

GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY
Regular Meeting In-person at Flag Rock Village
Common Room 2 Bernard Gibbons Dr., Housatonic. MA
Wednesday, December 13, 2023

- I. CALL TO ORDER: Attendance Roll Call. Chairman John Grogan opened the meeting at 11:30 a.m. with Board members John Grogan, Eileen Mooney, Phil Orenstein, Jackie Sinico, and Maureen Meier present. Also present: Executive Director Tina Danzy, Assistant to Director Madonna Meagher, Hugh McKay of the Regional Capital Assistance Team (via Zoom), Maintenance Person Tim O'Neil: LTO president Marlene Koloski; tenants Ann Pruhenski, Rosemary Besancon, Lynn Nemec, and a few others.
- II. BOARD VOTE: Phil Orenstein made a motion to approve the Annual Plan as presented at the Public Hearing immediately prior to the Regular Meeting. Jackie Sinico seconded the motion. The Board voted 5-0 to approve.
- III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:
 1. BOARD VOTE: Tina D. requested that the Board consider and approve the disbursement of \$12,935.00 to D.Clark & Son Excavation for the completion of the ramp project at Brookside. John G. made a motion to approve. Phil O. seconded, asking whether the amount was the same as initially approved. Tina D. confirmed the amount was a combination of the initial contract plus a change order to add four ramps. The Board voted 5-0 to approve.
 2. VACANCIES: Tina reported that there are currently five vacant units, two of which need extensive work. Applicants from the waitlist have been approved for three of the units, all expected in by January 1st.
 3. GRIEVANCE HEARING: Upon request of the LTO, a Dec.12th interview with a grievance officer was scheduled by the GBHA staff. At the request of the LTO, the meeting was cancelled. The officer volunteered to reschedule after the holidays, and requested some general information as to the nature of the grievance in advance.
 4. HOLIDAY PARTY: The Annual Holiday party is scheduled for Dec.20th from 1:00 to 3:30, and tenants and board members alike are encouraged to attend and to help spread the word about the party.
 5. MAINTENANCE STAFFING: Maintenance staff, challenged with keeping up since the medical leave of Rick Phair, thanks Tim O. for his service, and welcomes the part-time addition of Cathy Anne Madison after months of advertising the position to no avail.

6. EXTRAORDINARY MAINTENANCE: Tina D. asked that the Board and residents propose some possible future projects in the event that the money budgeted for Extraordinary Maintenance is not required to pay for any “big-ticket” emergency items, such as the recent elevator repair and the emergency water damage repair. Jackie S. mentioned the importance of sealing the decks and railings on a regular basis. Maureen M. asked whether power washing was a scheduled part of regular maintenance. Tina D. explained that these tasks could be accomplished by an expanded maintenance staff going forward.
6. PORTION OF SETTLEMENT OWED: Tina D. reported that the GBHA will pay \$3,000 from its current Extraordinary Maintenance Budget to the EOHLC Risk Management Fund to settle a civil suit with a total cost of \$35,000. Eileen M. requested a copy of the settlement agreement. Phil O. concurred that it would be wise for the Board to review the agreement in order to ascertain whether we might better protect the GBHA from such claims in the future.
7. VACATION: Tina D. will take vacation from Jan.3rd to Jan.11th.
8. WATER RELIEF EXEMPTION. Tina D. announced that as the end of the fiscal year on March 31st, EOHLC will discontinue the \$20 water relief exemption. Tina D. requested that the board vote to end the credit stipend at that time, but as the vote was not on the agenda, the matter was tabled to a future meeting.

IV. CITIZEN SPEAK:

1. Marlene K. asked what flooring would be put down in the Common Room at Flag Rock. Tina D. said that some type of floating floor would be best so that cleaning and maintenance would be relatively simple.
2. Lynn N. mentioned observing a resident discarding cat litter into a dumpster by pouring it in without any type of bag or containment.
3. Jackie S. noted that there was a pile of excrement in the vicinity of the elevator that needed to be removed.
4. Phil O. (Board Member) inquired as to whether the security camera was working. Tina D. said yes, and Madonna M. offered an anecdote resulting in a tenant (seen on camera) being reminded of a broken bag, resulting in proper disposal.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Next meeting date was set for January 24th at 1:00 p.m. at the Flagrock.Common Room.
2. Regarding the writing of meeting minutes going forward, Maureen M. volunteered to provide them. Maureen M. asked to be appointed secretary, and all agreed to discuss and vote on the appointment at the next meeting.

3. John G. introduced the topic of choosing and Executive Director evaluation instrument for the coming year. Jackie S. expressed disappointment in the survey process used in the past. John G. disagreed, and felt it was an effective tool. Phil O. proposed that Board members provide written assessments. John G. proposed that Board members go door to door for interviews, but Eileen M. felt that some tenants would be reluctant to respond candidly. Jackie S. and Eileen M. claimed that a prior survey contained coding which violated the anonymity of the survey. John G. halted the conversation on this subject, wanting to focus instead on what could be done going forward. John offered to draft an instrument for the Board to use, and stated that there would be no tenant survey. No vote was taken.

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

1. On the subject of defibrillators, John G. reported having found grant money available on the Mass.gov website, but we had missed the November 17th deadline. John G. reported his own ongoing exploration of other options, and Maureen M. volunteered to contact the Berkshire Taconic Foundation to see if any money might be available.
2. On the subject of railing repair, a couple of options were mentioned, including: covering the rail with materials donated by Sheffield Plastics, and detaching and reversing the top board to expose the unworn surface. Tim O. agreed to attempt the removal and to explore other options prior to the next meeting.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION CANCELLED:

Tina D. expressed a desire to continue in Open Session for any discussion of the complaints about office staff made at the October 25th Regular Meeting. John G. agreed that Tina has a right to make that request.

Tina D. expressed frustration that the October 25th meeting happened in spite of her absence. In addressing the LTO's written report, Tina noted she could refute all the charges listed if necessary, but from her perspective, the overall negative tone of the report made any real progress impossible. In addition, Tina noted that a great deal of time and energy has been spent on pursuing actions opposing her and the office in general, and pointed out that if the same amount of the time and energy could be spent working together as a team, much could be accomplished for the good of all.

Jackie S. pointed out that office staff has engaged in bullying, information which Jackie S. was providing on behalf of an unnamed tenant. Tina D. replied that if any such instance had not been previously reported to the Executive Director, it should not be discussed at a meeting of the Board.

John G. pointed out that too much focus has been given to third-person reports which are really just hearsay, and cannot be acted upon. John G. stressed the importance of factual first-person information.

Ann P. asked if someone could offer coaching on how to be sociable and how to treat others in the community. Maureen M. suggested that perhaps some of the Extraordinary Maintenance money could be used to fund some type of measure to improve relations within the community. Phil O. agreed.

Jackie S. made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which Maureen M. seconded.

Tina D. noted having received an email stating that EOHLC received a Fraud Waste and Abuse report regarding the GBHA's rent software. Eileen M. claimed that Tina D. has not adequately answered Eileen's questions about her own rent record with the housing authority. Tina pointed out that Eileen seemed unable to understand the reporting generated by the software, but that did not raise the issue to the level of reportable fraud.

John G. reiterated that a motion to adjourn had been made and seconded. The four remaining board members – Jackie S. Eileen M., Maureen M., and John G. all concurred. Meeting ended at 12:39 p.m.

Materials Distributed:

Executive Director's Meeting Packet

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Meier