

Brookline Housing Authority
Meeting Minutes
August 11, 2020
By Teleconference
4:30 PM

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

Executive Director Report

Mr. Alperin reported the following:

- He looks forward to working collaboratively with the BHA Board, staff and constituents.
- Congratulations are due BHA Director of Redevelopment, Maria Maffei, and her team for the successful closing of the 90 Longwood Avenue RAD transaction.
- The central offices at 90 Longwood Avenue have been moved to temporary locations at Trustman Apartments and the second floor of 90 Longwood Avenue. A flood on the first floor of the building in early July complicated this move and accelerated the schedule, adding to the moving costs. Hopefully, the insurance claim will help with the extra costs.
- The BHA has incurred significant COVID related operational and contract expenses in the first quarter of its fiscal year, much of which pertains to building sanitation efforts. In addition to the \$72,337 in CDBG funds, there is available \$305,183 in operating funds, plus \$217,584 and \$287,772 in two allocations of Housing Choice Voucher funds. FEMA and NEMA reimbursement requests are in process. The bottom line is that through June 30, 2020, the BHA has incurred \$125,000 in costs above and beyond the budget and it is short \$130,000 with respect to real estate activities.

Ms. Dugan said that she expects to see an increase in rodent activity at Walnut Street Apartments due to both the Gateway East traffic safety project construction and the dredging of the Muddy River. She suggested that the BHA should monitor and adjust exterminator efforts as needed.

Resident Association Report

Brookline Housing Town Wide Tenant Association (BHTWTA) President, Jaymmy Colon, reported the following:

- It has come to her attention that the BHA feels that she required to attend BHA Board meetings. She believes that she does not have to attend all meetings.
- She suggests that the BHA provide disinfecting wipes for BHA laundry rooms and keep doggie bag dispensaries stocked on BHA sites.
- She has not been receiving Board packages during the pandemic.
- She proposes a memorandum of understanding be developed between the BHA and the BHTWTA.
- The BHTWTA has been active and she has reached out to the BHA on behalf of residents regarding maintenance requests.

Mr. Alperin said that he would look forward to active participation by the BHTWTA.

Mr. Jacobs said that at many BHA Board meetings, residents have voiced concerns about the inattention of Ms. Colon and the BHTWTA.

Mr. Alperin said that he welcomes Ms. Colon's suggestions. The BHA is attempting to do everything possible to comply with COVID related CDC health and safety guidelines and best practices. He appreciates the help she has given to residents. He is glad that Ms. Colon is attending today's meeting.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Jacobs asked for details regarding the proposed solution to the rodent infestation at the 86 Dummer Street and Trustman Apartments site.

BHA Director of Capital Improvements, Sharon Cowan, said that BHA staff raised the issue as urgent and different eradication methods were attempted. It became apparent that a solution would require an engineering study and significant capital expense. Rodent burrowing is occurring behind the courtyard retaining wall and the wall will need to be redesigned to prevent this from continuing. The site trash enclosures will also need to be redesigned.

On a motion from Ms. Dugan and a second from Ms. Katz, the consent agenda was unanimously approved and authorized the following: the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on July 14, 2020; final completion of the office renovation project at Kickham Apartments with Unicon, Inc.; a contract for architecture and engineering services with BSC Group (BSC), in the amount of \$24,600, for the trash/rodent remediation project at Trustman and 86 Dummer Street Apartments; change order #1 to the doors and locks project at Egmont Street and High Street Veterans Developments. The contract with One Source Construction, LLC will increase in the amount of \$30,231.05. The change order has been approved by DHCD and our Architect at Garofalo Design Associates. This will bring the contract to a total of \$403,927.05; change order #1 to the contract with Drizos Contracting LLC for a time extension. This is a no cost change order that will extend the contract completion date by 14 days to August 14, 2020. Our architect at Garofalo Design Associates Inc. has approved the extension; and final completion of the contract with Araujo Brothers Plumbing for the replacement of underground domestic water pipes at Col. Floyd Apartments.

Resident Services Report

BHA Director of Resident Services, Danielle Mendola, reported the following:

- The Resident Services annual report runs from July of 2019 through June of 2020 and covers about 10 resident services programs. The numbers indicate that there were around 24,000 touchpoints of services provided collectively to about 770 BHA residents. This is an increase in numbers from the previous year.
- COVID necessitated a shift away from in person contact, and a new effort to provide essential services in other ways. Food security became a major focus, with BHA staff working closely with the Brookline Food Pantry and other partners to fill this need.
- BHA residents were provided with information and resources to participate more fully in the US Census count and the voting process.
- The BHA resident services team is working with Springwell and other partners to survey and support technology access for BHA seniors.
- The BHA is working with Steps To Success, Brookline Public Schools, the Brookline Center, and others on ensuring BHA students' access to technology needed for remote learning. They are also working on providing backpacks with school supplies to BHA students.
- The BHA is pleased with the continued financial support from the Town of Brookline's CDBG program for the BHA's ESOL and Next Steps programs.

Change Order #8

BHA Director of Redevelopment, Maria Maffei, said that this change order would replace decaying and unsound water piping, replace failing gate shutoff valves with ball valves, and insulate the new pipes.

On a motion from Ms. Cohen and a second from Ms. Katz, change order #8 to the construction management contract with Colantonio, Inc. for the renovation of 61 Park Street was unanimously approved. Totalling \$422,012.80, this change order increases the contract amount by about 2.5 percent, to \$17,276,206.

DHCD Budget Certification Revision

Mr. Alperin said that a vote is required by DHCD to amend the budget so that Patrick Dober can continue the valuable consulting work he is performing during the Executive Director transition.

On a motion from Ms. Dugan and a second from Ms. Cohen, a DHCD Budget Revision and data submission, to document the Employment Agreement dated August 1, 2020 between the BHA and Patrick Dober with hours as Senior Advisor not to exceed 150 and compensation not to exceed \$9,900 was unanimously approved. No part of such compensation shall be paid from state public housing funds.

Other Business

The Board confirmed that the next meeting will be held by teleconference on September 15, 2020 at 4:30 PM.

Arthur Conquest said that he came to the meeting because a group to which he is a member learned that some BHA students do not have the computers and Wi-Fi necessary to connect with their schools. He asked if there is a way to find out which BHA resident students lack computer connectivity. He also asked if there are options for discount computers and Wi-Fi access.

Mr. Alperin said that the BHA wholeheartedly agrees that BHA residents need access to computers and Wi-Fi. The BHA has been in communication with the Select Board and the School Committee on how to fund such an initiative. Access to computers at BHA developments has traditionally been provided within community rooms and computer learning centers, but this is currently not an option due to COVID concerns.

The major obstacle to providing universal connectivity is the lack of necessary capital and operating funds. The three ways this could be accomplished include: a partnership with an internet provider to underwrite such services; the provision of Wi-Fi hot spots to residents; and the wiring of BHA buildings to provide internet access. The costs to wire a building can run upwards of \$100,000 per building plus \$20,000 to \$40,000 per building for annual operating costs. The BHA would need third party help to support such costs.

Ms. Cohen said that the Cambridge Housing Authority and the Cambridge School Department identified all students with access problems and supplied them with Chromebooks and internet access. She asked if the Brookline School Department is doing this. She wondered if the BHA could use CARES Act funds to help pay for access in the short term.

Ms. Katz said that Steps To Success has reached out to all BHA students from the fourth grade through high school and catalogued where such access gaps exist. BHA staff along with Steps To Success, Public Schools of Brookline, Brookline Center, and others meet regularly to address these needs.

Ryan Black said that he is a member of Brookline Budget Justice (BBJ). He asked about the prospects for securing funding for internet access. Mr. Alperin said that he has shared internet access cost figures with Deborah Brown and Raul Fernandez and others. He believes that the Brookline School Department is the most realistic source for such funding.

Mr. Conquest said that education is the only way out of poverty. Mr. Jacobs said that the BHA fully agrees with Mr. Conquest regarding the importance of student access to remote learning.

Ms. Colon asked if there are funds within the BHA FY 2021 budget to support these costs. Mr. Alperin said that the BHA has old buildings and high costs, and will most likely lose money this fiscal year due to unfunded COVID related expenses. It is important to continue to press for funding to support the urgent need for BHA student internet access within the Town of Brookline.

Sara Hogenboom said that she is a member of BBJ, and supports Ms. Colon in her tenant leadership role. The BBJ is committed to the effort to secure funding for BHA student internet access.

On a motion from Ms. Cohen and a second from Ms. Katz, it was unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 5:40 PM.

**A TRUE COPY
ATTEST**



**Michael Alperin
Executive Director**