

Brookline Housing Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 16, 2010
90 Longwood Avenue
4:30 PM

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

Mr. Cloonan reported that one of the biggest tasks confronting the BHA at this time is getting modernization money obligated. He is recommending that the Board authorize a contract for the Morse Apartments and O'Shea House façade and balcony repairs. He intended to ask the Board to approve the Sussman House copper façade contract but this is on hold for the moment. The Brookline Building Department had no problems with these plans but Polly Selkoe from the Planning Department informed the BHA that some members of the Planning Board are not happy with the use of a copper overlay to wrap the façade panels. The BHA is scheduled to meet with the Planning Board on March 3, 2010 to discuss the matter.

Mr. Jacobs said that he likes the wood panels because they soften the impact of the concrete and make the building unlike typical public housing.

Mr. Cloonan said that the problem with the wood is that it requires regular treatment with preservatives. This becomes a significant ongoing expense. He feels that the copper has a natural look. It ages well and it is also environmentally friendly. There is a sample copper panel installation at the site if Board members wish to see it.

Mr. Jacobs said he will take a look at the copper installation. He asked if the BHA has considered alternatives such as Hardie Plank, a wood substitute.

Carol Correnti, BHA Capital Improvement Coordinator, said that wood substitutes were considered but they typically have limited 7 year warranties and like wood, require ongoing treatment with preservatives.

Mr. Cloonan said that bids for the copper façade work came in at \$174,000, substantially lower than the estimated price of \$240,000.

Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA also opened bids on the Col. Floyd window replacement, which is part of the ARRA \$2,000 per unit federalization requirement. Unit prices were used in the bid so that the scope of work could be adjusted to fit the budget. The front windows and the bathroom windows can be done for \$103,000. Federalization requires that a minimum of \$120,000 be spent. The bedroom windows would bring the cost up to about \$150,000. With the Sussman House façade job coming in under bid, conceivably some of this money could be applied at Col. Floyd. The deadline for obligating the Col. Floyd money is March 17, 2010. There is so much in flux at this point.

Mr. Jacobs asked about the 87.5% rent collection rate at the Trustman Apartments for the month of January. Mr. Cloonan said that rent collections vary from month to month. He could not remember the details, but believes that a couple of tenants with high rents may have missed a payment. He said that he would look into it and get back to the Board.

Mr. Cloonan said that the High Street Veterans and Egmont Street Veterans flooring bids were opened today and were added to the consent agenda. A contractor had done a sample hallway for \$1,400. The bids were opened today and the price came in at about \$550 per hallway or \$25,000 total. There is approximately \$54,000 in the CDBG budget for this work. This will be the last of the 2009 CDBG money needing to be obligated.

Mr. Jacobs pointed out that the Board resolutions for items C and F do not indicate what company the awards are going to. Mr. Cloonan said that this was an oversight and clarified the names of the contractors.

On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Dugan, the consent agenda: to adopt the minutes of the regular meeting held on January 12, 2010; to adopt the minutes of the special meeting held on February 5, 2010; to award the contract for façade and balcony repairs at the Morse Apartments and the O’Shea House to Follan Waterproofing and Construction in the amount of \$95,700.00, including provisions of Alternate #1; and to award the contract for front lobby flooring at the High Street Veterans and the Egmont Street Veterans Apartments to PAC Flooring in the amount of \$25,750.00, was unanimously approved.

Mr. Cloonan said that at the January meeting, the Board asked him to consider different options for phasing in the loss of state income exclusions when the Col. Floyd Apartments is federalized. He had previously provided a 0%/50%/100% phase-in option over 3 years. He is now presenting a 4 year phase-in option. Mr. Cloonan said that he is not sure if the BHA would have to offer these exclusions to all federal residents or if it could be limited to existing Col. Floyd residents currently receiving the exclusions.

Mr. Trietsch said that the issue for the Board is the impact on the tenants of getting a big jump in rent. The Board wants to help Col. Floyd residents transition to the new federal rent formulas. There may also be a fairness issue.

Mr. Cloonan said that persons living in federal developments never have received these rent exclusions.

Mr. Cloonan said that the typical rent increase for residents losing their earned income exclusion will be \$208 per month. The average rent for those folks is in the \$350 - \$400 per month range. Their rents would go up to \$550 - \$600 per month. Communicating the adjustment will be a key.

Mr. Trietsch asked about the cost to the BHA of transitioning to the new rent formula over a period of time.

Mr. Cloonan said that the full impact of the earned income exclusion for 10 residents would be \$24,000 per year.

Ms. Dugan said that she wouldn't know how to implement these changes otherwise. She pointed out that the cost to the BHA might be mitigated as some of these residents drop from the employment ranks over time.

Mr. Cloonan said that the effective date for annual rent adjustments at Col. Floyd is March 1st. Therefore, a loss of exclusion phase-in probably wouldn't start until March of next year.

Mr. Trietsch said that the BHA probably wants to err on the generous side, stretching the phase-in over 4 years.

Mr. Jacobs asked about the disabled veteran's pension exclusion. Mr. Cloonan said that there is one resident receiving this veteran's exclusion, which in his case amounts to approximately \$700 per month. The regulation states that the exclusion is "at the discretion of the LHA", and the BHA has always elected to provide it. This resident's income includes a \$30,000 per year veteran's pension, of which only \$1,800 is counted as income.

Mr. Cloonan suggests that this resident be given the option to transfer to another state development. Mr. Cloonan plans to meet with him next week to discuss all of his options. He might also be considered "displaced by public action" which could give him a very high priority in another community if he desires to move to another community. If this resident decides not to relocate, Mr. Cloonan proposes that he be given the same phase-in option as the residents losing their earned income exclusion.

Mr. Jacobs pointed out that to this point this gentleman has been paying a very small percentage of his income.

Mr. Cloonan said that any loss of income exclusion phase-in will need to be included in the Annual Plan in April.

Mr. Cloonan reported that the BHA needs to cut \$40,000 from the state FY 2011 budget beginning April 1, 2010. There will probably be an increase of between \$130,000 and \$140,000 in the federal conventional program funding, as the subsidy will be set at around 95% of formula funding. In prior years the level has been 87% to 88%. No significant increases in Section 8 administrative fees are expected.

Mr. Cloonan said that the big issue will be how to cut the \$40,000 from the state budget. The Trustman modernization construction budget will provide some funding for a clerk of the works. This will allow a BHA employee to come off the state operating budget payroll, providing temporary budget relief. There will also be a shift in the proration percentages after federalization, which will allow more costs to be allocated to the federal program.

Mr. Jacobs asked about the new leases and rent increase at 153 Kent Street. He also asked about the projected \$7,500 budget shortfall.

Mr. Cloonan said that the state is revising its Ch. 689 and Ch. 167 leases, and incorporating higher minimum rents. The effective date of the leases is the beginning of the BHA fiscal year. The reason for the budget shortfall was the need last year to rebuild porches, portions of the façade, and stairs.

Mr. Cloonan said that 2011 CDBG applications are due in a couple of weeks. He recently met with Brookline Planning Director Jeff Levine, who suggested that the BHA create a shopping list of work items and cost estimates. Mr. Levine's idea is to have a revolving source of CDBG funds to support these work items. This would allow for some flexibility to shift priorities as needs arise.

Mr. Jacobs said this is a good idea, but it puts pressure on the BHA to meet spending deadlines.

Mr. Cloonan said that the current priorities for CDBG funded work are focused on High Street Veterans and Egmont Street Veterans Apartments. The federal properties and Col. Floyd are in pretty good shape. The Trustman Apartments will be in great shape after the modernization work is complete.

Mr. Jacobs asked if there is some work that can be done with less design needs such as window replacement vs. kitchen upgrades. Mr. Cloonan agreed that this is an important consideration. An example is the rear hall flooring at the Veterans developments. However, the BHA can't neglect critical needs for the sake of design simplicity. One of the most critical needs is façade work, which takes time to design.

Mr. Trietsch said that the ability of the BHA to ask for more money is connected to how much money the BHA can spend. Time management becomes a factor.

Mr. Cloonan said that he still wants to keep pressure on the state for deleading at the Veterans developments, instead of tapping CDBG for funds. If the Trustman modernization bid comes in below the estimate, he might suggest that the state allow reallocation of the surplus for deleading efforts at the Veterans developments.

Mr. Trietsch confirmed that the next regular meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 12, 2010 at 9:00 AM at the Morse Apartments.

On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Dugan, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:45 PM.