

APPROVED
GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY
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BOARD MEETING
Great Barrington Housing Authority Board of Commissioners
Tuesday, September 17, 2019
Meeting held at Community Room, 2 Bernard Gibbons Drive

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

Administration: Tina Danzy, Executive Director, Madonna Meagher, Assistant to the Executive Director

CALL TO ORDER

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

Acting Chair Mercer made an introductory statement about Robert F. Kennedy. When dealing with difficult issues, RFK suggested a lantern approach where we shed light on the issues.

MINUTES – August 6, 2019, August 16, 2019, September 10, 2019

In an initial statement, Mooney complimented the drafting of HA board minutes from Assistant to the Director Meagher as she has had limited experience with taking minutes of meetings. Mooney stated that the previous draft minutes were surprisingly well done. Mooney then suggested additions and corrections to the minutes of August 6, 2019

Mooney made a motion to have amended minutes and have them brought back and reviewed in October meeting.

Dillion seconded motion.

Unanimous approval via roll call vote. 8/6/19 minutes continue to be unapproved.

August 16, 2019 minutes:

Mercer made a motion to approve the minutes. Seconded by Dillon Unanimous approval via roll call vote.

September 10, 2019

Discussion ensued about amending the minutes to include reference to an alleged racial slur Ms. Sinico stated at the meeting. Ms. Mooney wanted the word “unverified” to read “notarized”. regarding the statement Ms. Sinico read from former housing authority director Vera Cartier. The document was not reviewed by the board at the Sept. 10th meeting and so could not be verified by the board that it was signed by Vera Cartier and notarized. Mooney stated that she would not vote to approve the minutes of September 10, 2019 without the changes. No motion was made, and the minutes were passed over and left unapproved until the October 15th board meeting.

Acting Chair Mercer reported that a letter had been sent to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) requesting they act to fill a vacant seat on the GBHA board. The letter suggested that either the BOS advertise or appoint the 5th member. Discussion ensued about the process of selecting a person to fill the empty board seat. Acting Chair Mercer stated the State legislation for having a Local Tenant’s Organization (LTO) members be placed on the board has not been finalized. Ms. Mooney suggested otherwise. Acting Chair Mercer stated that the Housing Authority is well represented by town elected officials Mooney and Sinico who also are tenants at Flag Rock. He suggested that filling the 5th seat on the board might be well served if the position was opened to all candidates, not just a small tenant pool.

Mooney made a motion to elect a Local Tenant Organization (LTO) representative to the board temporarily. Sinico seconded the motion. Mooney aye, Sinico aye, Dillon nay, Mercer nay

MOTION FAILS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Executive Director Danzy reported that the state required recertifications for all tenants is now $\frac{1}{2}$ done. Karen Lewis continues to assist in processing forms and finalizing with tenant signatures. The rent delinquencies is under \$1500 for the month of August. With the early departure of bookkeeper Claire Richards, Assistant to the Director, Meagher and Executive Director Danzy keep accounts payable moving along. In terms of vacancies, there are three apartments to be filled at Brookside. CHAMPS database with applicants has been pulled and packets sent out to thirty people for their response. Dewey has one apartment vacant but is being held open due to termite damage being addressed. Flagrock family will be having a vacancy in October. All the locks were changed at Dewey.

A Performance Management Review (PMR) visit from the State occurred on August 8th. Laura Taylor, Bureau Director at DHCD's Bureau of Housing Management, along with Sarah O'Leary, Regional Attorney Project Coordinator, Carolina Gonzalez, Housing Management Specialist and Bruce Burdick, Lead Facilities Management Specialist visited random units on the properties, reviewed inspection reports, reviewed tenant files in the office and met with Executive Director Danzy. Laura Taylor specifically expressed her satisfaction to Executive Director Danzy with how the Housing Authority is currently being operated under her leadership. They mentioned, in a group meeting how impressed they were with rent collections and that that was a major improvement from previous years.

Executive Director Danzy will meet with a Lean Program representative from National Grid to assess energy savings measures on three sites. A capital needs 5 year plan with RCAT is being worked on. Porch repair/painting for Brookside has been moved to FY 2020 as well as flooring replacement. Flagrock and Brookside unit inspections have been completed. Dewey will be next for inspections with the elderly units inspected on 10/3 and the family units on 10/24. Executive Director Danzy is working with a new information technology (IT) specialist. There will be a focus on upgrading internet service at all properties with hot spots so maintenance can use the ipads to enter work orders and follow up on completions in real time. An upgrade in the phone system is badly needed. Power washing has been done to many units during the summer. There is more to be done.

The staff continues to receive training for the PHA system that is used for all accounting and work orders. Executive Director Danzy and Assistant Meagher attended a free RCAT facilities tracking training session in Holyoke. Assistant Meagher attended the facilities training in Holyoke and Assistant Meagher completed training in the state CHAMPS system. Executive Director Danzy will also attend an occupancy training on October 30th.

Executive Director Danzy stated the DHCD fee accountant, Sue Honeycutt provided the 1st quarter report and the July monthly financial report was in the handouts for the board. Honeycutt is also working on August financials. A \$400 fee from the DHCD accounting firm was explained by Executive Director Danzy. The fee represented accounting work that had been associated with Dewey property. The accounting firm had not been charging for their work when the property changed over to GBHA authority but now that it's established the fee is being charged. Executive Director Danzy also reported that the Berkshire Bank account for GBHA had a balance of \$71,158 with about \$18,000 in outstanding checks. The Dewey account had a balance of \$47,648.

Entertaining questions from the board, Executive Director Danzy fielded Ms. Mooney questions about the status of security deposits for tenants. Executive Director Danzy stated it was up to the board to set a policy about collecting security deposits.

Mooney made a motion to have security deposits discussion at the October board meeting. No one seconded the motion

Motion Failed

Continuing on her line of questions for the Executive Director Danzy, Ms. Mooney focused on the housing authority having a maintenance plan both short term and long term. Discussion ensued regarding maintenance supervisor, Rich Phair meeting with RCAT for long term capital projects.

Mooney made a motion to discuss having a maintenance plan provided at the October board meeting. No second to the motion.

Motion Failed

Mooney continued questioning Executive Director Danzy regarding the GBHA financials and specifically her [Mooney's] dissatisfaction with the accounting firm Fenton Ewald & Associates. Mooney reported she had been in contact with the accounting firm for answers to her many questions which left her very troubled and unsatisfied. Discussion ensued about specific accounting fees, warrants and invoices that Mooney questioned, Acting Chair Mercer spoke in favor of keeping Fenton, Ewald as the fiscal year

is now half over and changing in mid stream might create problems. He reminded the board that the firm had been the accountant for GBHA for over twenty years and are familiar with the scope of what GBHA handles financially every day. Acting Chair Mercer suggested that the board consider a review of Fenton, Ewald in the new year. Ms Sinico also had questions about specific checks being written by the administration.

OLD BUSINESS

Acting Chair Mercer, recognizing that once again, the board would be dead-locked with a divided 2/2 board vote, election of officers was passed over.

NEW BUSINESS

Acting Chair Mercer reached out to a local organization, Multicultural Bridge that focuses on diversity training. No dates are scheduled but he will get back to the board and the public would also be welcome to attend. Additionally, there is also going to be an Open Meeting Law training session for board members and the public but has yet to be scheduled. Executive Director Danzy stated she had some dates for the training session but needed to hear from the board which would be optimal. Regarding the Executive Director performance review, Ms. Mooney had comments that focused on having the board review [Danzy's] job performance in October; Tina Danzy's contract expires on March 31, 2020.

Mooney made a motion to have a review of the Executive Director either in open or executive session in early October. Sinico seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Mooney aye, Sinico aye, Dillon nay, Mercer nay
Motion Fails

LOCAL TENANTS ORGANIZATION (LTO)

LTO President, Marlene Koloski disagreed with Acting Chairman Mercer's previous statement and commented negatively on his comments earlier in the meeting regarding adding a 5th person to the board. Discussion ensued about tenant representation, Dewey/Sheffield representation, and having the Great Barrington BOS advertise for someone to serve. Ms. Koloski reported that the LTO Memorandum of Understanding was still not signed and was in the hands of the GBHA attorney.

BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Sinico asked for correspondence from the September 10th board meeting. Ms. Mooney stated she had made another records request with the State for information on legal invoices that have been paid by the GBHA. In a larger context, Ms. Mooney had presented a two page list detailing her concerns about the GBHA administration.

CITIZEN SPEAK

Flag Rock Tenant, Jane Greene read a statement of concern about the GBHA. She would like: civility among all board members, better channels for sharing information between board members, adding a 5th board member, putting tenants as a priority not "business is business" attitude, being watchful of money spent on lawyers, and additional friendliness and caring from GBHA employees. Flag Rock tenant, Mary Warford had concerns about the requirements the DHCD needed to have current bank statements as part of the recertification process.

NEXT MEETING: October 15TH 2PM CLAIRE TEAGUE SENIOR CENTER

ADJOURNMENT

Mercer made a motion, seconded by Dillon to adjourn the meeting at 3:27 PM. Unanimous approval.

Documents reviewed: Agenda, Minutes of August 6, 2019, August 16, 2019, September 10, 2019. Mission Statement, Contract for Accounting Services, Proposed website description of GBHA and Communication Policy drafted by Eileen Mooney, PHA accounts payable and liability details report, Fenton, Ewald & Associates end of 1st Quarter FY 20 report, Fenton Ewald & Associates July budget report. Mooney list of warrant questions, Mercer letter to GT Barrington selectboard.

Respectfully submitted,

Madonna Meagher