

Brookline Housing Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
January 17, 2018
90 Longwood Avenue
4:30 PM

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Trietsch at 4:40 PM. Those present included Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Katz.

Board Report

Mr. Trietsch said that the tragic death of Brookline Public Schools student and BHA resident Isaac Saki last week has been heavy on the minds of all at the BHA, and that the BHA Board and staff are keeping him and his family in their prayers. The Board is thankful for the compassion and support of Brookline Police Officer Tim Stephenson, and the counselors at Brookline Public Schools and Brookline Community Mental Health Center.

The Board wishes BHA Commissioner Barbara a quick recovery from injuries she sustained recently when she slipped and fell.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Dober reported the following:

- The BHA has welcomed two key employees this month: BHA Director of Maintenance, David Perry; and BHA Redevelopment Director, Maria Maffei. Mr. Perry most recently was the second in command at the Cambridge Housing Authority Maintenance Department, and has a wealth of experience and skills. Ms. Maffei has built an impressive career devoted to rehabbing affordable housing and offers the BHA a valuable skillset.
- BHA Assistant Executive Director, Matthew Baronas, last month gave a well-received talk on the history and the mission of the BHA to the Brookline Rotary Club.
- BHA resident services staff is distributing the second edition of its Resident Services Newsletter, including a Spanish language edition.
- The BHA is very pleased to be the recipient of a \$50,000 grant from the Brookline Community Foundation (BCF) that will go toward comprehensive service coordination. Two other BCF grants of \$10,000 each (to enhance ESOL and Family Learning Center programs) should bring the BCF support total this year to \$70,000. This level of support indicates that BCF considers the BHA to be a critical provider of services to the community.

Maintenance Department Report

Mr. Perry reported the following:

- Efforts are underway to strengthen the lines of communication between residents and staff in the Maintenance Department so that work is completed more effectively. When residents go directly to a Maintenance Worker or to a Property Manager to report problems, instead of properly reporting the problem to the Maintenance Department, some breakdowns of the work order process occur. An old BHA flyer that instructs residents on how to report maintenance needs is being updated.

Mr. Trietsch asked if residents can expect to get a call back if they leave a work order request on the Maintenance Department's voice mail. Mr. Perry said residents should expect this. Ms. Sullivan said that guiding all work requests into the system should help staff track efficiency.

Construction Report

BHA Director of Capital Improvements, Sharon Cowan, reported the following:

- The Sussman House emergency generator conversion is scheduled for next Thursday, weather permitting. Staff is arranging the availability of comfortable locations where residents can go for a few hours if they so choose during the planned electrical shut-down, including the Coolidge Corner library across the street.
- The BHA is waiting for approval from DHCD before bidding the first phase of the Egmont Street Veterans courtyard improvements.
- The contractor is waiting for a break in the weather in order to complete the Trustman Apartments roof replacement project punch list.
- The Trustman Apartments community room/office renovations are expected to be complete in a couple of weeks.

Consent Agenda

On a motion from Ms. Katz and a second from Ms. Sullivan, the consent agenda was unanimously approved and authorized the following: the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on December 12, 2017; Change Order #2 to the contract with Riverdale Plumbing & Heating Inc. for the High Street Veterans Apartments Sewer Line Replacement project, increasing the contract amount by \$49,428.70 to \$332,428.70 and extending the Substantial Completion date to November 6, 2017; Substantial Completion of the High Street Veterans Apartments Sewer Line Replacement project; a confidentiality policy required by DHCD in relation to resident income information made available to the BHA under the state Wage Match system; an amendment to the contract with Development Synergies LLC changing compensation from a flat rate of \$6,000.00 per month to an hourly rate of \$150.00 per hour in anticipation of reduced services by the contractor; and a fee increase under the contract with BSC Group for the Egmont Street Veterans Apartments Courtyard project in the amount of \$9,600.00, increasing the contract value to \$44,500.00.

Gateway East Reconfiguration

Mr. Dober introduced: Brookline Planning Department Deputy Director Joe Viola; Bill Smith, Senior Engineer from the Brookline Transportation Department; and Town contracted landscape architect, Kyle Zick.

Mr. Viola reported the following:

- The Brookline Planning Department recently conducted a number of walk-throughs with BHA staff, and held a meeting on December 19, 2017 with residents of Walnut Street Apartments. At each of these events, they received some good feedback relevant to Gateway East.
- The goal of the Gateway East project is to: improve the connection between the Emerald Necklace, the MBTA station, and Brookline Village; improve the ability of pedestrians and bicyclists to navigate across Route 9; and make the area more attractive and livable.
- An essential element of the project calls for the realignment of Walnut Street closer to the Walnut Street Apartments senior buildings, utilizing what is now the BHA parking lot adjacent to the senior buildings in order to accomplish this.
- The timeline calls for: 100% plan submittal in March, 2018; bidding in the fall of 2018; the start of construction in the spring of 2019; and construction completion in the fall of 2020.

Mr. Zick reported the following:

- Gateway East seeks to improve area aesthetics in such ways as: a tree lined road along Route 9 on both sides; a new green space and plantings near the bus stop; and a pocket park.
- At the suggestion of BHA staff and residents, a crosswalk to the bus stop from the BHA senior buildings has been incorporated into the plans.
- On the BHA side of Walnut Street, new features will include: a three foot retaining wall and fence above the road which will help mitigate street noise and lights; a tree and planting barrier on BHA property near the road; accessible walkways; and parallel street parking.

Mr. Trietsch said that he is pleased that the Town has addressed many of the concerns of BHA residents and staff.

Mr. Dober said that the sale to the Town of the BHA parking lot at the rear of the senior buildings needs to be negotiated. Appropriate compensation is required by HUD in any disposition of public housing property.

Mr. Viola said that during construction: Mass Department of Transportation will be the contract administrator; the Town will also provide some construction oversight; strict safety measures will be required; a project liaison to the community will be appointed; concerns raised by the public will be discussed at project team weekly meetings; Town noise bylaws and work hour bylaws will be strictly enforced; and dust control and rodent control requirements will be maintained.

FY 2017 Audited Financial Statements

Mr. Dober reported the following:

- The BHA's audit conducted by Guyder Hurley resulted in a clean audit.
- Cash reserves increased by approximately \$900,000 to approximately \$5 million.
- The audit tracks future obligations, including pension payments and health care benefits for retirees. These liabilities amount to over \$10 million and have a negative impact on the balance sheet, resulting in a net position of negative \$5.9 million.
- DHCD enacted new regulations and oversight requirements as part of the 2014 state public housing reform package. The requirements include a review of certain public housing authority operations during the annual audit. This is carried out under a structure called Agreed Upon Procedures (AUPs). The BHA auditor felt the BHA's AUP report was excellent. There were only eight "exceptions" out of 86 criteria, most of which were technicalities.

86 Dummer Street Operating Budget

Mr. Dober reported the following:

- The 86 Dummer Street financials are in very good shape, and Peabody Property has been doing an excellent job.
- A cooperative relationship exists between the BHA and Peabody Properties with respect to shared, pro-rated expenses such as snow and trash removal and landscaping work.

Mr. Trietsch asked how 86 Dummer Street residents feel about the management of their development. Mr. Dober said that resident feedback has been positive. BHA Property Manager, Sheila O'Flaherty, works very closely with Peabody Property staff to help insure resident satisfaction. And the BHA takes great efforts to extend BHA resident social services to 86 Dummer Street residents.

Ms. Katz asked why both water and sewer costs and real estate taxes are projected to be lower next year. Mr. Dober said that the water and sewer projections are based on actual use figures. And due to a timing issue, a year and a half worth of real estate taxes were paid last year, lessening the cost burden for this coming year.

Miscellaneous Issues

BHA resident, Kenneth Drummond, asked if residents are given a work order number when they request work in their apartment. Mr. Dober said that the BHA needs to do a better job of tracking work orders, and that Mr. Perry is committed on tightening up the system.

Mr. Perry said that there is a well-designed work order system in place, but it needs to be communicated to residents and staff to improve efficiency.

BHA resident, Deborah Bennett, said that she often gets a voice mail message when calling the Maintenance Department office. Mr. Perry said that he plans to implement a policy whereby if a work request is left on voice mail, a BHA Maintenance office staff member will get back to them with a work order number.

The Board confirmed that the next meeting will be held at Morse Apartments on February 13, 2018 at 4:30 PM.

On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Katz, it was unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 6:00 PM.

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ATTEST**



**Patrick Dober
Executive Director**