

Brookline Housing Authority  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
May 24, 2017  
90 Longwood Avenue  
4:30 PM

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Trietsch at 4:35 PM. Those present included Ms. Dugan, Mr. Jacobs, Ms. Sullivan, and Ms. Katz.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Dober reported the following:

- Work is beginning on two construction projects: the Trustman Apartments community space and office renovations; and fire alarm upgrades at Kickham Apartments.
- The series of Jewish Family and Children's Services bullying bystander training sessions are being held at each of the BHA senior housing sites. Special sessions arranged by Danielle Mendola, BHA ESOL Director, have been coordinated for residents whose first language is Chinese or Russian.
- A Parent Child Home Program (PCHP) sponsored playgroup at Egmont Street Veterans Apartments has begun. This is modeled after a well-attended PCHP playgroup at High Street Veterans Apartments.
- Ben Franco has been elected to a second term on the Brookline Board of Selectmen. He has been a strong supporter of the BHA. Heather Hamilton has been elected to fill the seat of Nancy Daily, who decided to not run for reelection. Mr. Trietsch and Mr. Dober are working on scheduling a tour of BHA properties for Selectman Hamilton.
- BHA Executive Assistant, Desiree Ladd, has earned her Massachusetts Public Housing Management certification.

Election of Officers

This being the BHA Annual Meeting, Mr. Trietsch asked the Board to take up the business of electing Board Officers for the next year. **On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Sullivan, Mr. Trietsch was nominated for and unanimously approved to be Chairman. On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Dugan, Mr. Jacobs was nominated for and unanimously approved to be Vice Chairman. On a motion from Mr. Trietsch and a second from Mr. Jacobs, Ms. Dugan was nominated for and unanimously approved to be Treasurer.**

Consent Agenda

**On a motion from Ms. Dugan and a second from Ms. Sullivan, the consent agenda was unanimously approved and authorized the following: the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on April 18, 2017; the BHA's self-certification under the Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) for FY 2017; Final Closing of the contract with Aqua Line Utility, Inc. for the storm drains repair project at High Street Veterans and Egmont Street Veterans Apartments; Final Closing of the contract with MJS Construction Inc. for the masonry repairs project at Trustman Apartments; and amendments to the Collective Bargaining Agreements between the BHA and the Teamsters and AFSCME unions, providing for a wage increase of 2% for FY 2018.**

### Special Guest Presentation

Ydelfonso Solano, VITA Tax Preparation Coordinator, explained the following:

- VITA was created by the IRS and modeled after an AARP tax preparation assistance program to help seniors and persons with disabilities to get their full tax refunds.
- VITA has been expanded to help tax filers of all ages who earn less than \$55,000 per household.
- VITA helps individuals and families file tax returns, resolve tax problems, and can assist them with credit counseling and medical debt resolution.
- VITA is the only such program in the Greater Boston area that remains open year round.
- Volunteers are trained and certified, and operate under a strict code of conduct.
- VITA has site hours scheduled at both the Walnut Street Apartments and Trustman Apartments.
- Through April 18, 2017, the VITA sites at the BHA have helped 195 individuals earn a total of \$390,195 in tax refunds. Sixty-five percent of the tax returns included an earned income tax credit.

### Authorization to Prepare 501(c)(3) Application

Mr. Dober said that the Board approved a contract with Hurwit & Associates at the February Board meeting, to provide advice and assistance regarding the establishment of a 501(c)(3). Mr. Dober and Hurwit Associates recommend the establishment of such a nonprofit entity, which can help the BHA to raise funds to support its social service programming. **On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Mr. Jacobs, authorization for Hurwit & Associates to establish a nonprofit corporate affiliate of the BHA under state law and prepare an application to the IRS for 510(c)(3) tax-exempt status under federal law, was unanimously approved.**

### Resident Association

Brookline Housing Town Wide Resident Association President, Jaymmy Colon, reported that things are going well at the developments. She has met with BHA Assistant Executive Director, Matthew Baronas, to discuss issues and concerns. Ms. Colon said that she would like to be more active in the BHTWTA, but she lately has been dealing with family matters, including some health issues.

Ms. Colon said that she has received email messages from a BHA resident saying that “the BHA Board is on to you”. She feels that this individual is a bully. Mr. Trietsch said that he does not know where these messages came from. If the BHA wishes to communicate with Ms. Colon, it will always do so directly. Ms. Colon also said that she was aggressively and unfairly questioned at a BHTWTA meeting at Sussman House and that the legitimacy of her leadership was questioned, and she is resolved to not let this happen again.

Mr. Trietsch noted that in order to function cooperatively, the separation between the BHTWTA and the BHA must be maintained and respected. In such a way, the BHA can rely on the BHTWTA to provide honest feedback. If Ms. Colon needs help against a bully, the BHA will do whatever it can to assist her.

Mr. Trietsch reminded Ms. Colon that the BHA would like her to provide the Board with information on BHTWTA meeting dates, agendas, and meeting minutes.

### Contract for Resident Services

Mr. Dober said that an RFP was issued for the resident services which the Brookline Community Mental Health Center (BCMHC) currently provides to the BHA. A new contract component was added to the RFP scope, which will allow service coordination at BHA state family developments through a grant from

the Brookline Community Foundation's NETA fund. BCMHC submitted the only response to this RFP. BHA staff feels that BCMHC is uniquely qualified to carry out these services. **On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Mr. Jacobs, a contract with Brookline Community Mental Health Center to provide services under the ROSS Service Coordination, Social Work Services, and Transitional Housing Program, in the aggregate amount of \$263,196.00 annually, for a three-year term, renewable for an additional two-year term, was unanimously approved.**

#### Contract for Information Technology Services

Mr. Dober said that an RFP was issued for information technology services. Eight proposals were received, and three finalists were chosen. After close examination of the proposals, Terminal Exchange Systems is being recommended for contract approval. Their price is significantly lower than the other finalists; they are a local Minority Business Enterprise; they have good references; and they have the capacity to meet the BHA's needs. **On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Katz, a contract with Terminal Exchange Systems to provide Information Technology services for a base fee of \$2,010.00 per month (\$24,120.00 annually), for an initial two-year term, renewable for two additional one-year terms, was unanimously approved.**

#### DHCD Staff Salaries

Mr. Dober said that DHCD is requiring housing authorities to approve a schedule of compensation for their five highest paid employees. DHCD certification language in their original schedule, which the BHA objected to, has been revised and is no longer objectionable to the BHA. **On a motion from Ms. Dugan and a second from Ms. Sullivan, the DHCD Schedule of Compensation for the BHA's five highest paid employees for FY 2017 was unanimously approved.**

#### Miscellaneous Issues

A non-BHA resident, Larry Onie, said that he attended a trial in Dedham District Court involving a BHA resident and her partner and a driver for the BHA's towing company. He stated his opinion that the tow driver acted irresponsibly and that the BHA has a responsibility to its residents regarding the companies it hires. He said that the tow driver's Facebook page had disturbing information on it.

Mr. Trietsch said that the BHA has concerns about anyone who mistreats residents. The BHA will have a serious conversation about the matter.

BHA resident, Shifra Freewoman, has concerns regarding the emergency pull cord system at Morse Apartments. An alarm is sounded on the floor where someone has pulled the cord, but there is no way for neighbors to know which unit has an occupant calling for help. Mr. Dober said that the pull cord system at the BHA is an old system that sounds a general alarm. The cost of upgrading such a system would be significant. Mr. Trietsch said that he would like the BHA to investigate options for making the pull cord system more effective, including the cost to upgrade the system.

Ms. Freewoman said that the BHA cleaning contractor and grounds keeping contractor seem to be using toxic cleaning products. Mr. Dober said that there is language in the BHA service contracts requiring "green" non-toxic products; however, even green products can produce strong odors.

BHA resident, Bruce Wolff, asked if the BHA had made any progress with free Wi-Fi for residents. Mr. Dober said that the BHA continues to monitor market options for no cost and low cost options.

Mr. Wolff said the social bullying bystander training for residents was well done, but he wished more residents would have attended the session at Sussman House. BHA resident, Ann Stitt, was thankful for the social bullying training at Morse Apartments. She said that she hoped that this training would be the beginning of a continuing conversation.

Mr. Wolff said that he has a medical condition that requires that he have air conditioning in his apartment. He believes that the BHA should provide air conditioning at no cost to residents. Mr. Dober said that unfortunately, the BHA cannot afford to purchase air conditioners for residents. There are organizations, however, that may be able to assist income eligible residents with such requests.

The Board confirmed that the next meeting will be held at High Street Veterans Apartments on June 13, 2017 at 4:30 PM.

**On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Mr. Jacobs, it was unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 6:05 PM.**