

GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY  
Thursday March 16, 2023

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. Also present: Executive Director Tina Danzy and staff Madonna Meagher.

II. FEE ACCOUNTANT RFP RESPONSES: Potential Board votes. J. Grogan stated there was one complete reply to the RFP and two others who responded. The candidate, Katie Brelsford, KB Accounting, was in attendance to take questions. T. Danzy inquired about her experience overall and in working with housing authorities – K. Brelsford replied she has done extensive accounting work with agencies/non-profits especially in education and travel/tourism managing finances and grant funding. She continued to state she most recently worked at 1Bershire and they are now a client. Her company started in 2021 and she currently has 15 clients – and she is bringing in a second bookkeeper. T. Danzy stated the DHCD accounting system features are very different because of regulations – K. Brelsford stated she has used government systems in the past and is interested in learning. T. Danzy confirmed she would be willing to come to Board meetings to cover quarterly reports and year-end, would help with budgeting and be available for questions as they arise. Regarding fees, K. Brelsford stated everything is included in the monthly fee quoted knowing some months would be busier than others - and noted it would be appropriate to reevaluate after three months regarding time commitment and it can be adjusted. There was a discussion about current fees and the proposed fees - T. Danzy stated K. Brelsford’s proposal is considerably more and stated the current accountant fees is \$1,030 per month and an additional \$1,500 for mod reports which is reimbursed by DHCD. She noted \$12,732 is budgeted for the year. P. Orenstein noted there would be a learning curve to use DHCD system – K. Brelsford replied she has used many systems and would not charge GBHA for time spent learning the system. E. Mooney stated M. Meagher does the basic bookkeeping, inputting invoices, check writing, etc. and asked if K. Brelsford picked it up at that point would that change the fees – K. Brelsford replied yes, that would reduce it \$600 per month. It was confirmed she has experience working with Adirondack for payroll and it was discussed she could do payroll using Quickbooks, but the additional fee vs outsourcing could be equivalent. K. Brelsford was asked to provide a reference from 1Berkshire.

J. Grogan made a motion to hire K. Brelsford/KB Accounting to provide accounting services as proposed and for hours to be reevaluated after three months. P. Orenstein asked for additional discussion. J. Grogan rescinded his motion.

It was discussed whether there are other options for accounting services and if Fenton Ewald would consider staying on, perhaps with another accountant serving GBHA. It was clarified that there has been no follow up with Teresa Ewald and that the original intention was just to reevaluate accounting services not necessarily change firms. J. Grogan noted there had been extensive research/outreach to identify potential accountants and despite repeated follow up, only one serious response was received from K. Brelsford. T. Danzy stated she would prefer to continue with Fenton Ewald and reaching out to Teresa Ewald was discussed.

J. Grogan made a motion to give permission for P. Orenstein to speak with Teresa Ewald and report back to the Board within two weeks; E. Mooney seconded. J. Grogan asked for any discussion – Jackie Sinico, tenant, stated the fiscal year is ending soon. It was stated that a special meeting would likely be required to discuss the matter. Roll call vote: J. Grogan, “aye,” E. Mooney, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0. J. Grogan stated he would call K. Brelsford to update her on the process.

III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Financials, vacancies, maintenance, legal and other updates.

A. Financials, vacancies, maintenance, legal and other - T. Danzy stated the bank balance is \$161,462 and that four vacant units have been filled since last meeting, but another family unit was abandoned this weekend. She noted cleanup/renovation is ongoing to get units ready.

Regarding legal matters, T. Danzy stated several family units are in court pending return and tenants are either getting outside funding, a payment schedule or will be facing eviction.

She also noted tenants are working with Karen Lewis, Resident Services Coordinator, and referrals are at an all-time high.

T. Danzy asked residents to clean snow off their cars so parking lots can be cleared. Regarding water distribution,

T. Danzy reported DHCD will allow a concession for water just so GBHA confirms every one to two months it is still needed – she added it costs DHCD \$1,000 per month for the concession. She also stated she talked to Town Manager, Mark Pruhenski, who stated up to \$250,000 will likely be available to benefit Housatonic customers – P. Orenstein added it is unconfirmed how the funds will be distributed. J. Grogan asked how much GBHA is being billed by Housatonic Water Works – T. Danzy replied \$1,290 per month total for senior housing which is one bill; family units are billed individually.

T. Danzy stated the Pet Policy has gone out and tenants are responding and noted there will be signage for the designated area for elimination.

T. Danzy reported she sent Western MA Executive Director Association scholarship forms to tenants for college bound students – and forms should be returned to her to send to the organization.

E. Mooney asked about mold complaint from a former tenant seeking up to \$100,000 – T. Danzy replied there are no updates from the attorney.

E. Mooney asked about the status of the pilot program – T. Danzy replied GBHA has not been billed by GB or Sheffield and when a bill is received, it will get paid. E. Mooney expressed concern about it not getting payment resolved.

P. Orenstein confirmed the reduction in the reserve is due to vacancies as they need a lot of work –

T. Danzy explained there is a lot of damage to units especially those housing long-time residents.

T. Danzy stated all warrants and invoices are available the Tuesday after the Board meeting at 1:00pm for Board signature and to view timesheets - or another time as needed. E. Mooney asked to see invoices and warrants at check signing time as well as timesheets – it was agreed that when J. Grogan comes in to sign checks, E. Mooney will accompany him to review items.

B. Bad Debt Write off discussion. Potential Board votes. T. Danzy asked for Board approval for the write off of regular uncollectable rents of \$4,785.42 for this fiscal year. She also asked for approval of an additional write off due to fraud of \$10,933 which should have been collected based on undisclosed income – she added it was on contingency to pay, some money was paid, but the person vacated. E Mooney asked if this has gone to court – T. Danzy replied there is an attempt to collect when tenants are living here via a court ordered payment arrangement. She noted that in this situation GBHA would have to cover legal fees, and the rent money is unlikely to ever be collected – she clarified it is new policy that housing authorities pay legal fees other than in special circumstances and she will be talking to DHCD attorney Sarah O'Leary next week to better understand it. She noted the person will be in the system so nonpayment will appear if they apply to another housing authority. She also noted that if the funds were ever collected it would be split 50/50 with DHCD. P. Orenstein asked about the Bad Debt Policy which states amounts owed \$2000 and over should be filed in district court – T. Danzy stated the fraud debt is two years old – P. Orenstein asked that go forward the age of the debt be provided. E. Mooney asked for additional information on collection attempts.

J. Grogan made a motion to write off \$4,785.42 and \$10,933 as bad debt; P. Orenstein seconded. J. Grogan asked for any additional discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: J. Grogan, “aye,” E. Mooney, “no,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” Motion tentatively passed 2-1. J. Grogan will check quorum rules regarding votes.

C. Cell phone reimbursement for staff. Potential Board votes. T. Danzy explained the staff use their personal cell phones for work and DHCD will reimburse for work related cell usage – it is up to each housing authority to decide to do so. She continued to state cell phones are used frequently to discuss business during work hours and after. She added that if video cameras are added, they can be viewed on phones via an app. She proposed cell phone reimbursement for five staff for total \$250 per month. It was confirmed there is no way to verify the exact amount of usage.

J. Grogan made a motion to reimburse each staff member \$50 per month for use of personal cell phones on the job; P. Orenstein seconded. J. Grogan asked for any discussion – J. Sinico asked why for five people – only T. Danzy and Rick Phair need access to video. E. Mooney stated it should not be for every month. P. Orenstein confirmed DHCD would approve incremental compensation to staff and the Board can authorize - he noted he would support if we are confident this is consistent with what other housing authorities do – T. Danzy replied it is done in Stockbridge, but we never have. J. Grogan suggested tabling the motion to double check with other housing authorities as it is a change in compensation policy and the Board needs to be informed. J. Grogan withdrew his motion.

D. Video update. Potential Board votes. T. Danzy described a proposed plan to purchase two cameras for each site and to use a memory chip for images - and she has checked with Kenneth Longo re: IT needed. P. Orenstein suggested using the cloud for storing images and that is included in the estimate he submitted. T. Danzy stated she would check into it further.

#### IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Executive Director Contract renewal. Potential Board votes. J. Grogan stated T. Danzy’s contract renewal is in the packet – it is a DHCD template and he filled in the details – it is for three years. E. Mooney stated she was told DHCD has nothing to do with hiring – J. Grogan replied they sent him the template.

E. Mooney made a motion to continue T. Danzy’s contract for three months – she added that there are aspects of her performance that should improve including response to information requests and the waiver. There was no second.

J. Grogan made a motion to renew T. Danzy’s employment contract as submitted to the Board using the DHCD form; P. Orenstein seconded. J. Grogan asked for any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: J. Grogan, “aye,” E. Mooney, “no,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” Motion tentatively passed 2-1. J. Grogan will check quorum rules regarding votes.

B. Pet Policy Questions. Potential Board votes. E. Mooney confirmed seniors do not have to use the designated area if it cannot be accessed due to snow or otherwise.

C. Flag Rock Centralized water filter - seek estimates for potential town/grant-financed fix. Potential long term solutions to HWW problems. Potential Board votes. P. Orenstein asked about installing a water filter on the main rather than in each unit – T. Danzy stated there are three different pipes so it is not easy. She also clarified the Town is considering funds per customer and the senior building is considered one customer. P. Orenstein stated it might be wise to get a an estimate so we are ready to submit a request to the Town when the time comes. T. Danzy stated she would ask R. Phair to do.

E. Mooney made a motion to get estimates from the contractor for central water filters for the senior building and family units; P. Orenstein seconded. J. Grogan asked for any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: J. Grogan, “aye,” E. Mooney, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

D. Modular housing to build onsite: investigating avenues to “right-size” smaller family households. J. Grogan asked that this item be tabled for another meeting. E. Mooney asked him to provide some information – he replied this is a concept for modular housing at Flag Rock for people who are not seniors, but do not require a large unit. E. Mooney replied the Affordable Housing Trust is also interested in this.

#### V. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Policy readings - Second Readings - Reasonable Accommodation - Potential Board vote. T.

Danzy stated this is a state form – she and J. Grogan made some edits, but any thing additional would need legal approval. E. Mooney commented it is very long. P. Orenstein stated the policy is hard to understand and asked that K. Lewis help people work through it.

J. Grogan made a motion to approve the Reasonable Accommodation Policy as presented; P. Orenstein seconded. J. Grogan asked for any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: J. Grogan, “aye,” E. Mooney, “aye,” P. Orenstein, “aye.” All in favor: 3-0.

VI. LTO REPORT: Marlene Kolowski. LTO lead stated an LTO meeting will be scheduled for early April and board positions will be discussed. She stating she would be coming out of the LTO role soon. She also recommended replacing tubs with walk in showers in Brookside in the senior units as they turnover. The Board was supportive of the idea and agreed to add it to the next meeting agenda.

VII. Minute Review/Approval Board Meeting of February, 2023 - No minutes were reviewed.

#### VIII. CITIZEN SPEAK:

A. M. Kolowski stated cats are being let outside and asked when the owners would get written up – T. Danzy replied they have 60 days to become compliant and then a write up can be done.

#### IX. BOARD COMMENTS

A. E. Mooney asked that K. Lewis add her name to her reports.

X. ADJOURNMENT - J. Grogan made a motion to adjourn; P. Orenstein 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 1:20pm.

Documents reviewed: Financials, bad debt worksheet, Executive Director employment contract.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Ostrow