

GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

Approved 11/7/18

2 Bernard Gibbons Drive

Great Barrington, MA 01230

Phone: (413) 274-1142 * Fax: (413) 274-1143 * Email: gtbarringtonhousingauthority@gmail.com

MEETING MINUTES

Great Barrington Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

Tuesday, September 18, 2018

Present: Karen Smith, James Mercer, Jackie Sinico, Diane Dillon

Administration: Vera Cartier, Rich Phair

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Karen Smith at 2:03PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

a) Snap Benefits

Cartier stated residents are now able to access the same documentation they provide to GBHA for rent determination to be used for SNAP applications. Documentation is available at the office so residents do not have to duplicate the same information when applying for SNAP.

b) Arborists Day

Cartier stated there will be an Arborists Day celebration held on October 24th at Brookside. Arborists will be there working on some of the trees, along with other activities. Cartier stated she just received an email from Doris at Botanical Gardens with an update, so further information will be forthcoming.

c) Ramsdell Library

Cartier stated the Ramsdell Library will soon be offering a program to bring books to Housatonic residents. Flyers describing the program are available in a few different locations/bulletin boards. Michelle Loubert added this is part of a community engagement program meant to reach out to those Housatonic residents that are unable to get to the library. The library is not ADA accessible, and this is a way to provide further access to the Ramsdell. Deliveries will be facilitated by the Director of the Ramsdell Library, provided by volunteers who will deliver the books to residents. The Ramsdell is also open on Sunday from 1 – 4. All are welcome!

FINANCIAL UPDATES

a) Accounts Receivable/Accounts Payable

Smith announced the GBHA budget was approved by DHCD as of yesterday. There has been no stated commitment as to the amount to be received. The first installment is expected to be received the first week of October. A draft was completed by our Bookkeeper a month ago of current Accounts Payable outstanding, to be between \$73,000 and \$78,000. This will be updated soon as some bills have since been paid since that accounting was done, along with aging of those bills. A few of the arrearages are to Worker's Compensation, Berkshire Lock Shop, Herrington's, Osterman Propane, Roger's, Home Depot, National Grid and Housatonic Waterworks. The Worker's Compensation has already been taken care of. It is expected all outstanding debt will be paid as of October 15th. The Board is relieved there is a more solid picture of what is owed and voiced a thank you to the Executive Director and staff for getting the information together.

b) All Bank Accounts

Smith reported on the different banking account balances, checking, and money market accounts.

c) Vacancies

Cartier reported there are two current vacancies – Flag Rock family units 27 and 14. Both units are 3-bedroom. Unit 27 has had rugs installed. They both should be ready to rent soon.

d) Rent Roll

Cartier reported all tenant rent payments are current. There are a few tenants in re-payment mode and they are also up to date.

e) Warrant Signing

Cartier stated there are warrants that need to be signed. Board members will do so following the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

a) Security Deposits/Pet Deposits

Since the current Executive Director has been employed all new tenants have paid a security deposit. If they have required time to do so a payment plan was devised for them. Collection of security and pet deposits with other Executive Directors seem to have been sporadic. When a tenant moves out Cartier researches to see if there was a security deposit made, and if so, processes re-payment to the tenant in the proper manner.

Smith stated the Board needs to review all security deposits. It is very important the Authority collect security deposits from tenants as it is the only protection the Authority has against tenant damage. Recent vacancies have left units with significant damage and the Authority has no recourse to recoup

repair expenses if there is no security deposit. Every future tenant will have a security deposit requirement. The same will be true of pet deposits.

Cartier suggested the Board come up with reasonable damage charges. For example, so much for a broken window, damaged door or wall. Possibly damage would be documented and dealt with during the yearly inspections and recertification. This would assist in keeping up with damages as they are discovered so they do not get out of control.

b) Pools

Smith stated part of the problem with tenant pools is some tenants are not responsible in caring for and monitoring their pools. The important thing here is safety. A small child can drown in an inch of water. Standing water that has not been cared for can also attract animals, etc. Also, a 4' fence is necessary around a pool area. The Board is asked to consider the possibility of an area where a kiddie pool could be located to be used by the family units, with a 4' fence and locked gate. No tenant would be allowed to have a pool as the common pool would fill the purpose. There could be a rotating schedule of care among the families who use the pool area. Board members raised concerns regarding chlorination and Board of Health, Planning Board regarding fencing and possible insurance responsibilities. Sinico stated she does not believe pools should be allowed at all. There are small toddlers that are not properly monitored, are found running in the road, etc. Dillon stated the concept of a community pool could be much more complicated than just fencing. Smith stated she would like to engage others, families in this discussion through the Resident Advisory Committee for input. **Smith will contact the Board of Health to discuss proper procedure/guidelines for a common pool area.**

c) Fire Pits

Smith stated the same concern for safety extends to use of fire pits. She has spoken to the Fire Chief in Great Barrington who has stated there are no laws surrounding the use of fire pits. However, the Authority is able to devise their own policy. Sinico stated she is OK with the use of fire pits if they are properly placed away from buildings and propane tanks. Dillon stated she believes the use of fire pits is much more dangerous than the use of pools. Mercer stated he would like to give the tenants a chance to use fire pits appropriately, with guidelines from the Board. If those guidelines are not followed the privilege can be taken away. Marlene Kosloski stated tenants have already discussed this issue. Fire pits should be 25' from house and 25' from propane tanks. They should also have a screen. Many tenants really enjoy their fire pits. It is therapy for them. **Mercer to look into what other authorities allow as to fire pit use and to draft guidelines.**

d) Spectrum

Cartier stated Lenox, Lee, and Stockbridge authorities all offer a bulk rate cable package to their residents. They all charge around \$20.00 per month. She would not agree with discontinuing providing this service as she believes it would cause a financial hardship if they had to subscribe to these services on their own. Marlene Kosloski stated the tenants have come together to discuss this issue and would be agreeable to paying an increased rate of \$18.00 to \$20.00 per month, which she believes would assist the Authority in paying for months units may be unoccupied. **Smith stated she would like to know what a tenant cost would be per month for the service, including all the fees and**

surcharges, and how much the authority has paid for unoccupied units. If “break even” figure could be achieved that would be great.

e) Dimmers

Cartier stated dimmers have been installed. The office has received all good reports. The subject will be discussed further under Maintenance Report.

f) Suite 3

Cartier reported Suite 3 is the Authorities computer monitoring service. She has been unable to connect with the company through phone or email. It is her opinion that if the Board wishes to discontinue this service she has no objection. Smith stated she was interested in how often the computer system has been scanned, the last time it was scanned, etc. She has been told by another professional that if you have a good virus protection program there is no need to have a monitoring service. Part of the recent budget award is money for technology, which Smith would like to use to have a professional, Tom Roy from Monument Mountain High School, come to evaluate the office equipment, computers, scanners, programs, etc. and make recommendations. Also to procure IPADS for the Maintenance Department to facilitate electronic work orders, etc. She would also like to see remote access capability to the Dewey Property.

g) Verizon

Cartier reports all phones have been working fine, rollover working fine. The only lingering problem with voicemail. She is currently waiting for call back to resolve that problem.

Smith stated someone was also going to look into a booster being installed to facilitate better cell phone service, since most tenants do not have landlines. Cartier stated she has sent an email and is waiting for a response.

h) Public Housing Notices

Cartier stated when she receives such notices she sends them to the Board. Smith stated there are 24 to 36 notices per year. Some are federal and do not pertain to GBHA. She has inquired whether notices are sorted by topic, so all notices throughout the years regarding a certain topic can be viewed without hours of searching for them. Apparently, they are not.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Champs Migration Training

Cartier stated this system is from the state and will be combining all housing authority waiting lists to a PHA network. It will be a centralized waiting list for the State. Each housing authority will continue to maintain their own priorities and preferences in regard to tenants, such as living and /or working in Great Barrington, veterans, etc. The Champs training will be on September 7th. Karen Lewis will attend.

b) Change Orders

Dan Downer from Hill Engineering, hired by the DHCD/ARCAT to complete the third phase of the Brookside roofing project, addressed the Board in regard to the current bids. Four bids were received ranging from \$37,000 to \$57,900. It is recommended the job be awarded to JJS for \$37,000. Their price per average square foot was almost \$1.00 less than the project completed last year. Smith stated the Board needs to approve the award of the bid. The award was mistakenly made without Board approval. Mr. Downer stated JJS has been advised and told to stand down until Board approval is received. Dillon inquired why the bids differ by \$20,000? Mr. Downer stated the reasons vary from travel/lodging expenses as the company could be traveling a long distance, what they pay employees, etc. All bidders are properly certified by the State and are capable of completing the job. The last four roofs were done by a different contractor. They may have already been booked when this bid went out.

Mercer made a motion, seconded by Sinico to approve award of the bid for third phase of the Brookside roof project to JJS for the amount of \$37,000.

Unanimous approval.

MAINTENANCE REPORT - Rich Phair, Maintenance Supervisor

- Unit 213 will be cleaned and ready on Monday
- Street lights have been changed to the "corn" bulbs. The electric bill will be monitored to see what affect the change has.
- The Courtyard bulbs have been changed to dimmable bulbs, with four controls so changes can be made to certain sections if necessary.
- Dehumidifier Project will be moving forward. A change order was made to accommodate for different piping in two bedroom units. The installer has stated he should be done in a week or so.
- Smith stated the new Maintenance truck is ready and will be delivered around the 1st of October.

RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARD – Marlene Koloski

Nothing further to add to report.

CITIZEN SPEAK

A resident voiced strong disapproval of the new lighting in the parking lot. She feels it is too bright, like the desert sun, obnoxiously bright. The new shields do not cover the bulbs. Phair stated he could try to make some adjustments to alleviate those problems.

Shannon Sinico inquired whether the existence of the Resident Advisory Board is mandated. She believes it is going nowhere and should be resolved. She does not mind attending informational meetings or meetings to discuss certain issues that arise, but she does not want to be part of the parties, etc. No one shows up and people put a lot of work into them. Smith stated she does not

believe the Advisory Board is mandatory, but the DHCD is constantly asking if one exists. She feels it is important to engage residents in the decisions regarding their living space. There should not be many meetings, possibly quarterly. Dillon commended tenants for their participation and feedback to the Board as it is very valuable information when making decisions.

BOARD SPEAK

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Sinico made a motion, seconded by Dillon to adjourn the meeting at 3:04PM.

Unanimous approval.

(Executive Session listed on the agenda was canceled.)



Respectfully submitted by Debra E Brazie