

GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

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MEETING MINUTES

Great Barrington Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

Wednesday, July 18, 2018

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

Administration: Vera Cartier

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Karen Smith at 2:32PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 20, 2018

Mercer made a motion, seconded by Sinico to approve the meeting minutes of June 20, 2018 as presented.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT – Vera Cartier

a) Dehumidifier Project

- Letters were sent to all tenants of family units regarding the anticipated start date for the dehumidifier project.
- Contractor notified the Authority they had to delay the start date. Letters were distributed to tenants regarding the delay.
- Cartier has been in contact with the Contractor and expects the project to be starting soon.

b) Recertification Paperwork

- All family units and Senior tenants at Flag Rock Village have been sent their recertification paperwork.
- All paperwork, financial documentation and proof of assets are due to the office August 6th.
- Brookside recertification will be sent this week.
- Recertification's for both properties are expected to be complete by September.
- Dewey property inspections and recertification are expected to be complete by October 1st.

c) Dryers

Tenants have complained the dryers previously had a 60-minute cycle, and now have a 50-minute cycle. Cartier has looked into this and all dryers at Flag Rock and Brookside will now have a 60-minute cycle.

d) CapHUB

The DHCD capital project system will soon be switching from the ARCAT system to the CapHUB project management system. This system will be used for capital projects such as driveways, roofs, etc. Vera, Rich and Scott will all receive training in this new system via webinars.

e) Trees at Brookside

A call was made to National Grid regarding trees determined to be on the Brookside property that pose a threat of power outage if they were to come down in a storm. National Grid will be removing these trees within the next two weeks. There are also many other trees on the property that could also pose a threat that need to be trimmed.

A suggestion was made that the Authority contact the Great Barrington tree warden via letter for advice and assistance.

RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARD – Marlene Koloski

Flag Rock Village

- The recent tag sale went well. Enough money was raised to install a sturdier canopy for the sitting area.
- The cat loose/multiple cat in one unit problem continues to be worked on.
- At the suggestion of Smith, the Resident Advisory Board will look into producing a monthly newsletter and/or a resident bulletin board that could contain vital tenant information, such as the pet policy, recertification deadline reminders, etc.

FINANCIAL UPDATES – Vera Cartier

a) Rent Roll Total and Updates for all Three Complexes

Smith opened the discussion stating documents had been sent out to the Board, and then retracted. The reporting format for the Dewey property is different than Flag Rock Village and Brookside. The format should be consistent for all (3) three properties.

Rent Roll

- Flag Rock has (1) family unit currently under a re-payment agreement.
- Flag Rock Senior section has no arrearages at this time.
- Brookside has no arrearages at this time.
- Dewey has (6) units in re-payment agreements.

Cartier explained the reason why the Dewey rent roll document is a different format is she had to create this for the Berkshire Housing Authority, as they had no reporting method. Now that GBHA owns Dewey she will convert the format to match the other properties.

Vacancies

- Flag Rock family section currently has (2) vacancies. Unit 27 vacant since May 1st. Unit 14 vacant since July 1st. The Authority has requested an extension from DHCD. One unit needs to be completely re-done due to tenant damage. The second unit was tenant occupied for 12 or 13 years so carpeting needs to be replaced, etc.
- Flag Rock Senior section has (1) vacancy. The unit has been shown and is expected to go under lease shortly.
- Brookside has (2) vacancies, with one expected to be filled shortly.
- Dewey is currently fully occupied.

b) Dewey Financials for 2017

Cartier recently had a discussion with Berkshire Housing Authority. They are finishing up their FY data and will forward financials for the Dewey property within the next 30 days.

c) Status of Dewey Transfer

Cartier has been in contact regarding when the deed for the Dewey property will be received. DCHD requires one more vote of the Berkshire Regional Housing Authority Board amending capital funding. Their Board has a meeting scheduled for tomorrow morning to complete this task. Once they report their vote back to DCHD, GBHA will receive written approval of the new deed.

OLD BUSINESS

a) Energy Audit

Smith reported Cartier finally has received a call back from the LEAN Program (Low-Income Energy Affordability Network) and has spoken to Victoria Nasanga regarding an energy audit performed on the three GBHA properties. Cartier has also submitted the required paperwork. Smith has also been on the phone attempting to find the correct avenue to get this done. Question remains; are they able to provide an energy audit for a housing authority? Authority is waiting on a clear answer. This project remains in process.

NEW BUSINESS

a) OBX Energy Visit

- OBX made a site visit two days ago.
- They perform energy management. The Authority is interested in beginning a pilot to manage the lighting in the courtyard and street lights. Rick will be able to do this from his phone.
- Next would be to make lighting adjustable – to be able to change the intensity of lighting by being able to dim them. Dimmable light bulbs would be needed for this project.
- Family units are responsible for payment of their own energy usage. Energy consumption/control is of concern in the Senior units. A/C and heat could be on at the same time or heat on with windows open, etc. The authority currently has no way to control this. A movement is moving forward, in the next 12 to 18 months, regarding how energy is used and managed.
- Smith stated this company has worked with Columbia University and all Job Lots buildings in the Northeast. All necessary hardware is “off the shelf” and can be purchased anywhere, which is a plus.
- Smith stated this is one way the Authority can move towards better efficiency.
- Mercer stated the heating system in the Brookside units is electric. An energy audit should also include the possibility/savings in switching the fuel source.

Cell Phone Coverage

Smith raised the issue of limited or spotty cell service coverage at the Flag Rock property. Board members see this as a safety issue as 99.9% of residents have cell phones, and many do not have landlines. **ATT & Verizon will be contacted to discuss what opportunities exist to improve cell service.**

b) Contract with Current Accounting Firm of Fenton and Euwald

The Authority has received a contract renewal request from the current accounting firm, Fenton and Euwald. Smith and Mercer will be discussing this contract with them and going over what is expected of them. Once this has concluded they will report back.

c) Addition of Clair (QuickBooks)

- Karen Lewis has been working in the office for 15 hours per week. Clair Richards will be an addition to the office to assist with developing/organizing the last year of deposits and receipts, auditing expenses as she goes. Mercer stated Claire has a very strong accounting background in auditing. She has already noted a monthly payment of \$40.00 for computer monitoring. **The Board would like more information on what this entity is providing.**
- Smith stated there is some very old files existing on the current office computers and believes they are in need of a cleaning. She would like to contact Tom Roy at MMRHS to see if he would agree to review the machines and see what needs to be done. This would be a good time to do this with the upcoming Technology monies the Authority will be receiving. Smith stated she would like all technology equipment up to speed for the arrival of the grant so informed decisions as to where to spend the money can be made.
- Smith would like to see both office phones (Housatonic and Sheffield properties) to roll to one another when no one answers, with call waiting. Mercer suggested looking into voicemails being sent as emails in case of emergency, etc. **This will be worked on.**

MAINTENANCE REPORT – Rich Phair

- Unit 107 is ready to be leased.
- Two family units vacant were covered under Executive Director's Report.
- Unit 3B Brookside is in the process of being emptied. Family has walked away and left the unit full.
- In response to tenant complaints, a 10MPH speed limit sign has been posted. Tenants report they do see a decrease in the number of vehicles driving too fast. Additional signs will be posted. Sinico inquired whether removable speed bumps could be installed to slow traffic down. Phair stated Bernard Gibbons Drive is a private way, so this would be OK to install. **Phair will look into quotes for removable speed bumps.**
- Contract paperwork is in order for the dehumidifier project. That project is expected to start mid-week.
- Measurements for flooring in Units 14 and 27 have been taken. Waiting on estimates.
- Waiting to hear about the resolution to the truck issue. Smith stated all paperwork was submitted 8 days ago for assistance with purchase of a new truck. Waiting for an answer.
- Scott has been on vacation this week, so Rich has been splitting himself between three properties.
- Today it was reported the air conditioning unit was no longer working and not repairable for the handicapped unit. This situation must be corrected immediately as these residents are severely disabled and must have air conditioning. HVAC workers at Berkshire Meadows assisted with locating a replacement unit and approval has been received to do so. Cartier stated the funds held specifically for that unit/property will pay for the replacement. GBHA will make payment initially, and will be refunded. Smith stated responsiveness to the situation is key.

CITIZEN SPEAK

- Smith inquired whether there has been any written documentation received regarding the report that people are staying in units that should not be there? The answer was no, no written report has been received to date.
- Smith reiterated specific information/details are necessary for the Board to act on problems raised. The Board understands the difficulty surrounding tenants getting involved in misbehavior. It is up to each individual tenant whether to report something they see or not. The Board would keep the reporting entity anonymous until such time as legal proceedings were necessary, and would move forward from there.
- Edward Abrahams from the Great Barrington Board of Selectmen introduced himself. He stated the Select Board has divided up various areas in an effort to reach out to those entities in the event any assistance is needed from the Town. Smith recognized and stated appreciation in having a member of the Select Board present at meetings, recognizing the GBHA does not report to the Town of Great Barrington or the Select Board.

BOARD SPEAK

- Sinico inquired whether the spider problem would be dealt with soon. Spraying will be done soon.
- Sinico stated the floor matting in the elevators is almost complete.
- Sinico believes the outside walls should be power washed to keep up with preventive maintenance.

Smith stated many of these projects will be done as time allows. There are (3) properties to take care of and not enough maintenance staff to keep up. Cartier stated there will be a preventive maintenance inspection completed on July 30th. Sometimes they ask to inspect random apartments. Smith stated she would like a Board representative present when they inspect. **Sinico volunteered to be present for inspection and will report back to the Board.**

ADJOURNMENT

Mercer made a motion, seconded by Sinico to adjourn the meeting at 3:29PM.

Unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted by: Debra E. Brazie