

# GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

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## MEETING MINUTES

Great Barrington Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

Wednesday, April 18, 2018

**Present:** Karen Smith, James Mercer, Jackie Sinico, Diane Dillon, Vera Cartier, Sue Honeycutt-Accountant

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Karen Smith at 2:31PM.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – March 21, 2018

Smith asked for a provisional approval of the meeting minutes from March 21, 2018. The minutes are too lengthy and could be shortened. Motions, pertinent discussion and bullet points are all that are necessary. Smith to encourage Recording Secretary to seek advice from others within the community who prepare Board minutes. Smith will edit down these minutes to be used as an example. All Board members agreed to be referenced by last name only.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT**

#### a) Laundry Update - Cartier

- Cartier reported washers and dryers will be replaced on both properties May 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Currently working on preparing plumbing at Brookside.
- Rich has agreed to remove old machines if necessary.

#### b) Mass Save Energy

***Smith tabled Mass Save Energy report/discussion, to be brought forward under New Business.***

### **RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARDS**

#### a) Updates from both Boards – Marlene Koloski-reported for both properties

##### **Brookside**

- There has not been another meeting held to date.
- Reaching out to Brookside tenants to use Suggestion Boxes.
- Next meeting to be held in May.
- The Board discussed trespassing issues that have been experienced at Brookside. Individuals have been seen on numerous occasions loitering, including at the Senior Center. There is concern for the residents' safety. Sinico questioned whether there has been adequate cooperation from the Town of Great Barrington Police Department. Smith suggested a letter be drafted to the Town

Manager, with copy to the Great Barrington Chief of Police and Select Board, outlining the Boards concerns and asking for what the intended patrol schedule of these areas might be. It was agreed copy should be sent to the MA State Police also. Smith said she would follow up with the PD. See attached email.

**Mercer made a motion, seconded by Smith for Executive Director Vera Cartier to draft a letter to the Town Manager of Great Barrington, with copy to the Town of Great Barrington Police Chief, Select Board and State Police regarding trespassing/loitering at Brookside, asking for patrol and guidance in ensuring the safety of all residents. Letter will include request to respond with patrol schedule.**

**Unanimous approval.**

**Flag Rock**

- A potluck dinner was held – (30) residents attended. (15) from the senior section and (15) from the family section. Smith stated she was in attendance and was impressed with the turnout and level of interest.
- Residents are interested in scheduling cookouts throughout the summer.
- Senior residents would like to organize a game night. Family residents showed an interest in this activity also.
- Outreach at this property has not been approached.
- The next meeting has not been scheduled.

Chairperson Smith asked for a moment of silence in memory of Annemarie Bushka who was killed in a car accident this past weekend.

**FINANCIAL UPDATES**

- a) Presentation by accountant S. Honeycutt of Fenton, Ewald  
Chairperson Smith introduced Sue Honeycutt of Fenton, Ewald. Fenton, Ewald is a private CPA firm from Needham, MA with 20 years of experience. They specialize in working with Housing Authorities.

*Please see attachment provided. All Board members were provided with a copy of the Financial Report.*

Discussion was as follows:

- A 10% increase in budget has been allowed by DHCD. With this increase \$287,000 with increase can be budgeted for this year. Utilities are separate.
- Any income the Housing Authority incurs would reduce subsidy provided, such as income from washers and dryers. The Authority does not benefit from charging more for these types of services, the State does.
- If the Authority works to conserve energy and reduce costs the benefit of any savings goes to the State. In regard to Solar Power, the Authority is able to keep 25% of the savings. The Board is interested in conducting an energy audit and will be looking to the State to provide funds to convert bulbs, etc. It was agreed there may be assistance for this since the State would benefit from any reduction in costs.

- Great Barrington Housing Authority currently has a negative reserve status – more money is spent than taken in. It is believed much of this is due to units being offline and rent in arrears. There are units that are currently unoccupied due to needed repairs and litigation.
- When rent is not paid it is counted as revenue not received. If the arrears are eventually written off as an expense it causes the Authority a second hit. There is a “double hit” when rent is not paid.
- The Board agreed it is important to get all units online and occupied, and also get a policy in place to keep rent payments current. Once these areas are dealt with it is believed it would be approximately 36 months before the reserve could be replenished. This would all depend on expenditures that are made.
- When a unit is offline and needs repairs, and there is no money to do those repairs, it is important to notify DHCD for the funds to get the unit back online.
- As of April 1, 2018, all Housing Authorities will receive \$10,000 as a technology exemption to be spent at their discretion. This could be for computers, scanners, website updates, software, etc.
- The maintenance truck is very old and needs to be replaced. A request will be made of DHCD for a new truck with a plow, but there is no guarantee it will be approved. Smith inquired whether the plowing could be shared in some way with the Town. There was also a question of whether there is enough time for one person to plow both properties and keep walkways clear. Overtime increased an extreme amount this past winter due to increased snow removal needs. Smith would like a professional evaluation done of what services are needed, plowing, walkways, etc. for the three properties and what the most efficient process would be. Vera Cartier stated the priority is preventing falls.
- The Executive Director salary recommendation is made from DHCD every (3) years. 2015 was the last update. The new recommendation is \$57,252 for the next (3) years. If the Board votes to accept this figure it will represent a \$7,000 salary increase. DHCD makes the salary recommendations based on how many units are in a Housing Authority. The Authority also receives a management fee for Sheffield.
- Smith asked for a full description of how the revenue stream works. Is there any management fee paid by Berkshire County for management of Dewey? Yes, there is additional revenue for Dewey.
- Administrative Assistant position has a recommended increase of 5%, or .75 per hour. The current Administrative Assistant has asked for more money and increased hours. Vera Cartier reported there is not enough money in the budget to support this request.
- Smith stated increases should be merit-based, and should not be offered to a probationary employee until their probation period is complete and performance has been evaluated.
- Maintenance salary is set by the Department of Labor. There are no choices for the Board to make here. Overtime included in the budget is an estimate.
- Deferred Compensation was discussed as to not contributing by the authority until finances are more stabilized.
- **Smith would like to schedule a financial training session for the Board with Sue Honeycutt** so they can gain a better understanding of revenue and expense streams, budget lines, state equations, etc. Mercer requested there be information on how revenue may change when the Sheffield property is added to the Great Barrington Housing Authority. It is believed that program is not in the best of shape, with many rental payments in arrears.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

- a) Great Barrington Housing Authority Personnel Policy/Discussion and Vote  
*Discussion was tabled until the Executive Director is able to review Personnel Policies with each employee – expected to be completed next month.*
- b) Trash Hauling/Vendor Bid – Vera Cartier
- 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.
  - A bid has not been received from the company in New York.
  - Currently, waste management services are on a month-to-month basis.
  - Smith requested the Executive Director provide a spreadsheet of all contracted services at Dewey, contract duration, what is coming up for renewal or bid and when.
- c) Job Descriptions/Present and Edit
- Smith has edited employee job descriptions. The Executive Director's job description was developed from a template from the State, with (4) items added pertaining to Board support. Mercer requested a monthly report be included listing rent arrearages and vacancies, along with the number of units that are out of service and how long before those units will be online.
  - Maintenance job descriptions were edited in the areas of tasks requiring special licensing, etc. The Administrative Assistant job description has been tailored to reflect the specific duties of the job performed.
  - Board members are asked to review the edited job descriptions. A vote will be taken next month.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

- Smith reported, in response to a statement made by a tenant, an evaluation of the lighting at Flag Rock Village was made. Email response to Board was read by Smith (attached). Smith recommends Mass Save visit the Flag Rock Village site during the daytime and nighttime hours to observe lighting and report back with their recommendations. Feedback will also be welcome from Town of Great Barrington Building Inspector Ed May, neighbors and tenants. This way the Board can approach the State with a proficient, effective evaluation.
- There was a brief discussion regarding tenants turning up their heat to high temperatures in the winter months.

#### **MAINTENANCE REPORT**

- a) To be presented by the Executive Director

Report Prepared by Rich:

- Apt 109 to receive new window and wall due to rot caused by a leaking air conditioner. Also new flooring. Unit is currently offline. New window has been received.
- Apt 11 continues to be under litigation but will be moving forward soon.
- There will be a dehumidifier project in every family unit.
- Ceiling repair in a family unit was made, caused by a leaking bathtub.
- 60' of front fencing along sidewalk and road was hit and damaged by a hit and run driver. Fencing will be repaired.

- Plowing damage to lawns will be repaired.
- Pot holes will be repaired.

### **CITIZEN SPEAK**

Resident mentioned that Rich had put down some matting in front of the elevator this past winter that seemed to work and held up to foot traffic very well. The suggestion was made to put this matting around the decking and stairways where it can be very slippery. **Vera Cartier to follow up on this suggestion.**

### **BOARD SPEAK**

*No additional comment*

### **ADJOURNMENT-4:10 pm**

**Mercer made a motion, seconded by Scinico to temporarily adjourn the meeting and enter Executive Session to discuss personnel matters.**

### **Unanimous approval.**

Executive session

Motion to open Executive session: Sinico seconded

Salary proposed for Vera Cartier: Board needed clarification as to the scale proposed by the GBHA accountant for the Executive director. Discussion ensued that the salary presented was a combination of her responsibilities for 3 components. One being Dewey, one being elderly housing and one special needs and that the total was recommended by the state.

Salary increase: Discussion ensued as to when Michelle Loubert's provisional period of employment was up. Information given to Smith was that May 13, 2018 was her 6 month anniversary. Board agreed that any salary increase would be reviewed by the board after that time span had passed and supervision was complete with the Executive Director.

Dillon motioned to close executive session Mercer seconded  
Vote unanimous-Smith, Dillon, Sinico, Mercer

### ***Meeting Reconvened***

**Mercer made a motion to reconvene the open meeting, seconded by Dillon.**

**Sinico made a motion, seconded by Mercer to approve the Executive Director's salary increase to \$57,252.00**

Smith stated the Board recognizes the Executive Director's job performance has been excellent and would like her to be rewarded based on her performance and not just on the state's salary recommendation.

**Unanimous approval.**

**Mercer made a motion, seconded by Sinico to approve Maintenance salaries and benefits of \$91,132.00**

**Unanimous approval.**

***Administrative Assistant increase will be tabled until completion of the probation period.***

Respectfully submitted

Debra Brazie