag Rock property, does not cause moisture problems and removing about 17 trees should help with moisture retention. Mrs. Mooney said she wants to read Mr. Boyer's report. Mr. Grogan and Mr. Orenstein agreed. Ms. Danzy said Mr. Boyer will be asked to provide a written report.

She and Mr. Phair said they want to know who told Mrs. Mooney that drainage from the mountain behind Flag Rock causes moisture problems. Mrs. Mooney said former member Mary Pat Akers, an architect, said this during a board meeting. Others have said this during private discussions and she will ask them if they object to be identified.

Ms. Danzy said nothing has changed regarding legal action taken by a former tenant regarding damages from mold at 23 Bernard Gibbons Drive. (The damages have been remediated.) Legal action involves day-to-day operations, she stated. (DHCD guidelines state that board members should not be involved in day-to-day operations.) During the following discussion, Mrs. Mooney said legal action seeking up to \$100,000 in damages is not a day-to-day matter and DHCD states that a housing authority board is responsible for legal and financial obligations. Mr. Grogan said board members may be held responsible for legal problems and the board is responsible for knowing what is happening. Mr. Orenstein said he agrees with Mr. Grogan and this is not a day-to-day legal matter, unlike the GBHA's going to court for rent owed by a tenant. They agreed Ms. Danzy should try to arrange by the end of August a Zoom call with the attorney handling the legal action.

Mrs. Mooney questioned the lack of legal fees in budget reports. Ms. Danzy said the GBHA has not had any; DHCD pays for the legal action regarding the mold complaint.

Ms. Danzy said policies are being copied for new members and a review of some is needed. Later in the meeting, Mr. Grogan said that when the board has a fourth member, it should form a subcommittee to review all policies. Mrs. Mooney noted present policies are on the GBHA's website.

Mr. Grogan said he attended a three-day virtual National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) workshop for board members. The GBHA paid the cost, slightly over \$500, he said. He said it was very useful and the next fiscal budget might include funds for more members to attend.

Ms. Danzy said a porch ceiling at Bryant Court will be repainted when the maintenance staff has time.

Mr. Orenstein said that as a new board member, he would like a tour of the facilities. During the meeting, it was agreed to have this Aug. 10 at 11 a.m., starting at Flag Rock.

Procedural Discussions:

New AUP contract: Ms. Danzy noted that auditors of Agreed Upon Procedures may only be with a housing authority for five years so the GBHA needs a new firm. She said **LISA FALLON?** was recommended. Mr. Orenstein said Ms. Danzy should reach out to all eligible providers. Mrs. Mooney seconded. Mr. Grogan asked, referring to Great Barrington's citizens' bylaw, whether anyone present wished to comment but no one did. On a roll call vote, Mr. Orenstein, Mrs. Mooney and Mr. Grogan agreed that Ms. Danzy should get information from all eligible candidates for AUP auditor.

Ms. Danzy noted that Fenton Ewald & Associates, GBHA accountants, is working without a contract. A proposed document was included in the packet for this meeting. Mr. Orenstein said he wanted more information about fees and what is anticipated. He will send an email to Ms. Danzy with his concerns. The matter will be considered again at the next meeting, Aug. 17 at 11 a.m.

The final payment and closure of Creative Placemaking Project #116070 required a vote. Mr. Grogan asked but no one attending had a comment. On a roll call vote, Mr. Grogan, Mr. Orenstein and Mrs. Mooney voted to authorize the final payment and close the project.

Mr. Grogan said warrants in packets should be for the month before a meeting, rather than two or three months past as they are now, and that warrants should be signed by three members each month before checks are mailed. Warrants can be signed the day of the next board meeting, he said. He and Mr. Orenstein said they want bank statements to continue being included in their packets; Mrs. Mooney had asked if they thought it necessary.

Mrs. Mooney asked about having information that tells what entity is responsible for revenue each month and that tells how many hours a week, including overtime, each employee worked. She will provide a sheet showing what she means for the next packet.

New Business. Mr. Grogan said the GBHA should notify past tenants of HAA5 in water provided to Flag Rock by Housatonic Water Works. Ms. Danzy said there is only one past family and its mail is being returned as undeliverable. Mr. Grogan and Mrs. Mooney said they thought that in an earlier board

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meeting they were told such a letter would go to four or five former tenants. Ms. Danzy said only one family was affected and there is no forwarding address.

The copy of a letter from Ms. Danzy to state Rep. Smitty Pignatelli, also sent to state Sen. Adam Hinds, was in the packet requesting their help resolving problems with DHCD's CHAMP' software used for housing applications. Ms. Danzy said neither legislator has responded.

Mr. Grogan asked if Flag Rock tenants at the meeting had concerns about the quality of their water. No one said anything. He noted his is always brown. (Mr. Grogan lives on North Plan Road.)

Chairperson Update: Mr. Grogan said he feels board membership is a collaboration and as chairman, he wants to be open, honest and above board, and to reach out to everybody.

He said in recent days, he has met with Fred Clark, chairman of the Great Barrington Affordable Housing Trust Fund board, and Carol Bosco Baumann, temporary director of Southern Berkshire Community Development Corp.; and has spoken with the chairman of the Stockbridge Housing Authority and they plan to meet this month. He also left messages for the chairman of the Lee and Lenox housing authorities' boards. He plans to meet again next week with Ms. Bosco Baumann and Jane Ralph, director of Construct Inc.

He wants to help people graduating from GBHA units to other housing, including, perhaps, with remedial measures, he said. He also is investigating how to get financial vouchers for tenants who now occupy a three-bedroom unit – as an example – in a GBHA facility but with their children gone could move to a smaller residence elsewhere if they could afford it, thus making the three-bedroom home available for another family.

Mr. Grogan asked if there is a mission statement. Ms. Danzy said there is and she will provide it.

Old Business: Mr. Grogan said Flag Rock parking for senior apartments and staff lacks sufficient spaces and the staff and LTO need to brainstorm

Website updates and dog walking were tabled until the Aug. 17 meeting as Ms. Danzy needs to leave soon.

LTO Report: LTO president Marlene Koloski said her item, regarding a new tenant survey, was quite lengthy so she proposed waiting until the Aug. 17 meeting. She also said she wanted to meet first with Ms. Danzy.

Ms. Koloski asked why, when an appliance is broken, the tenant is charged for a new one. Mr. Grogan said he thought the GBHA replaced broken appliances. Ms. Koloski said the tenant had caused the breakage but why didn't depreciation apply? Ms. Danzy said the refrigerator had been brand new.

Minutes Review/Approval: Mrs. Mooney said a year in the first paragraph of the June 21 meeting was wrong and Sherry Steiner had declined her appointment as a board member. She did not resign because she had not yet been sworn in. Mr. Orenstein said the sentence referring to him was garbled; Mrs. Mooney said she would untangle it. **On a roll call vote, she, Mr. Orenstein and Mr. Grogan voted to accept minutes of the June 21 meeting as corrected.**

Citizens' Speak: Jackie Sinico said 12 tenants at Flag Rock have handicapped placards but only four parking spaces are specified for handicapped parking. People visiting tenants and the office park there during the day, taking tenants' places, she said.

"This is our home and we deserve better," she stated. Mr. Grogan said the parking situation needs to be figured out.

Susan Morris said she wants to speak to the board during its site inspection. Mr. Grogan and Mr. Orenstein explained that under the Open Meeting Law, she may speak and they may listen but they may not respond until an actual board meeting.

On a motion by Mrs. Mooney, seconded by Mr. Orenstein, with all three voting in favor by roll call, **the meeting adjourned at 3:49 p.m.**

The next meeting is scheduled for Aug. 17 at 11 a.m. via Zoom and telephone.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Mooney

Secretary

Materials provided for the Aug. 3 meeting:

-Draft minutes of June 21, 2022

-Two proposed contracts for Fenton Ewald & Associates for the period April 1, 2022, through March 31, 2023.

-Report dated July 25, 2022, for project number 116070

-Report of resident services' coordinator Karen Lewis' actions during July.

-Proposed revisions to website

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-Ms. Danzy's letter to state Rep. Smitty Pignatelli regarding problems with DHCD's CHAMP wait list program

-Fenton-Ewald balance sheets as of May 31, 2022

-Cash disbursement journal for May 2022

-Berkshire Bank statement for May, 2022

-Minutes of April 13, 2022, already posted on GBHA page on town website

Also, sent separately:

-Copy of notice to Flag Rock seniors that decking on the second level needs power washing and resealing but is safe and that smoking is not allowed in apartments or within 25 feet of any building; this will be monitored and not tolerated.

-Performance review sent Aug. 2 by Carolina Gonzalez, DHCD housing management specialist