

Great Barrington Housing Authority Minutes  
Thursday, September 29, 2022

I. Call to Order: Attendance Roll Call - Chairman John Grogan opened the meeting via Zoom at 11:00am with a roll call: John Grogan, "aye," Eileen Mooney, "aye," Philip Orenstein, "aye." Absent: Tom Blauvelt

II. Policy Discussion and Revision - Potential Board vote.

- A. J. Grogan stated he had reached out to three local housing authorities asking for a copy of their policies, but had not received a response. He stated he received from DHCD a list of suggested policies – and would forward that to the board. He noted GBHA does not have all of DHCD's suggested policies and has some they do not.
- B. P. Orenstein stated that at a high level the board should assess how GBHA policies align with DHCD requirements. He also asked to see a copy of GBHA's tenant lease agreement to ensure consistency with the policies - and noted the existing policy duplicates some lease provisions, just in more simplified language. He stated there is a model lease agreement on DHCD's website which should be compared with GBHA's. It was confirmed that Executive Director, Tina Danzy, would be asked for a blank GBHA lease agreement and P. Orenstein will send the DHCD sample to the board. P. Orenstein also raised the question what the policies should cover and who is the audience – he noted currently, matters such as tenant expectations and accounting procedures are both covered – and stated perhaps the later should be in a different document. J. Grogan stated DHCD has the following policy categories: applicant and tenant, housing authority staff, buildings and permits, administration and finance – which the board agreed is a good construct.
- C. J. Grogan commented that the policies read as if they were written in response to specific situations and stated policies and bylaws are more overarching governing documents. P. Orenstein commented there should be awareness that policies are to some degree aspirational, but also need to be practical based on capacity.
- D. J. Grogan noted that overtime the GBHA board's authority has been diminished in favor of a stronger Executive Director/administration. E. Mooney provided an historical perspective regarding the evolution of the balance of authority/responsibility/influence of the Executive Director, accounting/finance and the board - and the financial management and process questions raised at various junctures. J. Grogan noted this reinforces the need for effective policies and to clarify it is within the board's purview. P. Orenstein stated board responsibilities are outlined in DHCD materials including oversight of financial matters. J. Grogan added areas of responsibilities are policy, financial, legal matters and employment/ oversight of the Executive Director – and that is law. P. Orenstein added one general objective is to reset/improve fundamental relationships of Board and Executive Director and Executive Director and tenants – though not a policy matter.
- E. The board discussed the process for reviewing the existing policies and agreed that in the next two weeks the board should review the policies assigned and identify those GBHA does not, but should have; what existing policies are no longer needed or can be combined with other policies; and any revisions that should be made. J. Grogan will collect all materials and E. Mooney offered to make edits. It was noted that the policies should be digitized. It was also discussed that at the board's last meeting it was stated T. Danzy did not need to attend this meeting – and the board agreed T. Danzy should review the final edited version of the policies for real world applicability. E. Mooney also stated the LTO should be kept informed and can give input on policies, but there is no right to approve.

- F. The board discussed elements of a personnel policy that should include a code of conduct for everyone involved in the GBHA. It was discussed and clarified that certain provisions of a personnel policy is actually mandated by state/federal law – such as nondiscrimination, so it need not be described in detail in the policy – only referred in terms of GBHA’s commitment to adhering to those laws. P. Orenstein stated similarly, there is a rent collection policy, which is in the lease, so the policy should just reference the lease – though he added perhaps key lease provisions in simple language should be included for clarity.
- G. The board discussed several policies that had multiple versions such as pet policies and others that were vague and confusing such as the grievance procedures. E. Mooney stated tenants do not raise grievances because they do not understand the policy/process. The board also agreed that if a board member is contacted directly with a grievance or otherwise, the person should be referred to the Executive Director.
- H. The board agreed to meet on October 13 to continue this discussion and to review assigned policies according to these categories: keep the policy and make edits; eliminate the policy as it is covered by law; combine the policy with another; and a policy needs to be created. It was also agreed edits should be sent to J. Grogan and editing should be done in advance, not during meetings.

III. Citizen Speak: No citizens asked to speak

IV. Board Comments

- A. E. Mooney asked J. Grogan to remove “draft” from the April 13 minutes.

IX. Adjournment - J. Grogan made a motion to adjourn; E. Mooney seconded. Roll call vote: J. Grogan, “aye,” E. Mooney, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 12:05pm.

Documents Reviewed

- GBHA policies

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Ostrow