

# **GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY**

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**Great Barrington Housing Authority Board of Commissioners**

**Tuesday, February 19, 2019**

**Meeting held at Dewey Court**

**Present:** James Mercer, Diane Dillon, Jackie Sinico

**Administration:** Tina Danzy

## **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairperson James Mercer at 2:00PM. (3) individuals were identified as recording the meeting, Sinico, Mercer and the Housing Authority.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – None

## **RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARD**

Eileen Mooney, Secretary of the LTO (Local Tenant Organization) addressed the Board. An LTO is not a resident association, but a global tenant's organization. Tenants have been notified of meetings and bylaws that have been developed. Bylaws have also been provided to Board members and the interim Executive Director. Mooney requested the Board provide a letter affirming the Housing Authority recognizes the LTO as the local tenants association, and that required materials have/will be provided. Proposed wording can be provided if needed.

Mercer inquired whether the bylaws were developed in working with the State. Koloski stated an outline for the bylaws was provided by the State. She and Mooney have been working with individuals who guide tenant groups through the creation and implementation of an LTO. Today the LTO is asking for an acceptance letter from the Board.

Mercer inquired whether residents of all three properties were notified of meetings when the LTO was set up. Koloski stated all tenants were notified of the meetings through flyers distributed by individuals at the three properties. Meetings will be held at the Senior Center in Great Barrington. Mercer inquired as to who the officers of the LTO are. Marlene Koloski – President, Sue Hipwell – Vice President and Eileen Mooney – Secretary.

Koloski stated another vote will be held at a later date for the position of Treasurer. The position is not needed at this point. In the future there will be a budget for office supplies, etc. The LTO needs to be supplied with an office, computer, printer, phone, etc. The Authority would be responsible for the initial cost of these items and would be reimbursed by the State. LTO Officers have the right to attend interviews for an Executive Director, etc.

**Mercer made a motion, seconded by Sinico to approve and recognize the LTO as the local tenants association subject to legal approval and submission of all documents to the DHCD**

## **Unanimous approval.**

Mercer thanked everyone for their hard work in organizing the LTO.

### **CITIZEN SPEAK**

Eileen Mooney inquired what the policy is regarding tenant notification when there a problem arises involving one of the properties, specifically, the reported break-in at the office. Tenants were advised their locks would be changed but were not given an explanation as to why. Phair stated the event involved the coded lockbox that contains the master key. The box had been opened using the code (not broken into) and the master key was missing. He theorized that a local police officer perhaps opened the box to get the key to perform a wellness check on a resident, but the key was never returned to the box. All units were re-keyed to a new master key, which was then locked up in the box. The office was not affected at all in this incident. Mercer stated he agrees tenants would be notified as soon as possible of an incident and what the resolution will be.

A tenant inquired whether washing machines are serviced and if so, how often. Phair stated once per month when money is collected from the machines they are supposed to be inspected at that time for any service needs. If service is necessary, maintenance for that company is alerted to do the repair. There is also a phone # posted in the laundry area to call if a tenant finds a machine is in need of service. Mercer stated tenants can also email the Interim Executive Director if they find any problems with machines. A request was made to look into a change machine for the laundry room. This request has been made and researched before. It has been found to be very expensive. Danzy stated she will research further.

The issue of peanut shells at the Brookside property was raised once again. Apparently there is a tenant who is feeding peanuts to the squirrels and the peanut shells are all of the property according to Sue Hipwell. It is quite a mess. Mercer stated the Authority will work with LTO on developing a policy around this.

Sinico stated there are (2) units that seem to be loaded with ants. They go away for a while when spray is used, but come right back. The situation needs permanent intervention.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT** – Tina Danzy

#### **a) Office Update**

- Working out “kinks” of the PHA (Public Housing Network) system
- Delayed update of vendor information – expected to be completed in the next 60 days
- Continuing work to update contractor insurance certificate file
- Updating resident contact information. Still accepting responses
- Residents are encouraged to come to the office to report any changes in income, etc.
- Danzy to have a meeting with the property attorney at the end of the month to discuss an appropriate system for rent collection. Majority of rents are received on time, but a handful are delinquent every month. Danzy would like to be more proactive around this issue.

Inquiry was made whether rent could be set up for automatic deduction. Danzy stated she is open to that and would look into the possibility.

b) Vacancies

- Flag Rock – Unit 110 is ready for rental
- Brookside - 6C is ready for rental
- Dewey unit – ready inspection determined rug replacement was necessary. This will occur next week
- Flag Rock Unit 14 still in repair process
- Notice to vacate by 2/28/19 received by Flag Rock Unit 216

A pull was made from the wait list. The office is currently working to process those applicants. CORI checks were completed last Thursday. An offer should be made to prospective tenants next week.

Danzy reported the CHAMPS system is not pulling the Dewey vacancy. The State is aware of the problem. Once resolution is made applicants pulled in the first run will come up again as prospective tenants for the Dewey vacancy.

Prospective tenants are sent a letter asking to verify their priority. Once done the system will be updated whether they have met the priority or not. The system will instruct whether additional information is needed. Once information is entered into the system it is retained and does not have to be re-entered. The list will maintain itself from list to list.

The State realizes there are “quirks” in the system and that their own software is causing delays in filling vacancies. Therefore, the Authority will not be losing monies due to vacancies.

- Paperwork has been submitted to allow the use of the Wage Match system. This system allows the Executive Director to match wages reported by tenants. Still waiting on State response – hopefully will receive access soon.
- Danzy stated she is excited the LTO will be up and running soon. One project the group could work on is assigned parking, and how would that work.
- It has been determined that a Snow Log has not been kept – documenting when snow was removed and what treatments were used, when those applications were made, etc., whether it be done by maintenance or an outside vendor. The log will also record how many man hours are used. Danzy has just begun implementation of a Snow Log.
- Danzy is working with Phair to develop a preventive maintenance schedule in the form of an excel spreadsheet to track maintenance schedules and concerns. Danzy recently met with Sinico to discuss spring preventive maintenance needs. Possibly pursue hiring an additional part-time individual for seasonal work and to get some extra projects completed. This avenue would be much less expensive then hiring an outside contractor. Would like to explore further at the March Board meeting.
- The alarm company will inspect Flag Rock on March 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>
- Stove replacement has been approved for the Brookside property. Danzy and Phair are working on finalizing what model will be ordered. Within the next month all Brookside units will have a new stove. A plan will be developed to do the same with the other two properties, along with researching a grant to replace refrigerators in the next year. Tenants inquired if the stoves could have a bottom drawer for storage and a light in the oven.
- Danzy stated Phair is still gathering information on a replacement for the greenhouse heater. Sinico questioned whether it would be used as no one has used the greenhouse in the winter in a

long time. Mooney stated she would be interested in using it, but does not want the Authority to spend the money if she is the only one interested.

- Several change orders are being dealt with around the dehumidifier project. Phair will report further in his report.
- Danzy thanked residents for attending the recent Meet & Greet sessions held at the three properties. There was a good showing at the Dewey session. The session at the Senior Center was postponed and re-scheduled due to the cold weather. The session held at Flag Rock was a bit smaller. Follow up will be to address House Rules. There will be an informal meeting held on March 14<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 2:00 to discuss House Rules.
- It was also noted that Dewey residents have never signed a new lease with the GBHA since the changeover of responsibility. Danzy will be speaking to legal counsel as to whether tenants should do so.

Resident inquired whether all residents are CORI checked. Danzy stated all residents 18 years old and up are required to be CORI checked. She cannot speak to past practice before her arrival as Interim, but moving forward all will be CORI checked.

- Danzy stated office clean up at Dewey has begun. DHCD will conduct a property inspection on Thursday at 10:00AM. They will randomly select a handful of units to inspect when they arrive that morning.
- A financial audit will be taking place on Tuesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>. The audit will be done on FY2018 financials.
- DHCD visit to Flag Rock was canceled.

Koloski inquired when new living room lighting will be installed. Phair stated all bulbs are in the shop. The work will be done as soon as time allows.

### **FINANCIAL UPDATES**

Danzy reported the following balances as of today:

Great Barrington Housing available balance - \$37,215.70

Dewey Court available balance - \$37,759.64

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **a) Computer Assessment Update**

Mercer reported Tom Roy will be coming to perform updates this week. He is also working on purchasing IPADS for the Maintenance Department.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **a) New Executive Director Hiring Subcommittee Update**

Mercer reported the State approved the advertisement last week. It has been sent out to various publications, both local, eastern State and (2) web-based platforms. The return date for interested applicants is by 1:00PM March 18<sup>th</sup>. All applications, whether mail or email, will be collected and filed by Karen Lewis.

Eileen Mooney inquired whether the Housing Authority had approved the advertisement. Mercer stated the State approved the advertisement. The Hiring Subcommittee relied on the State as to the process to be followed.

*Sinico read the advertisement placed for a new Executive Director in its entirety to attendees.*

**Mercer made a motion, seconded by Sinico to approve the advertisement for the position of Executive Director, as proposed by the State of Massachusetts.**

**Unanimous approval.**

Mercer stated the Board is working with the State in an attempt to increase the hours for the Executive Director position. The State has approved 26 hours for the position. It is felt with the responsibility of three properties and the distance between those properties the hours should be increased.

**MAINTENANCE REPORT** – Rich Phair

- Phair stated there have been 19 days this past winter of dealing with snow removal and ice, which has caused a delay in dealing with other projects.
- Major clog in 25 feet of pipe was cleared. Tanks were checked and pumped. Wipes continue to be a major problem and could in the future cause a serious situation.
- Air Ram has been purchased and has already been used (4) times
- Dehumidifier Project is nearing the end. Upgrade to electrical panel has been completed. The Authority was able to use their electrician instead of the contractor's electrician, which saved expense. Waiting for Electrical Inspector to confirm inspection.
- Greenhouse heater – request for estimate is out to (2) propane companies. Phair is also pursuing the cost of an electric heater.
- DHCD no longer supports a generator program. The last generator installed for an Authority cost \$143,000 to do so to support a community room. The installation of these units is very involved and costly.

**BOARD COMMENTS**

Sinico stated the flag pole at Dewey Court needs to be replaced. Phair stated this can be done in the spring.

Sinico requested Board meetings be held at the Senior Center in Great Barrington. She believes it to be a good space, accessible to all properties. Mercer stated the March meeting can be scheduled at the Senior Center. Future dates can be discussed at that meeting.

Dillon stated she believes great work has been done this past month in forming the LTO. She believes all of this to be a positive move for the community.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Sinico made a motion, seconded by Mercer to adjourn the meeting at 3:20PM.**

**Unanimous approval.**

**The next meeting of the GBHA Board will be held on March 19, 2019 at the Claire Teague Senior Center in Great Barrington at 2:00PM.**

Respectfully submitted by Debra E Brazie