

GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

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MEETING MINUTES

Great Barrington Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

Wednesday, May 23, 2018

Present: Karen Smith (via phone), James Mercer, Jackie Sinico, Diane Dillon

Administration: Vera Cartier, Karen Lewis

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Jim Mercer at 2:30PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 18, 2018

Sinico stated there was an error on the top of page 4 regarding the savings that would be incurred by changing garbage companies.

“One bid received to date would amount to \$1,000.00 in savings per year. This would also be using a local company, which the Executive Director would prefer”, **should read** “One bid received to date would amount to \$1,881.12 in savings per year. This would also be using a local company, which the Executive Director would prefer.”

Dillon made a motion, seconded by Sinico to approve the meeting minutes of April 18, 2018, as amended.

Unanimous approval.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Acceptance of Deed for Dewey Way, Sheffield, MA From Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority – Discussion and Roll Call Vote

- Vera Cartier addressed the Board – a Board vote is necessary for transference to occur. Two different roll call votes are needed. (1) to accept the deed, (2) to accept the capital plan and financing. There were (4) items requiring completion – two are already completed. Once the other two are taken care of the obligation to the state will be satisfied.
- All Board members acknowledged they had reviewed the paperwork provided.

Dillon made a motion, seconded by Smith to accept the Deed, as written and presented, for Dewey Way, Sheffield MA from Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority.

Unanimous approval via roll call vote.

- b) Acceptance of each assigned CFA (Contract for Financial Assistance), as amended, from Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority – Discussion and Roll Call Vote

Dillon made a motion, seconded by Smith to accept each assigned CFA (Contract for Financial Assistance), as amended, from Berkshire Regional Housing Authority.

- Smith has requested **within two weeks of this vote the Board receive information on what the debt is, what the balance of the reserve is, payables, vacancies, etc. Vera Cartier to provide this information to the Board.**
- Vera Cartier will be opening a separate bank account for the Sheffield property tomorrow morning, as required. Transfer is scheduled for July 1st.

Unanimous approval via roll call vote

- Smith reported she and Dillon recently attended a phone meeting with the State. The meeting was recorded and can be shared. They met with (4) people and discussed a list of deficiencies that need to be dealt with by the Authority. Some are easily remedies and some are not without the appropriate training, which was indicated to the State. Smith requested a list of the deficiencies be forwarded to the Chair and the Executive Director, to be reviewed and possible remedies discussed by the Board upon receipt.
- Issues were discussed that have nothing to do with the Authority, but have everything to do with the State not forwarding appropriate documents, such as Public Housing Announcements. The onus is on the State to do so.
- There will be an increase in revenue to the Authority this year.
- Vera Cartier will be trained on the new operating system via phone. The Authority has been told it is too far away to send a person to provide hands on training.
- Given the Authority now assuming responsibility for Dewey Way, and based on the 10-20 hours of part-time work that has been given by the Executive Director, Smith believes the Authority should be looking to the State to increase the funding since there will be over 100 units to maintain.
- There was brief discussion around re-certification and re-determinations.
- Brief mention of receiving clarification on LPO's.
- The Authority will be receiving a \$10,000 grant this year for technology. The Board should begin to study what technology purchases would be most beneficial, such as a scanner, IPADS for maintenance work orders. Possibly use these monies to develop a GBHA website. Vera Cartier stated the Authority must have a website separate from the Town of Great Barrington website. Mercer agreed. Smith stated concern that maintenance of a website is extremely expensive and the Authority does not possess anyone with the skill set required to manage a website.
- Mercer requested the Executive Director present the Board every month with a list of vacancies at the properties. In the area of receivables, he would like to see a clear cut procedure in place to deal with arranges and to bring tenants up to date with rent payments. Also would like a monthly report on debt and deficiencies the Authority is trying to catch up on. Smith agreed the Board should receive a report every month on accounts payable, accounts receivable, vacancies, etc. The new PDH software will provide these reports. The Executive Director is currently receiving training via phone on the new software and will inquire whether financial training could be provided sooner rather than later.

- Smith also believes there should be training provided for the Board so it is understood what the Board should be looking at and what reporting the State will require. This area was not clear in the training package provided to Smith, Sinico and Dillon.
- Mercer recently attended an Ethics Course in Springfield, MA and will circulate the PowerPoint presentation to Board members. He found the training very interesting.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

a) Rich Phair, Maintenance Supervisor

Rich Phair gave the following report to the Board:

- 9 month inspection took place with black top company and Thomas Boyer, Construction Advisor from DHCD.
- (1) In front of the dumpster there is “ponding” and freezing up – drain is not working. Curbing will be cut back 6” – 8” to re-pitch. This repair will have an expense associated with it. Vera Cartier stated this should have been a repair order during the original construction, but was missed. DHCD will look into the situation. **Mercer made a request that Vera Cartier follow up with Tom Boyer with a memo regarding this situation, describing what should have happened, and that it now needs to be made right.**
 - (2) Blacktop is peeling off by back door – concrete underneath was not removed as it should have been. Concrete will be removed and blacktop repaired at no cost to the Authority.
 - (3) Small area heaved this winter by office parking. Area is considered a “toe catch” and has been painted yellow for better visibility. DHCD agreed with this resolution.
- The building permit was secured for Senior Unit 109. The window and wall have been replaced and inspected. The wall has also been repaired. Flooring will be put down June 13 – 14, possibly sooner.
 - Countertops have been delivered for Unit 11. Ceiling fans have been installed and are running for air circulation. It has been noted that despite the recent rain and such, floors in the unit have stayed dry.
 - There was a recent bear problem. All but three totes were left in disarray. Maintenance has been frustrated that residents believe they should be picking up their garbage. Bundy cords have been installed on all totes, which seems to have solved the bear problem for now.
 - New washer and dryers have been installed. The old ones have been removed and picked up.
 - The truck is currently out for repair. The bed is rotting off the front of the truck. The garage is checking to see if it is a bot that has rotted, and if so, will replace it. They will check over everything. It is known that the exhaust needs to be replaced soon. The truck receives maintenance for oil change every 3,000 miles or every 6 Brakes have been replaced once.

Smith expressed her appreciation to Rich and the Maintenance Team for working so diligently to secure the building permit for replacement of the window and to get the project done, acknowledging it was a frustrating experience.

OLD BUSINESS

a) Personnel Policy – Discussion

- Smith reported the only changes that need to be made to the personnel policies going forward are cosmetic. The content of the policy meets State standards. They have also been reviewed by Vera Cartier. Debbie Brazie, Board Recorder, is also reviewing them for document format and structure. A copy has also been sent to the State with no negative feedback. Smith stated these policies will be a working document and can be amended as needed. Smith recommended the Board vote on the Personnel Policy today, effective today.

Sinico made a motion, seconded by Dillon to approve the Personnel Policy as presented.

Unanimous approval via roll call vote.

b) Job Descriptions – Discussion

- Smith reported she took what was included in the original documents and conducted research online for the positions of Maintenance Assistant, Maintenance Supervisor, Administrative Assistant and Executive Director. Changes that were believed to be prudent were incorporated into each job description, and all were submitted to the Executive Director for review. Vera Cartier stated she has reviewed the job descriptions with staff and has posted them on the Community Room Bulletin Board. Smith believes these descriptions are an excellent starting point.

Sinico made a motion, seconded by Dillon to approve the Job Descriptions as presented.

Unanimous approval via roll call vote.

c) Energy Audit – Mass Save and DHCD

- The executive Director reports Mass Save just called her back today after numerous attempts to reach them via phone and email. Both Brookside and Flag Rock are now enrolled. It will be two weeks before an assessment of the properties can take place.
- DHCD stated they would assist with any costs related to energy savings. Smith reported it has been learned that DHCD provides energy audits. Smith would like to see the Authority work with Mass Save, DHCD and use the Diego lighting report – compile all the information received and move on from there. It would be best to get as much feedback as to energy saving options as possible.
- DHCD has suggested possibly using limiters within units to assist in cost savings in regard to heat. The Authority's energy costs are currently out of line.
- Diego, Ed May and the Fire Chief all concur the lights are too bright and there is too much differential between inside and outside lighting. The Board will evaluate once all information for all available areas is received.

FINANCIAL UPDATES

Mercer recommended this item be postponed until the June meeting to give the Executive Director time to be trained on the software and to be able to develop the appropriate reports. The financial section of the software should be the first section she is trained on.

RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARDS – Flag Rock Village and Brookside Manor

Marlene Koloski reported the following:

- A cookout at Flag Rock will be held this coming Sunday from 1 to 5. A big turnout is expected.
- A meeting will be held tomorrow night regarding the tag sale.
- Garden boxes are moving along well. Boxes have been made – (10) tenants are using them.
- Smith inquired whether any tenant issues have been raised? Koloski stated within the family units a few residents do not seem to want to pick up their garbage that the bear has strewn around. It is unfair to Rich and his crew to have to do so. Dillon inquired whether residents have been spoken to about this. Yes, they have been spoken to and have agreed to comply.
- There has been no update on the wipe situation. The Town has sent out a communication, which Vera has been distributing to tenants as well. Continue to educate.

CITIZEN SPEAK

Jane Greene addressed the Board. She stated in the three years she has resided at Flag Rock Village, she is happy to have a Director and Board working together in a professional manner. For the first time she feels secure. Thank you to Jackie Sinico for the beautiful plantings around the property. She also commended Rich and his crew for being patients and doing a commendable job. She also thanked the Assistant Chairperson of the Resident Advisory Committee for working so hard on the resident cookout and tag sale.

Marlene Koloski inquired how many people are currently living in units that are not included on the current lease of that unit. And why can't anyone do something about this? Mercer has been discussing this with the Executive Director – this will be part of the re-certification process. There are units that have numerous people in and out, but deny additional people are living there.

Smith requested written statements from neighbors if they believe they are witnessing people who are not on a lease living in a unit. All information will be kept private. Written documentation of what is being observed, and when it is being observed, will assist in remedying these situations.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT – Waiting List Review, Trash Cans, Annual Inspections and Re-Certifications, Laundry Presentation, Pet Policy

- The Executive Director reported the State has mandated every family unit requires a dehumidifier in the unit. Budgeted bid of \$35,292 was under-estimated. Two bids have been received with the lowest being \$49,529. DCHD has provided email confirmation to the Executive Director that they approve and to move forward with the project. The Board must approve and sign off on the dehumidifier project.

- Rich verified that all units incur some kind of moisture. Some units could be handled with ceiling fans to promote air movement and air conditioning, but this de-humidifier project is mandatory for all family units. Some family units have already been updated with de-humidifiers.

Dillon made a motion, seconded by Sinico to approve acceptance of the bid received for \$49,529.00 for the de-humidification project, with DHCD paying the total cost for the project and no further cost to the Housing Authority.

3 members voted approval via roll call vote.

Smith abstained.

Smith stated she has chosen to abstain from the vote since this is the first she is hearing of these numbers. Information regarding this bid and DHCD response regarding this bid was not provided to the Board prior to the meeting. It is recognized that this type of information needs to be provided to Board members prior to a meeting so everyone is prepared to discuss and vote in an informed manner.

Waiting List

Executive Director updated the Board with the following statistics:

115 waiting for (1) bedroom
85 waiting for (2) bedroom
42 waiting for bedroom
12 waiting for (4) bedroom

Numerous calls are received on a daily basis from those who are on waiting lists inquiring where they are at on that list. They are told by family or friends that there is an open unit and the phone calls begin. The waiting list grows on a daily basis. Applicants do not understand the process.

Applicants complete either a standard or emergency application. Applications are available at the office, can be mailed to them, or can be found on the Town of Great Barrington website.

Possibly this is an area that could be delegated to the Administrative Assistant. Smith requested there be a one-page policy stating how the waiting list works that would be given to all applicants. Rather than a website, possibly start up a Facebook page where waiting list #'s could be viewed.

Annual Inspections and Re-certifications

Executive Director stated she and Rich will be performing inspections at Brookside next Wednesday. Next will be Flagg Rock Village Senior and Family units. Once inspections are completed re-certifications will begin.

Conditions of tenant yard will be addressed. Authority is paying for a roll off next week to assist tenants with cleaning out unwanted items. The Authority will be getting much stricter regarding the condition and appearance of yards and units.

Garbage Removal

Executive Director reported the Authority has to opportunity to save \$1,881.12 per year by switching from Republic to Roger's for garbage removal. Currently, the Authority is considered "At Will" with Republic, and would not be locked into a contract if they switched to Roger's.

Sinico made a motion, seconded by Dillon to approve switching from Republic to Roger's for garbage removal, effective immediately.

Unanimous approval.

BOARD SPEAK

No additional comment

ADJOURNMENT

Sinico made a motion, seconded by Dillon to adjourn the meeting at 3:35 PM.

Unanimous approval.

The next meeting of the Great Barrington Housing Authority Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, June 20, 2018 at 2:30 PM at Flagg Rock Village Community Room.

Respectfully submitted by:

Debra E Brazie, Recorder