CALL TO ORDER
The meeting was called to order at 2:00PM by Vice-Chairman Mercer.

MINUTES – May 22, 2019 and May 28, 2019

Mooney suggested the following amendments to the May 22, 2019 meeting minutes:

Page 2 – 7th bullet – “Dillon stated she would support this if funds available”. Mooney believes she also stated support for this.
Page 3 – Motion to purchase printer and materials for LTO – Mooney believes Dillon made this motion.
Page 5 – Last paragraph – “Regarding Board members serving, two resident members are allowed at this time”. Mooney asked for further clarification of use of the word “allowed”.

Vote on May 22, 2019 meeting minutes were tabled until the next scheduled Board meeting to allow transcriber to check on suggested amendments.

Transcriber note: The meeting recording for May 22, 2019 was reviewed and found the following:

Page 2 – Verbatim statement made by Mooney following at 12.44 of the recording: “Dillon stated she would support this if funds available”:

Mooney – “Why don’t we discuss that when we get to the budget, if that is OK”.

Page 3 - LTO printer, ink, supplies motion:

It has been verified that Mooney made the motion to approve, seconded by Mercer at 32.26 of the recording.
Mooney stated she received the May 28, 2019 meeting minutes too late to read them. She requested they be tabled until the next scheduled Board meeting.

The Board took a few minutes to for members to read/review the section of the May 28, 2019 Board meeting, Page 2 and Page 3, a) Approval of Executive Director Contract – new format per DHCD section.

Mooney made a motion, seconded by Sinico to approve the section (page 2 & 3, OLD BUSINESS) of the May 28, 2019 SPECIAL BOARD MEETING minutes, a) Approval of Executive Director Contract – new format per DHCD.

Unanimous approval via roll call vote.

Vote on the remainder of the May 28, 2019 meeting minutes were tabled until the next scheduled Board meeting.

RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARD/LTO UPDATE – Marlene Koloski
A meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday, June 25, 2019 to make a recommendation to appoint a temporary tenant to the Board to represent all (3) properties. Koloski stated the LTO is looking for a tenant who would be willing to serve in a temporary role to achieve a (5) member Board. Right now the Board cannot move forward and is at a standstill with (4) members splitting many decisions. Mercer inquired whether this individual would be from Sheffield. Koloski stated she is hoping the individual would be from Sheffield – there are some interested. The vote will be taken by an outside individual. The outcome of the vote will be reported to the Executive Director. Sinico stated it will be very important to go to the Great Barrington Board of Selectmen to ask for appointment of this individual to the GBHA Board.

Mercer stated previous Chairperson Smith began the procedure with Smitty Pignetelli and Adam Heinz in correcting an oversight made last year during the merger of the Sheffield property to GBHA. No provision was made at the time for a Sheffield representative on the GBHA Board of Directors. In checking on their progress this past week, it was found they are looking for initiative from the Board as a whole, a consensus, that the Board would like them to file this legislation.

Mercer has also spoken to counsel regarding where it stands on the State level in regard to an LTO representative on the Board. The last (3) years the State Legislature has not determined how that person would be placed. In consulting with Attorney Boyle, there was discussion about how to get a Sheffield member placed on the Board. His suggestion was very similar, in that it be an interim position, supported by the LTO, with amendment made to the LTO bylaws to contain that provision and amend the HA bylaws to accept that provision. This would allow a temporary position on the Board for Sheffield representation and would be contingent upon any legislative changes.

Sinico stated this position could be an immediate addition to the Board – the Great Barrington Selectmen could appoint the position. Mercer stated the Great Barrington Selectmen have no authority to appoint a member from Sheffield. This appointment would be made by the LTO and the HA Board. The proposal from the LTO would be considered by the HA Board.

Koloski will work with State to propose changes to the LTO Bylaws.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT – Tina Danzy

- PHA System – Still learning the many steps of the accounting features of this software. Nearly caught up with data input to the system. The new Office Assistant will also be assisting with entering invoices.
- Late rent notices were sent out earlier this month. Notice to quit will be sent out this week for those tenants in non-compliance. One tenant is currently scheduled for Housing Court for non-payment.
- Vacancies – Unit 216 and Unit 14, previously vacated units, have been leased. Danzy stated as a reminder to all, Flag Rock senior housing is also disabled housing. A couple of inquiries have been received concerning the age of the one of the new tenants.

Unit 102 and Unit 5B are vacant – a pull will be made from the waitlist. Notice for Unit 3A has been received – will vacate end of July.
- Danzy reported she attended a Human Resource training last week, which she found to be very helpful. Key features were discussed regarding employee files. She will be working on properly organizing employee files as time allows.

Danzy also attended a State Economic Engagement Session. Sinico and Mooney also attended Western Mass Executive Director Roundtable will be held tomorrow. A State Representative will hold a presentation on evictions. Danzy stated she hopes this to be useful in moving certain violators along more quickly in challenges faced with Housing Court.

Regional Dwelling Unit Inspection training will be held in Chicopee – Danzy and Phair will attend.
- Stove replacement is complete at Brookside. Working with ARCET Representative to continue appliance replacement at Dewey Court.
- Dewey – in final stages of receiving bids for property clean up, tree trimming, etc. A notice had been sent out that a maintenance worker was expected to be at the Dewey property all week – but had to be pulled to address a unit with immediate issues. Power washing of the back area of the Community Room has begun and will continue. There will be continued efforts to spruce up the Dewey property. She asked tenants to notify her of any flower beds that are not currently being maintained so they can be removed.
- Resident Clean Up at Flag Rock Family Units – inspection of yards was done two weeks ago – yards are looking very nice. A few notices were sent to tenants who still needed to remove items, i.e. mattresses, broken appliances, etc.
- Office Administrative Position – offer to hire letter was sent out today. If accepted will announce individual publicly. It is the intention the new person will begin July 1st.
- Recertification – Packets to be sent to Flag Rock residents immediately for 9/1 recertification. Danzy is waiting to hear from the State as to how to proceed. Last year there was a mass recertification done for all (3) properties. This task could not be finished by 9/1. Recertification’s are extremely time consuming to mail out and make sure all responses are returned with the proper documentation. Documentation must be reviewed, collect any additional or missing documents, enter into the system and have tenants sign. The office will start on this immediately and appreciates tenants being proactive.
Mooney inquired what the plan is for meeting minutes since the current recorder has resigned. Danzy stated the current recorder has agreed to transcribe minutes for this meeting. She and Mercer will get together to come up with a plan going forward. Mooney stated she believed it should be a Board decision. Mercer stated it should be an Executive Director decision. Mooney stated the Executive Director is responsible for recording the meeting and can delegate to someone else to transcribe the minutes. Mercer stated this function could be delegated to the new Office Assistant without Board involvement. Mooney inquired whether this was being considered. Danzy stated yes, but no final decision has been made.

Mooney stated the GBHA website, included on the GB Town website, should include a list of the facilities within GBHA. Also, possibly an LTO contact person – name and phone number.

In addition, Mooney stated the April minutes are not posted on the website. It is a town requirement that town boards post their meeting minutes no later than 35 days following a meeting. It is Mooney's understanding that minutes do not need to be approved minutes to be posted, but could be a draft copy. Since the GBHA Board is elected by people of the Town of Great Barrington, with a webpage on the town website, it is Mooney's belief they are to follow the 35 day deadline. Mercer stated he will check with legal counsel.

OLD BUSINESS

a) Election of Officers

Mercer stated he would be interested in continuing as Chairperson of the GBHA Board. He also stated he has received several phone calls from individuals who are concerned about bias if there are too many resident representatives on the Board.

Mooney stated she is also interested in serving as Chairperson of the GBHA Board.

Mercer stated the GBHA Bylaws state an Election of Officers will be held at every regularly scheduled Board meeting to attempt to elect Board Officers. If no consensus is reached the process is delayed until the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. Mercer believes the GBHA Bylaws should be amended to allow the Executive Director to vote in the event of a tie.

Sinico nominated Eileen Mooney for the position of Chairperson of the Great Barrington Housing Authority Board of Directors, seconded by Mooney.

Sinico and Mooney voted approval via roll call vote.

Mercer and Dillon opposed via roll call vote.

Motion failed

Dillon nominated James Mercer for the position of Chairperson of the Great Barrington Housing Authority Board of Directors, seconded by Mercer.

Mercer and Dillon voted approval via roll call vote.
Sinico and Mooney opposed via roll call vote.

Motion failed

Election of Board Officers will be tabled until the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.

b) Open Meeting Law Complaints/Action Plan

Mercer stated an official letter has been received from the State and has been distributed to all Board members. The conclusion contains several provisions of actions to be taken, including making certain documents available for public request. Documents to be made available include:

- Evaluation of Former Executive Director Vera Cartier
- Documents related to evaluation of Vera Cartier

The separation agreement between Vera Cartier and GBHA is not a public document, in order to preserve the privacy of the individual, as determined by the Attorney General’s Office. Mercer stated the letter is very specific on what documents can be released and is silent on the rest. Mooney stated she believes that is an incorrect interpretation and does not believe anything is exempt.

Mooney made a motion to write a letter to the Attorney General’s Office, copy to be sent to DHCD Attorney Colin Boyle, inquiring whether any documents are not to be released.

Motion was not seconded.

Mooney stated she has already filed a letter mentioning this as her interpretation. She believes the Board should also pose the question. Mercer stated his opinion differs. As a Board this letter is communication from the State, and legal counsel has advised what to release. Mooney stated, as a Board member, she has not received any notification from DHCD counsel. Any communication from legal counsel should be distributed to all Board members. Mercer stated none of this is in writing. Mooney suggested inviting DHCD Attorney Colin Boyle to a Board meeting to discuss this, and also ask the Attorney General Division of Open Government what might be or is not covered, specifically, the rebuttal paperwork received from Vera Cartier.

Mooney made a motion, seconded by Sinico to invite DHCD Attorney Colin Boyle to the next regularly scheduled GBHA Board meeting to discuss the letter received from the MA Attorney General's Office in regard to release of documents in reference to the previous Executive Director, Vera Cartier.

Unanimous approval via roll call vote.

Mercer stated all Board members are required to complete State Board Training. Once completed, certificates are to be given to the Executive Director for submission to the State. Mooney and Sinico stated they have already submitted their certificates to the Division of Open Government and did not retain copies.
**FINANCIAL UPDATES** – Budget Presentation by Fee Accountant - Sue Honeycutt – Fenton Ewald & Associates

Financial reports have been a long time coming due to difficulty in obtaining proper information. Financial information had to be pieced together. Proper systems are now in place and are being used correctly, so monthly reporting will now be available on a timely basis. The June quarterly report will be received on time, along with monthly reports, which could not have been done previously.

Accounting is based on accrual basis, not cash basis. Individual line items shown are as required by DHCD. The first column is as budgeted. Actual to Date is actual.

Sue Honeycutt presented financials as of March 31st to the Board:

4001 Great Barrington Housing Elder/Disabled/Family
689 4-bedroom special needs unit – operated by outside agency
4009 Dewey Court

**4001 Great Barrington Housing Elder/Disabled/Family**
2019 - $693,000 income. Operating subsidy of $378,000 is unusual. This is due to exemptions/additional money received from DHCD during the year such as Technical improvement money, new truck, additional bookkeeping services, legal settlement, and attorney services. $131,000 was also received to bump up a very low reserve fund. The State allocated monies to all HA with low reserve funds.

Big spending was in Maintenance line items, with materials slightly overspent. Contracted Services were overspent by $40,000, which probably has a lot to do with vacancies and how much must be spent to re-lease a unit. This figure is very difficult to predict.

Bottom line – there is a surplus of $117,364, which is largely due to the DHCD reserve augmentation. This puts the reserves in a much better place. DHCD minimum is 35% - this amount is 37.84%. Last year the HA overspent what was earned.

**4009 Dewey Court**
This property has a 9-month activity report due to the merger of the property last year.

Income was $117,965. There is a small overage in the administrative line. Dewey Court suffered very large losses in their collection line, as in 4001 account, due to not being able to verify rent balances, so they had to be written off. Mooney asked for clarification. Sue Honeycutt explained rents were not being charged properly and not being collected or recorded properly. Tenants' balances could not accurately be determined, so everything had to be written off and started from scratch. This included the Dewey account also. The write-off ended up being a little over $22,000.

There is a year-end deficit of $21,367, which correlates with the write off. Dewey reserve is at $42,185. It is a small program, so reserve is at 97%.
Mooney inquired where the income from the laundry is listed. Sue Honeycutt stated it is in Other Revenue - $2,031.00, although not separated out as it is not required to be. In 4001 that amount is $15,793.00. Sue Honeycutt explained this amount really doesn’t matter because the more you make in laundry and other income the less the HA receives in subsidy. Mooney required what else would be included in Other Income. Sue Honeycutt replied late fees, fines, any income that is not rental income.

Sue Honeycutt stated Other Revenue is really not a benefit. It benefits the State and reduces the subsidy payment.

GBHA is starting off in a good place this year. With the addition of the Dewey property a portion of office expenses can be shared between 4001 & 4009. Office and salary expenses are allocated based on the number of units. This will assist the financial health of GBHA. Mooney stated part of this is the Executive Director’s collection of rent – Sue Honeycutt agreed.

Mooney inquired where the balance is kept. Sue Honeycutt responded it is not a cash basis. The reserve balance will not be seen in an account due to other things that affect it, such as rent collection, etc. When rents are charged it reduces the subsidy – if rents not paid and written off it is a loss. The HA actually gets hit twice when rents are not paid with reduced subsidy and non-payment. It is very important to keep rents up to date.

Sue Honeycutt stated the new budget is here today, but can be approved at the next meeting to allow time for review. HA cannot always budget what they would like to budget since they must adhere to the amounts set by DHCD. The budget is prepared within the limits set by DHCD, it is entered into the ZDHCD system, signature pages for the Board are supplied, budget is approved and is sent to DHCD for final determination. Mercer inquired whether a delay on the budget vote will affect cash flow. Sue Honeycutt stated no, there is no penalty for not being on time with the budget.

Mercer suggested the Board have a quick workshop during one of their summer meetings.

Mooney stated in reading previous meeting minutes she is wondering whether all staff benefits are being paid. Is a proposal to do so in the budget? Mercer stated this topic was scheduled for discussion at the July Board meeting once the end of year and budget figures were known. Sue Honeycutt stated previously the HA contributed 10% of an employee’s salary to their retirement fund. In the policy it is stated this benefit would be provided as long as there were monies to do so. At the time it was determined the HA could not afford to do so, so the Board voted to suspend the 10% contribution. This benefit is included in the current budget and can be resumed if the Board decides to do so.

Sue Honeycutt stated there is usually a budget comparison provided from year to year – due to difficulties experienced last year and the merger of Dewey Court a comparison would not make sense.

Mooney inquired what PILOT was. Sue Honeycutt stated this is a Payment In Lieu of Taxes, made to the Town of Great Barrington. An Authority can ask for a waiver of this payment. Mooney recommended the Board request the Town of Great Barrington to waive this fee.
Mercer thanked Sue Honeycutt for her work in preparing this financial information. Sue Honeycutt stated the budget may need to be reviewed in a few months.

Mercer stated a new contract is needed with Fenton Ewald. Mooney inquired whether this is required to go out to bid. Sue Honeycutt stated it is not a requirement, but the HA is welcome to do so if they desire. Yearly fees are standard fees. Mooney stated she would like to see GBHA go out to bid for accounting services. Sue Honeycutt explained several years ago DHCD would dictate the fee that could be charged. Fees would increase in tandem with increases allowed for Administrative salaries. When DHCD discontinued dictating the accounting fees Fenton Ewald continued the practice of matching increases in the same manner DHCD had done.

Mooney inquired whether the Administrative salaries included the Office Assistant. Sue Honeycutt responded yes, and directed Mooney to where that was broken down. Mooney inquired whether DHCD dictates the Office Assistant salary. Sue Honeycutt responded the total salary line item cannot increase more than 3%, so in a way, yes. Mooney stated she realizes the position is only 18 hours a week, but is this amount a fair amount for the needs of the position? Danzy stated yes, she believes this is a fair rate for the area. The position is at $17.00 per hour, and will move to $18.00 per hour upon positive review of job performance.

**NEW BUSINESS**

a) Budget Vote

*Tabled until the next regularly scheduled Board meeting to give members time to review the budget*

b) Fees Accountant Contract

Mercer stated Sue Honeycutt will provide a copy of a new contract for review.

c) Community Preservation Committee Update

Mercer stated he is the current CPC Representative – term to expire in 2023. A meeting was held last week – Committee will be starting in the fall to look for housing related proposals. Mr. Cooke from the GB Selectmen has come up with programs and has asked for support. GBHA can brainstorm and attempt to procure monies for studies to be done. For example, one area not being adequately serviced in South County is “workforce housing”. We have low income, elderly and disabled housing, but no “workforce housing”. It is very difficult for new teachers or other young professionals in our area to secure affordable housing for the working class. Mercer’s idea would create a mechanism, a housing development that is dedicated to first-time homebuyers.

The process would look for State funding to develop a project. Those individuals who met eligibility requirements would rent a unit for 5 to 7 years, with a portion of their rent each month deposited into a savings account. At the end of the term they would have a sizable amount of money to move forward with a down payment to use towards the purchase of a home. This process would offer a way to learn money management skills and how to get to the next step. The program would partner with local banks to fund 1st time homebuyer loans. This is something Mercer stated he would like to pursue. He will need a study and further discussion with the Board to develop and
present this idea to the CSC for consideration. The preliminary proposal would be due in the fall, 2019.

Danzy stated this is very similar to the Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) that she has had some experience with. For instance, if an individual is paying $100.00 for rent, they get a job, and their rent goes up to $500.00, the difference of $400.00 is held in a savings account as long as they maintain their working status. Local subsidized residents can participate in this program and build a down payment to eventually purchase a home and become independent.

Dillon stated she believes this to be a great initiative and looks forward to exploring it further.

**MAINTENANCE REPORT** – Rich Phair

- Dewey Court estimates have been received. Phair will be asking the bidders to look over their bids and see if they can sharpen their pencil a bit. Lowest bid received is $3,000 to cut down and trim trees, weed and mulch flower beds and remove those beds not being cared for and seed for grass instead of woodchips. Without woodchips the bid is $2,500. The second bid was $3,150 with woodchips – without would probably be approximately $2,600.
- Danzy and Phair met with the new ARCET Representative and discussed building additional projects into the capital budget such as sidewalks, window replacement, stove replacement, update laundry room area and bathrooms. Fence repair/replacement was also discussed. The Capital Plan going forward will include Dewey and Flag Rock properties. During this meeting it was found that some projects have already been approved, which no one had been aware of.
- Fire Alarm Panel Replacement – ARCET Rep is working on securing quotes. The only quote received to date is from Lee Audio. Bids for this project have been going on since October of 2018 – the current bid is under $10,000. Phair recommends the HA move forward with this replacement.
- Automatic Door Systems – the cost for replacement is just over the ARCET budget. Proposals are $4,800 for a manual popper and $4,700 for wireless. Sinico stated ADA may be able to assist – check with Koloski of LTO.
- In process of collecting the bills for repair of Unit 14 to determine the total expense of repairing damage to that unit.
- Potholes in the driveway have been repaired. A few have been temporarily repaired. The contractor will be back to properly cut and fill those areas.
- Speed bumps for the Flag Rock driveway are currently backordered. They will be shipped the 25th.
- Danzy stated if monies are left over from projects those monies are able to be reallocated elsewhere.
- A tenant inquired whether the gutter work at Dewey has been settled. Work has been done to just the Community Room area, but gutters are needed all the way down the building. Phair stated the HA is approved to replace the gutter systems across the Community Room entrance; Tenant stated the water is coming up onto the sidewalk and she is worried it will come into the unit. Phair will contact ARCET regarding this.
- A tenant of Dewey Court stated she will claim and maintain unclaimed flower beds, and to please let Maintenance know not to pull them out.
- A tenant inquired what the Executive Director’s schedule will be in terms of time spent at the Dewey office. Danzy stated at this time it is difficult to determine, but a schedule is being worked on to provide some coverage at the Dewey property.

**CITIZEN SPEAK**
Michelle Loubert stated she was a previous employee of GBHA, and voluntarily left her position in May 2018. Since then she has attended GBHA Board meetings and has recorded those meetings. Some of the information that has been stated has been very erroneous and to her detriment. Now there has been a successful open meeting law complaint resulting in granting information that was not available before.

Some of the information that has been discussed she has seen and has previously discussed with Sue Honeycutt. Loubert stated she has her own documentation and finds some statements that have been made untrue. She has requested her personnel file three times and has received a very “bleached file” all three times. She has found negative comments within her personnel file that violate Title 29, Chapter 49, Section 52c in that she was never informed these statements were being added to her personnel file, and therefore was unable to make a rebuttal, as she has the right to do.

Previously, Loubert stated she was of the mind to let these things go and move on. After hearing Sue Honeycutt’s presentation today she has decided to not only file a rebuttal with the GBHA Board, but also with DHCD. In addition, she may be filing a complaint with Wage and Hour Division due to some very questionable practices she has experienced.

Loubert stated she was willing to walk away – but after sitting in meeting after meeting, listening to statements that have been well-crafted, and knowing what truly transpired, is not acceptable. She is very angry regarding comments made that have been a serious detriment to her professional reputation.

Mercer acknowledged point taken, and also stated the Board has nothing to do with personnel files.

**BOARD COMMENTS**

Sinico inquired of Danzy, when she is out of the office during the week attending classes/seminars, etc. would she consider working on Friday, since the office is currently closed that day, to make up for time not available to residents. Residents have been complaining Danzy is not available to them. Danzy stated her position has been reduced to 26 hours per week by the State. She is not scheduled to be out for the month of July, and is currently exceeding 26 hours per week.

Mooney inquired, as a cost saving measure, could agendas and other paper materials be printed double-sided. Danzy stated the office is in need of a new printer as the current model is very slow and inefficient. As far as she knows, the current printer does not print double-sided. Many requests for copies of documents could be fulfilled electronically to save paper.

Mooney inquired who would be responsible for preparing a notice that the GBHA is accepting bids/applications for an accounting firm. Mercer stated this discussion could be added to the next meeting agenda.

**Mooney made a motion that the GBHA enter a bid process for accounting firms.**
Motion was not seconded

Mercer stated he does not believe changing course with the accounting firm would be a good idea at this point. There have been many different areas that have caused delays in GBHA being able to obtain accurate, timely financial reporting. Today is the first time financials have been caught up and on track. He believes it is premature to consider changing accounting firms, considering there would be no cost savings in doing so. Mooney stated she does not agree.

A committee was established to review the GBHA Bylaws – Sinico and Mercer volunteered to do so.

Mercer made a motion/seconded by Dillon to appoint Mercer and Sinico to a committee to review the GBHA Bylaws – specifically establishing a provision for a Sheffield representative to serve on the GBHA Board of Directors.

Mooney stated this subcommittee would be open to public attendance. Mercer agreed.

Unanimous approval via roll call vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Sinico made a motion, seconded by Mercer to adjourn the meeting at 3:52PM.

Unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted by Debra E Brazie