

**BROOKLINE HOUSING AUTHORITY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2021, 4:30 PM
By Telephone Conference Call**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Jacobs at 4:30 PM. Those present included: Ms. Dugan, Ms. Katz, Ms. Sullivan, and Ms. Cohen.

1. Call to Order

2. **Board Reports. No votes**

3. **Executive Director Report. No votes.**

Attachment A – FY2020 Financial Statement and AUP Report.

Mr. Alperin touched on the following key points from his report in the BOC board package:

- The Board will be asked to vote on two capital projects which are nearing completion, and which Ms. Cowen has done a great job of completing remotely.
- Additional health & safety precautions for residents taken to prioritize during COVID.

Progress has been made on the Vacancy Report as turnover work on units has been completed. The Authority has moved from having a problem with turnover work (which is a maintenance issue) where units are ready to rent, to having more of a leasing/applications issue.

The December Rent Coll vs. Rent Collected report indicates the Authority's collections have turned positive this year due to hard work by the Property Management team. The BHA is now able to collect more rent than anticipated; including some late rent from previous years, and the Authority's safety net was the beneficiary.

Mr. Alperin congratulated Mr. Hernandez and the Section 8 team for the additional 75 vouchers they received for persons 55 years old or younger with a disability, who are income qualified, to live in and around Brookline. \$1.3M was received from HUD, which he anticipates it will be renewed annually.

Mr. Alperin thanked State Rep. Tommy Vittolo and State Sen. Cynthia Cream, for supporting earmarks in the bond bill for the future redevelopment of Col. Floyd and hopes Gov. Baker will approve it.

On January 13th at 7 pm, the BHA will hold a Zoom neighborhood meeting regarding the redevelopment project at Col. Floyd Apartments. Mr. Alperin noted this redevelopment should result in approximately 150 units of new affordable housing; exceeding Town Meetings' expectations.

Mr. Alperin said he will reach out to the Town's Advisory Board Chairman to see how the BHA can be supported by part of the Town's budget. Hopefully this leads to outcomes supportive of the BHA's objectives. He also noted that Select Board Member Fernandez recently introduced the concept of a new affordable housing committee comprised of two Town Meeting members, the BHA, a resident from family development, and the Director of Maintenance to discuss how to further redevelopment goals.

Mr. Jacobs assumed the issue of how units are filled is also a problem for other housing authorities and asked if the BHA had spoken with Chapa or MANAHRO to discuss CHAMP and to see about having a meeting with DHCD. Mr. Alperin said other housing authorities have been contacted and share a common frustration about only one applicant being pulled at a time. He agreed it's a good idea to talk with other housing authorities about lobbying at the state level for administrative changes.

Mr. Hernandez further explained that DHCD engaged MANAHRO to assist with streamlining the application process. DHCD's intent was to create a fair process. However, if a housing authority pulls 100 applications, and out of the 100 they receive 25 responses, and out of those 25, 10 households have been screened and are in the process of being qualified, if the housing authority finalizes five out of the 10, they can't make any offers to those five until the other five applications have been completed. This is one of the challenges of this system which works against all housing authorities. It is time consuming and doesn't allow a housing authority to move forward and make an offer to a household. Everyone is put in a queue and cannot be offered housing until all 10 applicants have been screened and qualified. It's delaying households who need housing from being housed. As a follow up, Mr. Alperin will talk to Ben Stone, who runs public housing at DHCD to understand what their thinking is.

Ms. Katz noted it has been 60 days since MANAHRO got involved, there is no evidence that the situation is going to be remedied, and that it's time to be aggressive.

Mr. Hernandez said DHCD is trying to see what they can do to expedite this process. He suggested if DHCD made two minor changes, all housing authorities would see a major improvement in the process: 1) expand the expiration date when from when you pull a waiting list, changing it from 60 to 90 days so housing authorities would have some breathing room as tried to process these applications; 2) if an applicant has been screened and qualified, allow the housing authority to make them an offer. Mr. Alperin said these issues will be taken to Ben Stone, Chapa and MANAHRO and discuss advocacy efforts outside of the role MANAHRO is playing.

4. Resident Association Report. No Votes.

No report.

5. Consent Agenda

Vote to approve Consent Agenda, Items 5.A. through 5.F.

5A. Vote to approve the December 8, 2020 Board Meeting and DHCD Annual Plan Public Meeting minutes.

5B. Contract Award. Vote to approve a contract for architecture and engineering services with Studio Umbra, in the amount of \$14,000, for the front building exterior doors/locks project at Trustman Apartments.

5C. Contract Award. Vote to affirm a contract for architecture and engineering services with Crowley Engineering, Inc. in the amount of \$19,960, for the boiler replacement project at High Street Veterans.

5D. Approval of Propriety Procurement. Vote to authorize the use of Proprietary Products Best Key System in the bid specifications for the doors and locks replacement project at Trustman Apartments.

5E. Substantial Completion. Vote to approve Substantial Completion with One Source Construction for the Doors & Locks Replacement Project at the Egmont St. and High St. Veterans Developments. Substantial Completion was approved by the BHA's Architect Garofalo Design Associates, Inc.

5F. Substantial Completion. Vote to approve substantial completion with Thomas E. Snowden Inc. for the bathroom fans installation project at Egmont Street Veterans development. Substantial Completion was approved by BHA's engineer Nangle Engineering, Inc.

This agenda item was unanimously approved on a motion by Ms. Dugan and a second by Ms. Katz.

6. COVID-19 Expenses and Budget Implications. Connor Clark, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator. No Votes.

Mr. Clark presented the extent of all BHA COVID incurred expenses for March -December 2020 and the implications heading into the last quarter of the fiscal year. On a high level, over \$500,000 was incurred over all programs in COVID costs: 70% for cleaning labor, 14% of costs are related to remote technology for staff, other costs were for PPE & cleaning materials, notices, and posters. The state public housing program incurred most of these costs or 63%, federal public housing incurred 25%, and 10% for all other housing including tax credit housing and Section 8.

In response to the pandemic and the added expense of doing business as a housing authority, over \$1M in supplemental funds were received through: Federal Cares Act Funds, CDBG funds from the Town, DHCD funds for state programs, as well as Cares Act HCV Supplemental Admin fees to support Section 8. As of December 31st, 94% of those funds were allocated. Additionally, the BHA applied for FEMA reimbursement dollars and has allocated funds to that potential source but have yet to be approved. It's unclear when those funds will be received.

Current budget implications include as of December 31st: the state public housing program has an over \$250,000 net decrease of unrestricted reserves, and the federal housing program is currently seeing a \$150,000 net increase in unrestricted reserves. The reason is that different funding sources have specific requirements for costs those funds can be allocated to.

Looking ahead over the next three months, the monthly spend rate in the state public housing program is over \$9,000/month; the majority of which is for COVID cleaning costs. By March 31st there will be a net \$237,000 decrease in unrestricted reserves, and in the federal public housing program there is a monthly spend rate of approximately \$16,000/month (the majority also from cleaning costs). The net increase will then shrink to about \$86,000.

The pandemic is not over, and costs are ongoing; mostly for cleaning which is the largest share. Looking to the immediate future, Mr. Clark said the majority of these funds have been spent, FEMA funds are still a wild card, and the Authority is hoping more funds become available.

Mr. Alperin thanked Mr. Clark for this update, and added he feels the Housing Authority is roughly made whole from Federal Cares Act monies on the federal public housing and Section 8 programs. However, the State Public Housing Program was unable to be as generous on a per unit basis with their Cares Act or COVID relief funds, and the state public housing is incurring the most costs. The BHA is in danger of dipping into what is already the least reserved program further. He feels the reserve decreases noted by Mr. Clark are conservative, that there are savings in other areas, and that the numbers in Mr. Clark's

report is hopefully a worst-case scenario. Mr. Alperin noted the BHA is already below the minimum threshold the state would like the Authority to hold in the state public housing program's reserves. Absent of additional federal stimulus, the Housing Authority can't continue the same level of cleaning and sanitation without the Commissioners agreeing to further dip further into these reserves. State approval may also be required, but the benefits to public health should warrant an additional decrease.

7. DHCD FY 2021 Budget Revision. Vote to approve Budget Certification Revision for the State Public Housing Program, increasing the budget by the \$133,420 in COVID-19 funds received through DHCD.

Mr. Alperin explained that these are funds received from COVID-19 funds from DHCD and requires an amendment to the FY 2021 budget. To do so requires a vote by the Board of Commissioners to approve receipt of those funds.

This agenda item was unanimously approved on a motion by Ms. Cohen and a second by Ms. Katz.

8. Administrative Plan Amendment - Section 8. Vote to approve amendments to the Section 8 Administrative Plan related to the Mainstream Vouchers serving non-elderly disabled households.

Mr. Hernandez said that this refers to the \$1.3M the BHA was awarded in mainstream voucher funds to assist 75 households. From time to time housing authorities need to amend their Section 8 administrative plan. This is adding language to the Housing Authority's Section 8 plan to accommodate the new funding for mainstream vouchers.

This agenda item was unanimously approved on a motion by Ms. Dugan and a second by Ms. Cohen.

9. Federal Public Housing Waiver. Vote to approve a temporary waiver to two provisions of the BHA's Federal Public Housing Program, in accordance with PIH Notice 2020-33(HA), REV-2 and pursuant to the provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Mr. Baronas said the Cares Act allows housing authorities to issue waivers to adjust program priorities related to health and safety during COVID, and the BHA Board has adopted several of these waivers over the last few months. Two new provisions are now being proposed: the first relates to the BHA's designated housing plan allowing for renewal extensions (extending the period of time further); and the second waiver is for a change to the annual choice of rent. Public housing residents can choose either an income-based rent based on 30% of their income, or a flat-rate rent based on Section 8 fair market rents. Some residents, although still in a low-income category, may have higher incomes and can choose to cap their rent at a flat level. This waiver would allow them to the flexibility to change from a flat-rate rent to an income-based rent if their income were to go up again, which is not normally allowed by HUD regulations. Mr. Baronas recommended that the Board approve these waivers.

This agenda item was unanimously approved on a motion by Ms. Katz and a second by Ms. Cohen.

10. Development Change Orders. Vote to affirm change orders for Morse Apartments, 90 Longwood Ave.

Mr. Anderson said there are series of change orders which have been approved by staff, anything less than \$50,000 up to a cap of \$500,000 for the project would be approved by staff. He felt it was time to give the Board an update as to where the status of projects stands.

This agenda item was unanimously approved on a motion by Ms. Sullivan and a second by Ms. Dugan.

11. Contract Amendment. Vote to approve an amendment to the Agreement between Brookline Housing Authority and Hill International, Inc. to extend the term for construction management services for 61 Park to May 31, 2021 at an additional cost of \$12,219.

Ms. Maffei said this is an extension of the existing contract with Hill International. Due to the COVID shutdown, the project is going out another 3-4 months and the Authority needs to extend the contract with them. She felt they offered a very fair price to extend their services for this period for an extra \$12,000, and recommended approval.

This agenda item was unanimously approved on a motion by Ms. Cohen and a second by Ms. Sullivan.

12. Elevator Upgrade. Vote to approve a proposal from Associated Elevator to upgrade the elevator at 61 Park at a cost of \$30,000/each. Such non-routine extraordinary work is allowed under the existing contract dated November 27, 2019 so long as certain provisions are met. As the construction contract with Colantonio, Inc. ('CI') included an allowance of \$60,000 for this work, CI will provide a credit to the Owner in this amount.

Ms. Maffei said the Authority wants to have upgrades to the elevators, which was carried as an allowance in the contract. Colantonio sought a proposal from Associated (the existing vendor) who originally came in at \$30,000/elevator. Under Chapter 149A, Colantonio would be obliged to bid this out competitively, but because the BHA has an existing contract with them, can contract with them directly. The change in pricing reflects the taxes incurred for non-labor material items because 61 Park is a taxable entity. The BHA will receive a \$60,000 credit back from Colantonio and will only incur \$1,000 in out-of-pocket expenses. Mr. Alperin added this is in response to elevator issues at 61 Park. The decision to add this elevator work back into the scope of the construction was a deemed appropriate as a result of some state inspections and work with the contractor.

This agenda item was unanimously approved on a motion by Ms. Sullivan and a second by Ms. Dugan.

13. Approve Annual Plan. Vote to approve the BHA's 2021 HUD Annual Plan, for Federal Public Housing.

Attachment B - HUD Annual Plan.

Mr. Alperin said the BHA is required to file this plan annually with HUD, regarding plans for the coming year, and was developed by all department heads in their respective areas. A resident advisory meeting was held on January 5th, and the plan was posted publicly. No written comments were received. A

second public meeting was held on January 6th, and there were no additional comments or questions which would cause revisions to the plan.

This agenda item was unanimously approved on a motion by Ms. Katz and a second by Ms. Cohen.

14. BHA Personnel Policy. Vote to approve the BHA’s revised Personnel Policy.

Attachment C – BHA Personnel Policy.

Mr. Alperin asked the Board to postpone voting on this, as Ms. Cohen has raised issues which warrant further revisions to the Personnel Policy. He proposed the approval of the revised Personnel Policy instead be added to the agenda of the Board meeting on January 26th when revisions can be considered. He noted this is a comprehensive update to the BHA personnel policies; they were last entirely updated in 2000 and amended in 2007. These updates are needed to bring the BHA current with labor law at the state and federal levels and the BHA’s current practices. In addition to working with the BHA’s legal counsel, the policies were reviewed with all department heads. The policies were sent to all BHA staff who were offered a chance to discuss any issues or concerns related to the new policies.

Ms. Cohen clarified her issues weren’t major objections. Mr. Alperin offered that revisions include: adding sections requiring staff with expired licenses to proactively notify the BHA; a legacy reference to a grievance policy appropriate for unionized employees, but which has been moved to the Authority’s collected bargaining agreements and should be referenced there instead, and further clarification regarding language prohibiting staff from having romantic relationships with residents of BHA housing.

Ms. Katz will also send a few questions/comments for Mr. Alperin to consider prior to the January 26th meeting. Mr. Alperin will ask BHA Legal Counsel, Michele Randazzo, to provide a redlined version of the document so Board members will know what has changed.

15. Other Business

None.

16. Board Meetings

Extra January Board Meeting: Tuesday, January 26th at 4:30 PM (FY 2022 Budget)

February Board Meeting: February 9th at 4:30 PM

17. Adjournment Vote

On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Katz it was unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 5:25 PM.

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Michael Alperin, Executive Director