

GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

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SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Great Barrington Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

Tuesday, January 25, 2019

Present: Karen Smith, James Mercer, Jackie Sinico

Administration: Tina Danzy

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Karen Smith at 5:00PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 15, 2019

Smith stated the minutes presented today are a redacted copy of the January 15, 2019 meeting – specific to the vote taken to reappoint Interim Executive Director Tina Danzy, extending her Interim role from 2/11/19 to 4/10/19.

Mercer made a motion, seconded by Sinico to approve the redacted meeting minutes of the January 15, 2019 meeting as presented.

Unanimous approval.

CITIZEN SPEAK

Michelle Loubert reported she was recording the meeting. At the January 15th meeting a new Records Access Officer was appointed by the Chair. She inquired whether Smith was still the current records officer. Smith stated she was. As of Sunday, January 27th, Board member Jackie Sinico will be the Records Access Officer. Michelle also stated on 12/20 she filed a public records request and has also filed an appeal of that request. She has spoken to the Secretary of State's office and has received a determination. She is confused – the Secretary of State instructed her to deal with the town accountants concerning the matter, but the Great Barrington Housing Authority is not through the town government. She will file an appeal regarding this as well.

In addition, Michelle Loubert stated the W-2 form she recently received from Great Barrington Housing Authority has an error on it. The figures do not agree with her final pay stub. The accountant had acknowledged there was a problem with her payroll when she was employed by GBHA, and payroll issues were noted in her resignation letter submitted in 2018. Also, it appears her personnel file is missing. As of this date Michelle has not received a corrected W-2 form. A complaint has been filed with the US Wage and Hour Division, and if a corrected W-2 form is not received soon she will also file a complaint with the IRS. This situation is affecting her family as well, and is an issue she takes very seriously. Smith responded Sue Honeycutt has been instructed to contact Michelle in regard to her

W-2. Mercer stated he is confident the accountant will follow up. Tax documents are due to employees, etc. by the end of January.

Tenant stated for the past two weeks refuse pickup has not occurred on Thursday. Has the pickup day changed? Also, they would request the Authority ask tenants to bring their refuse containers back from curb side and only bring them out on pick up day. It was noted a postcard is pinned on a bulletin board in the office regarding the change of day for refuse pick up. The matter was discussed and understood that this type of information has to be communicated to tenants.

Susan Morris – Brookside tenant – Susan stated the Brookside property is covered with peanut shells do to a current resident who is feeding squirrels. The peanut shells are all over the property and are unsightly. Smith agreed it is not a good practice to be feeding the local wildlife, especially if it is interfering with the appearance of the property. ***Smith asked Mercer to include discussion on this topic on the February meeting agenda and determine whether a specific policy is needed.***

RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARD

Marlene Koloski stated she continues her work on setting up an LTO for the tenant's association. She is working with Jack Cooper in Boston and a woman named Marguerite in Worcester. Marguerite will assist with every step of this process. Smith stated this process starts with the tenant's association, which was formed in February of last year. She understands the former President has resigned. Steps in this process include 7 day notices to tenants, a Board appointed individual to perform the election, and Smith would recommend the ballot for the election be a secret ballot. Koloski agreed. When the tenant's association is ready, Koloski will contact Danzy and Mercer. Tenants meeting has been scheduled for February 5th to discuss this. Smith recommended minutes be taken at that meeting also.

OLD BUSINESS

a) Vote on Hiring Subcommittee

A subcommittee of the Board needs to be formed around the advertisement, interview process and hiring of a permanent Executive Director.

Smith made a motion, seconded by Mercer to form a Hiring Subcommittee of the Great Barrington Housing Authority Board, appointing Mercer and Sinico as subcommittee members.

Unanimous approval.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Web access through Town of Great Barrington website

Smith stated it was mentioned at the January 15th meeting that the Great Barrington Housing Authority had a website. The Authority does not have its own website, but does have a web page on the Great Barrington Town website. Per Marie Ryan, Town Clerk for the Town of Great Barrington, the Authority is welcome to post whatever they would like to on this web page, such as the name and contact

information for the Public Records Officer, job openings, link to job application, special announcements, etc.

BOARD COMMENTS

Sinico asked to re-visit a suggestion given by the Select Board that the Authority consider the use of an intermediary. She believes there has been a loss of trust between tenants and the Board. She also feels applications for the permanent Executive Director position should be submitted somewhere other than the housing authority office so there is no question around legitimacy or how the process is done. Mercer stated he would have a problem with applications being directed anywhere other than the housing authority office. He is confident tenants do have trust in the Board. An Interim Director has been hired who has proven to be capable/responsible, and is trusted to handle the finances and invoices of the Authority. Sinico stated she disagreed and would like to see applications for the Executive Director position be submitted to the Town Managers office, as an example. Smith stated the Town of Great Barrington will not agree to that. Applications will be submitted to the GBHA office and will be filed upon receipt. If necessary, applications can be opened by both Hiring Committee members at the same time. Mercer stated the advertisement will state to address application submittals to "Hiring Subcommittee" and will be held all together in a secure place. He believes it is time for the Board and tenants to begin to rebuild positive relationships and move forward. He does not believe there is any indication there would be any problems with this process. Sinico stated she believes distrust of the Board is for good reason. She does not feel part of the Board. Smith reminded Sinico that she has had a vote and a say on every topic/issue addressed by the Board. Sinico stated she still has no idea why the former Executive Director left her position, and believes she had no choice but to do so. Smith stated this type of discussion is degrading to the efforts of others to make progress. Sinico stated 80 tenants were in favor of Smith being removed from the Board of Directors. She views that as a large trust issue. Smith stated all issues in regard to that hearing have been appropriately dealt with and are over. She believes Sinico should now focus on the Public Request Officer duties and the Hiring Subcommittee or she can continue to spit and fight. Mercer stated he believes it is time to move forward. The Hiring Subcommittee will begin the process next week.

Sinico stated she believes the office needs a qualified Administrative Assistant and not an Office Clerk. The Authority is paying another individual \$35.00 per hour to complete work the previous Administrative Assistant used to do. Smith stated the previous Administrative Assistant was never required to deal with the finances of the Authority. The new individual doing so has had to go back 18 months to reconcile unpaid invoices such as property insurance, medical insurance, etc. Old invoices were found in the Executive Director's office also. Smith reported all of this is just about caught up now.

Sinico stated she would like to see all checks that are sent out. Smith stated she does not see that as necessary. That is what the warrant documents are for, which are reviewed for accuracy. Each warrant contains vendor information and the amount paid.

Sinico inquired whether the current assistant in the office was paid mileage to travel between properties. Smith stated yes, they are reimbursed for their travel. Sinico stated she does not believe that should be so since she sees this as part of her job. Smith stated it is not the job of the Board to micro-manage these things. If this employee is asked to travel between properties by the Interim Executive Director she will be reimbursed for her mileage.

Mercer stated he will bring a document to the next Board meeting outlining the responsibilities of the Board of Directors and the responsibilities of the Executive Director. The Board oversees the Authority, but is not involved in the day to day operations. The permanent Executive Director will make the decision of who the Administrative Assistant should be. Smith stated at this point Danzy has been satisfied with her staff's performance. She has not heard anything to the contrary.

Sinico asked that her meeting packet be provided the morning of the Board meetings. She has not had enough time to review packet contents before the meeting and has found discrepancies in the minutes, such as who was speaking etc. Smith stated she is welcome to come to the office the morning of the Board meeting to pick up her packet.

ADJOURNMENT

Sinico made a motion, seconded by Mercer to adjourn the meeting.

Unanimous approval.

The next meeting of the GBHA Board will be held on February 19, 2019 at the Dewey property in Sheffield, 2:00PM.

Respectfully submitted by Debra E Brazie