

Great Barrington Housing Authority Minutes  
Wednesday, November 16, 2022

I. Call to Order: Attendance Roll Call – potential board vote. Chairman John Grogan opened the meeting via Zoom at 11:00am with a roll call: Tom Blauvelt, “aye,” John Grogan, “aye,” Eileen Mooney, “aye,” Philip Orenstein, “aye.”

Also in attendance: Executive Director Tina Danzy and staff Rich Phair and Madonna Meagher.

II. Executive Director’s Report

a. Financials, vacancies, maintenance, legal and other updates

i. New AUP contract – Potential board vote

ii. Change in CFA due to ARPA Targeted Award of \$94,219 – Potential board vote.

J. Grogan made a motion to approve the ARPA targeted award of \$94,219; T. Blauvelt seconded. J. Grogan asked for any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: T. Blauvelt, “aye,” J. Grogan, “aye,” E. Mooney, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “no.” Motion passed: 3-1

iii. Change in CFA due to ARPA Formula Funding Award of \$162,077 – Potential board vote.

J. Grogan made a motion to approve the ARPA formula funding award of \$162,077; T. Blauvelt seconded. J. Grogan asked for any discussion – E. Mooney asked what the funds are for – T. Danzy replied this is additional ARPA funding to be used for existing projects in the annual plan - details were reviewed with J. Grogan. T. Danzy also confirmed these funds cannot augment the contingency budget – it is only for capital projects. P. Orenstein noted this is based on formula funding and reflects GBHA’s share. E. Mooney asked that the motion specify that funds will be used for projects in the annual plan – it was duly noted and T. Danzy confirmed the projects are identified. Roll call vote: T. Blauvelt, “aye,” J. Grogan, “aye,” E. Mooney, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 4-0

iv. Plow contract, potential Town involvement – Potential board vote.

T. Danzy and Rick Phair, Maintenance Supervisor, presented stating a bid for \$21,000 for a new two-year plow contract has been received from Hils Lawn Care and their references were verified. It was discussed it is historical/standard practice to offer a two-year contract – and a GBHA standard contract is used with a provision for termination if GBHA is dissatisfied with services. R. Phair stated the other bids received were higher – Gary O’Brien \$34,000 and First Response \$23,000. J. Grogan noted he has spoken with Mark Pruhenski about the Town providing this service – R. Phair stated it had been considered in the past, but there are obstacles including the road being too narrow. J. Grogan replied it is being revisited by DPW Superintendent, Joe Aberdale, along with the compensation. T. Danzy stated leveraging Town services should be considered for the future to minimize GBHA expenses. It was noted the plow contract needs to be finalized quickly.

P. Orenstein made a motion to approve a two-year contract with Hils Lawn Care for plowing and salting for \$21,000 each year; J. Grogan seconded. J. Grogan asked for any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: T. Blauvelt, “aye,” J. Grogan, “aye,” E. Mooney, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 4-0.

III. New Business

a. Accounting firm process update – Potential board vote.

i. J. Grogan noted regarding a potential change in accounting services for GBHA - it has to go out to bid as it exceeds the dollar threshold. He continued to state he contacted KB Accounting which was recommended by Barry Clairmont who is involved in auditing affordable housing projects in the area.

- ii. T. Danzy stated GNHA has had a long-time relationship with Fenton Ewald – there have not been any issues with their work - and it is a good relationship. She further noted this is a specialized field. J. Grogan replied the impetus to hire a new firm is because it is good policy to have a fresh view. It was confirmed there are no concerns about Fenton Ewald's work – it is just good governance to make periodic changes and the board should be looking at options.
- ii. J. Grogan stated he had sent questions to T. Danzy on this - and that the KB Accountant has no DHCD experience, but does work with housing issues and 1Berkshire – and can also offer financial consulting services. J. Grogan clarified he was only inquiring if KB has worked with other agencies and is available/willing to provide financial services.
- iii. E. Mooney stated this has to go out to bid so discussion should not focus on one firm - she agreed the Fenton Ewald has been in place for too long and noted she had difficulties receiving financial information in the past.
- iv. J. Grogan emphasized that good governance is a priority and clarified the concerns are about the longevity of the accounting firm-GBHA relationship - not about the executive director relationship with the firm. J. Grogan also stated he has reached out to DHCD to inquire if they have a list of accounting firms – E. Mooney stated the choice of accountant is up to GBHA – it does not have to come from the list. T. Blauvelt added the accountant/firm has to have the right credentials. It was noted discussions are exploratory at this time.

b. Wood deck condition at Flag Rock – Prior exchanges with DHCD – Potential board vote.  
It was agreed the wood deck is in good condition.

c. Policy Reviews – Snow removal, grievance, procurement – Potential board vote.

- i. It was noted T. Blauvelt sent the personnel policy to J. Grogan, but it is not yet reviewed and was tabled.
- ii. P. Orenstein stated he had noted E. Mooney's concerns about the snow removal policy and has created the current draft based on two existing policies/guidelines. He questioned the provision regarding residents' responsibility to clear snow on their own vehicles – and if unable to do so to contact the office - he inquired what the staff would do in that situation. R. Phair replied staff does not want to clear off cars due to potential claims of damage – but they will clear around cars. T. Danzy suggested keeping the existing language - if assistance is required to contact the office and reasonable accommodations can be made. P. Orenstein suggested using a hold harmless clause regarding damage to cars.
- iii. P. Orenstein also raised concerns about resident seniors having to move cars between the upper and lower lots as specified in previous versions of the policy. R. Phair stated that has not been an issue as cars are generally backed out for clearing and moved back in.
- iv. E. Mooney stated moving cars does not need to be in the policy nor does the reference to someone else being hired – it should address who is responsible for clearing. She read her suggested language: The GBHA board may approve other actions affecting snow removal such as contracts with other organizations or steps to be taken because of weather in that particular year. Any vehicle that interferes with snow removal by parking on the road in a facility will be subject to towing at resident's expense. Addressing the first paragraph she added: Residents of family homes of Flag Rock and Dewey Court are responsible for snow removal on their driveways and walkways.

- v. J. Grogan noted this is the first review of the draft policy – and agreed car shoveling/ moving should be put back in – and stated there will be a final review at the next meeting. E. Mooney stated she was never informed of that requirement.
- vi. P. Orenstein stated whether people are aware of a policy is a separate issue and it should be communicated after it is approved. He noted in the current policies there is demanding language that all residents of Flag Rock must move cars between the two lots – he expressed concerns about requiring tenants to do so if they are physically unable. R. Phair clarified this applies after a snow storm - and clarified that generally within 24 hours cars are used/moved. Concerns were expressed about the danger of snow and ice build up. P. Orenstein stated a lot of what has been discussed makes sense, but is not reflected in the policies.
- vii. P. Orenstein stated he would resend the two existing and the new draft policy to T. Danzy and the board. T. Danzy stated she would review and provide feedback – and have a draft for the next meeting. E. Mooney stated she would send her comments/edits to T. Danzy.

The board agreed to table additional policy review and continue at the next meeting.

- d. Potential to provide guidance from tenants for Planning Board and Affordable Housing Trust as more affordable housing is considered - Potential board vote. E. Mooney suggested perhaps residents can provide valuable input regarding plans for new affordable housing at North Plain Road. E. Mooney and T. Danzy agreed to discuss offline.
- e. GBHA Budget Development Meetings – How to improve tenant input - Potential board vote. J. Grogan asked about involving tenants/LTO in budget discussions. T. Danzy stated she had planned to meet with Marlene Koloski to discuss reviewing the annual plan with the LTO. The board discussed the importance of LTO meetings to understand tenant needs. E. Mooney stated there have not been regular LTO meetings and was given advice that the Executive Director should attend an LTO meeting to discuss the annual plan. T. Danzy clarified she would need to be invited to a meeting. E. Mooney offered to talk to M. Koloski. T. Danzy also stated a better working relationship with the LTO would be beneficial as would having residents more actively involved.
- f. 5 year plan and next year's budget discussions – It was discussed that at the next meeting on December 14 at 11:00am the board would be present to focus on the annual plan. E. Mooney asked about holding a hearing. T. Danzy stated her presentation would cover discrepancies due to fiscal years, Capital Improvement Plan proposal, current budget, DHCD tenant survey, maintenance practices, etc. She clarified the packet is discussed at the annual plan meeting/hearing followed by a regular board meeting where, if agreed upon, the annual plan can be approved.

#### IV. Old Business:

- a. Flag Rock Parking and LTO involvement therewith.– Potential board vote. The board discussed that if there were regular LTO meetings parking issues could be discussed/resolved. T. Danzy suggested trainings/resident meetings to reinforce importance/benefits of the LTO – and to perhaps include training costs in the budget.
  - i. P. Orenstein asked T. Danzy about installing a ring camera – T. Danzy replied she has to review the information P. Orenstein provided. P. Orenstein emphasized the need to move forward and T. Danzy stated it could be included in the budget and installed in the spring – and asked about installing in multiple sites. P. Orenstein stated it would be a phased approach to purchase one camera initially for the Flag Rock parking lot/entrance and phase two would be an assessment if what is needed and potentially to expand to other properties. T. Danzy suggested it is a testing/pilot site so there is no fair housing issue. E. Mooney suggested budgeting for all sites – P. Orenstein replied more information is needed as the items are costly.
- b. Warrant signing – Potential board vote. E. Mooney asked T. Danzy about addressing warrants on Tuesday as there is one outstanding set for November – and any checks to be signed can be done this week.

#### V. LTO Report – No report was provided.

VI. Minutes Discussion – J. Grogan stated Stacy Ostrow has agreed to do meeting minutes from recordings for \$20.00 per hour - and will start immediately.

J. Grogan made a motion to hire Stacy Ostrow at \$20.00 per hour; T. Blauvelt seconded. J. Grogan asked for any discussion – P. Orenstein stating Stacy would provide draft minutes to J. Grogan and they can be edited at the meetings. It was agreed draft minutes would be shared with T. Danzy. Roll call vote: T. Blauvelt, “aye,” J. Grogan, “aye,” E. Mooney, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 4-0.

J. Grogan made a motion to terminate the agreement with minute taker Debbie Brazie; E. Mooney seconded. J. Grogan asked for any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: T. Blauvelt, “aye,” J. Grogan, “aye,” E. Mooney, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 4-0.

#### VII. Citizen Speak – No citizens asked to speak

#### VIII. Board Comments – There were not comments from the board

IX. Adjournment – J. Grogan made a motion to adjourn; E. Mooney seconded. J. Grogan adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at 12:07pm.

#### Documents Reviewed

- GBHA policies

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Ostrow