

Brookline Housing Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
July 14, 2010
226 High Street
4:30 PM

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

Mr. Cloonan and Mr. Trietsch thanked the High Street Veterans residents who participate in beautification/gardening efforts at their development.

Mr. Cloonan reported on strategic planning initiatives in two areas. The first involves potential new units along Dummer Street on the site of the Trustman Apartments. The BHA has solicited proposals from architects to move past the preliminary design studies that already have been done. The BHA is scheduled to appear before the state Designer Selection Committee on July 21, 2010 as part of the architect hiring process. Many issues need to be explored, including the ideal number of units, zoning issues, and financing options.

Mr. Trietsch said that any new units would be owner controlled by the BHA and would serve the same low-income population that the BHA currently serves.

Mr. Cloonan said that the second strategic planning initiative relates to the Town's Gateway East project. The Town's preliminary concept of the projected roadway and pedestrian safety improvement project has a direct impact on the parking, buildings and green space at the Walnut Street Apartments. The Town wants to be supportive of the BHA, and a fair exchange of land is part of the discussion.

Mr. Trietsch explained that Gateway East is a federally funded transportation project. The Town's designers originally came up with an open space concept for Town owned land abutting BHA property. The BHA asked them to also look at a development option for this land, which could potentially be conveyed to the BHA as part of a land swap.

Mr. Cloonan said that he was happy to report the good news that the Brookline District Court is not on the list of courts slated to close. He was pleased that Judge May, in his testimony to the Board of Selectmen, praised the philosophy of the BHA to preserve tenancies rather than to evict residents.

Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA summer youth employment program has just gotten underway.

Mr. Cloonan reported that the BHA submitted to HUD an application for 60 additional Section 8 Vouchers for disabled persons.

Mr. Cloonan reported that the state is moving to a new capital formula funding process. This will help to finance future improvements, primarily at the High Street Veterans and Egmont Street Veterans Developments (since the comprehensive modernization project at Trustman Apartments will address the most pressing needs there, and the Col. Floyd Apartments is being federalized). Annual capital improvement projections are included in the Board packet. The BHA is hoping to get new heating systems at High Street Veterans and Egmont Street Veterans Apartments funded by the state separately from this new formula funding system.

Mr. Jacobs said that the letter from the state says “You can count on...” certain funding levels. But how does the BHA know that the 2014 money will be available? Mr. Cloonan said that the 2008 bond bill is the source of this funding. However, the annual bond cap could be adjusted upwards or downwards in the future.

Mr. Jacobs asked when the 2012 capital money would be made available. Mr. Cloonan said that it became available on July 1st of next year (2011).

Agnes Rogers, Town-Wide Resident Association President, reported that everything seems to be quiet at the developments.

Ms. Dugan reported that they are selling t-shirts in Brookline Village for \$20. This month the proceeds go to the Steps To Success program.

On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Mr. Jacobs, the consent agenda: to adopt the minutes of the regular meeting held on June 15, 2010; and to authorize the Chair to sign 2011 CDBG contract between the Town of Brookline and the BHA, with funds awarded for ESL classes in the amount of \$12,500, for the Next Steps Program in the amount of \$14,000, and for BHA physical improvements in the amount of \$337,500, was unanimously approved.

Mr. Jacobs asked about the work items for the CDBG physical improvements and if any of this money could be used to leverage additional money.

Mr. Cloonan said that the CDBG award is actually a pool of money with some discretion regarding work items. One priority is to fill gaps, if any, in funding for the High Street and Egmont Street Veterans Apartments heat and domestic hot water system upgrades. Other priorities include: kitchen and bathroom upgrades at the Brown Street condominiums; ADA site improvements at the Veterans Developments; rear hallway improvements at the Veterans Developments; and an engineering study of the condition of the façade at the Veterans Developments. Mr. Cloonan said that in the next month to month and a half, he hopes to have a more definitive listing of the work items.

Mr. Cloonan and Janice McNiff, Section 8 Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Coordinator, introduced Miki Herivaux, the most recent FSS graduate. Ms. Herivaux explained that she moved to the United States from Japan 5 years ago and went on the FSS program soon thereafter. She was a single mother with 3 children with limited English skills and

no income. The FSS program helped her to set achievable goals, such as procuring daycare and part-time employment. Her ultimate goals of becoming a full-time hair stylist and living independently could not have been accomplished without this support.

Mr. Cloonan and the Board congratulated Ms. Herivaux on her significant achievements.

Mr. Cloonan said that he also included information in the Board packet regarding a new federal funding program called PETRA. The more he learns about this program the more he likes it. PETRA would allow public housing developments to convert from traditional public housing funding mechanisms to Section 8 program funding. Expense levels could rise from \$600 per unit per month to \$1,200 per unit per month. The housing authority, however, would have to finance capital needs through the private market. He thinks that in communities such as Brookline, where the properties are in good shape and demand is high, the program could work well.

Mr. Cloonan said that one detail in PETRA that needs further analysis is the provision that persons having lived in a public housing development funded by Section 8 for two years would gain the mobility to use the Section 8 subsidy elsewhere. This would not seem to be as much of a concern with elderly/disabled buildings. Originally, HUD envisioned converting 30% of public housing nationwide through PETRA.

Mr. Cloonan reported that a BHA employee has lost or misplaced some of his master keys. This matter has occupied much time and attention recently. Staff has been working hard to determine which master keys are of concern. The BHA probably has 20 different master keys.

Mr. Cloonan said that he met with the employee today and believes that the keys in question have probably been missing for 3 months. The failure of the employee to promptly report the issue is problematic. However, Mr. Cloonan is encouraged by the fact that almost a complete set of this employee's master keys have been reassembled. He is also encouraged by reports from the Brookline Police Department indicating that there has been no increase in crime or complaints of unauthorized entrances at BHA developments over this 3 month period of time.

Mr. Trietsch asked if BHA master keys are labeled. Mr. Cloonan said that there is no identification on the keys as to which locations they belong to, only a code including in many cases the employee's initials.

Mr. Trietsch asked if there is any chance the BHA will find the keys. Mr. Cloonan said that during off hours, the employee has been renovating a family house he is inheriting. While at the BHA, he works primarily in 2 shops. The BHA is making every effort to have these locations checked and double checked for the missing keys. The BHA is also reviewing work orders over the last several months to determine the other locations where the employee has worked.

Ms. Sullivan asked if anyone has contacted retailers where the employee might have visited during business activity. Mr. Cloonan said that this is a good idea.

Mr. Jacobs asked if this has ever happened before at the BHA. Mr. Cloonan said he knows of no such issue occurring in the past.

Mr. Jacobs asked if there is a system in place to improve security. Mr. Cloonan said that all BHA issued keys are currently being inventoried. Keys will also be carefully checked at employee transition. Building Managers have master keys, however, they are limited to the buildings they manage. Their keys will also be inventoried.

Mr. Cloonan said that the Maintenance Department has also checked video surveillance equipment located at the sites to make sure everything is operational.

Mr. Trietsch asked all in attendance if they had any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the master keys. There was no response.

Mr. Cloonan said that with the \$1.7 million formula funding anticipated from the state over the next 3 years, along with approximately \$2 million to replace the heating systems at the Veterans developments and \$337,000 in CDBG money from the Town this year, the BHA will finally have money to begin to improve the living conditions at the Veterans developments.

Mr. Trietsch confirmed that the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 17, 2010 at 4:30 PM at a location to be determined later.

On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Dugan, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:30 PM.