

Regular Meeting Minutes
June 13, 2017
226 High Street
4:30 PM

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

Board Reports

Ms. Dugan said that she was very impressed by the presentations that BHA residents made to Congressman Joe Kennedy at a meeting that BHA staff arranged for him at Kickham Apartments on May 26, 2017. Congressmen Kennedy came to learn more about public housing from BHA residents.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Dober reported the following:

- In response to a resident's concern expressed at the last meeting about toxic chemicals, BHA staff confirmed that its landscape contractors use no chemicals and its cleaning contractors use only green products.
- In response to a resident's concern expressed at the last meeting that emergency pull cords do not identify which unit is calling for help and do not notify emergency responders, the BHA is researching options for the upgrade of BHA emergency pull cord systems.
- The series of service coordination open houses and bullying prevention trainings for residents have been completed at all BHA elderly developments with great turnouts and shared information.
- The ESOL end of the year celebration on May 31, 2017 was a great event. Over 70 participants and family members attended.
- The construction contract for storm drain repair and replacement was completed this spring at High Street Veterans Apartment, and a new construction project for a sanitary sewer line replacement has begun.
- Mr. Dober said the BHA public housing vacancy rate is currently less than 1%. He thanked staff for their consistent efforts to fill vacant apartments.

A resident of the BHA Transitional Housing Program who resides at High Street Veterans Apartments thanked the BHA for the opportunity to live in Brookline after her family had lived eight months in a shelter; however, she expressed a concern about the unavailability of parking. Mr. Dober explained that, unfortunately, there is a waiting list for parking at the High Street Veterans Apartments.

Resident Association

BHA Assistant Executive Director, Matthew Baronas, confirmed that Brookline Housing Town Wide Resident Association President, Jaymmy Colon, was unable to make the meeting today.

Consent Agenda

On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Mr. Jacobs, the consent agenda was unanimously approved and authorized the following: the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on May 24, 2017; a contract for installation of a replacement landscape wall at Egmont Street Veterans Apartments to DeMelo Construction in the amount of \$47,864.00; and Final Completion of the contract with Lan-Tel

Communications, Inc. for installation of security cameras at the Kickham, Sussman, and O'Shea buildings.

Emergency Transfer Plan

BHA Director of Subsidized Housing and Applications, Carlos Hernandez, said that HUD is now requiring public housing authorities to adopt an Emergency Transfer Plan (ETP) relevant to the 2013 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Under the proposed BHA ETP, participants in BHA federal public housing and Section 8 programs who are victims of domestic violence would be given priority consideration for a transfer from their current BHA program unit into another unit (either federal public housing or Section 8).

Ms. Sullivan asked if the BHA's state public housing program has similar rules. Mr. Hernandez said that the state does not currently require such a plan; however, BHA policies in place allow the BHA to transfer a victim of domestic violence from state public housing to the Section 8 program.

Mr. Dober said that applicants for BHA's state public housing program who are fleeing from domestic violence receive a very high priority.

Mr. Trietsch said that it is a priority of the BHA to provide for the safety of its residents.

On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Sullivan, the HUD-required Emergency Transfer Plan under the Violence Against Women Act was unanimously approved.

FY 2017 Year-End Financials

Mr. Dober reported the following:

- The BHA's combined programs ran a small surplus of \$92,842. This is consistent with the BHA's bottom lines in recent fiscal years. The goal of the public housing budget process is to break even.
- Recent trends are continuing, including the rising costs of contracted plumbing and mechanical services due to the advancing ages of BHA buildings.
- Salary costs increased above projections due to the filling of a new full-time receptionist/program assistant position, and a higher than budgeted annual staff salary increase.
- Electricity costs rose; but these cost are covered dollar-for-dollar by operating subsidy.
- Frontline maintenance fees increased, but these fees were matched by income from the COCC.
- HUD subsidy increased slightly because of better than expected congressional funding.
- Miscellaneous income increased, primarily due to the leasing of parking spaces at Walnut Street Apartments to Children's Hospital. The rental contract for these spaces will expire in early 2018. The BHA will seek to pursue such revenue in the future.
- Federal public housing ran a deficit; state public housing broke even; and the Section 8 program ran a surplus.
- BHA reserve levels are healthy. However, when future expenses for retiree health costs and retirement system contributions are accrued as required by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB 45), the reserves total negative \$4.19 million. Most other public agencies in Massachusetts and throughout the country contend with the same issue.

- BHA Graduate Fellow, Rachel Meketon, is working on a long-term (five year) analysis of income and expenses to project future surpluses and deficits. It is expected that this study will show increasing deficits and the need for new revenue.

Miscellaneous Issues

BHA resident, Dora Miller, said that residents often jam pennies in the door lock mechanism of the front entry door to her building at High Street Veterans Apartments, rigging the door so that it does not lock. She said that BHA Property Manager, Nereida Otero-Torres has responded to her complaints by sending letters to residents warning them not to do this, but the problem persists. Ms. Miller added that the community garden at her development has limited capacity. If she had some money for seeds and supplies, Ms. Miller would be willing to teach fellow residents to grow vegetables in containers.

BHA resident, Eileen Ward, said that one of the dumpsters at High Street Veterans Apartments has no side doors, and another dumpster has a broken cover. Ms. Ward added that there are many dogs at her development and that some of the owners leave messes on the grounds.

Mr. Trietsch said that the BHA will look into these matters.

BHA resident, Bruce Wolff, said that he was unsatisfied with the BHA's response to his previous request that they purchase an air conditioner for his apartment. Mr. Trietsch said that, unfortunately, the BHA cannot do for one resident what it cannot afford to do for others.

Mr. Wolff said that he was concerned that residents are able to reserve the community room in his building for their private use. Mr. Dober said that the BHA resident handbook makes it clear that residents are allowed to reserve their community room on occasion for group events.

Ms. Miller said that she has heard rumors that BHA buildings will be torn down and renovated. Mr. Trietsch said that there are no such plans.

The Board confirmed that the next meeting will be held at Egmont Street Veterans Apartments on July 11, 2017 at 4:30 PM.

On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Katz, it was unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 5:45 PM.