

Brookline Housing Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
June 15, 2010
55 Egmont Street
4:30 PM

The Meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Trietsch, at 4:35 PM.

Roxanne Berman announced that she will be resigning from the Board as of the end of August. She will be moving to California.

Mr. Trietsch said that the rest of the Board will be sorry to see Ms. Berman leave.

Mr. Cloonan reported that the Board's Strategic Planning Committee has been busy exploring the possibility of adding affordable units to the portfolio, focusing on the Dummer Street parking lot. The BHA is soliciting architectural proposals, due next Wednesday. The BHA is also in the process of hiring a legal consultant for assistance with zoning issues and community process. There were two responses to the legal RFP: one firm from Worcester has experience working with towns on zoning issues; the other firm is local with a solid understanding of Brookline's government and community processes. Mr. Cloonan, Mr. Jacobs, and BHA Director of Planning, Anne Reitmayer, interviewed both firms, rated them according to the criteria in the RFP, and are recommending the selection of Robert Allen and Associates.

Mr. Jacobs said that Mr. Allen's firm not only has Brookline expertise, but the necessary experience guiding developers through the local process. The other firm provides technical assistance to zoning boards but has not worked as much with developers.

Ms. Sullivan asked if there might be additional and more expensive fees if Mr. Allen's firm works with a sub consultant. Mr. Cloonan said that law firms may subcontract for expertise in areas such as zoning. The reimbursable rate for this work can be higher than the consultant's own rate. There is language in the HUD/DHCD contract for this scenario. Mr. Jacobs added that because of variables in the process, it is impossible to get a fixed legal fee when dealing with zoning work.

On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Sullivan, the award of the legal services contract for zoning and permitting relating to new construction at the property bounded by St. Paul, Dummer, Amory, and Egmont Streets in Brookline, Massachusetts to the Law Office of Robert L. Allen, Jr., LLP, as amended by fee restructuring, was unanimously approved.

Mr. Cloonan reported that he received unofficial word that the Brookline Community Fund will be awarding the BHA \$5,000 to continue its computer programming at the senior developments.

Mr. Cloonan said that starting this summer, he will be soliciting proposals for project basing Section 8 Vouchers. There has been interest from owners seeking to project base vouchers for the first time. The BHA has existing project based vouchers at residences on Winchester Street, Fuller Street, 1023 Beacon Street, and 1754 Beacon Street. They are under 5 year contracts awarded in 2003 and 2004. Since then the regulations have changed. The BHA needs to get everyone under contracts reflecting the new regulations.

Mr. Trietsch asked if these would be renewals or require a new process. Mr. Cloonan said that everyone, existing and new proposals, would have to apply under the new process.

Mr. Jacobs asked how many project based vouchers are committed to developments at this time. Mr. Cloonan said that there currently about 40 and that by regulation this number can rise to 20% of the portfolio, or roughly 100. Mr. Jacobs said that he would like to have some project based vouchers available for the new units being considered on Dummer Street.

Mr. Jacobs asked if the new project based contracts would have 5, 10, or 15 year terms. Mr. Cloonan said that he is not prepared to make a recommendation at this time, as there are many factors to consider. Mr. Jacobs suggested that it is important for new development financing to have the terms as lengthy as possible, whereas it is not so critical with existing developments to have extended contract terms.

BHA resident, Carolyn Love-West, said that she is working with New Compass under their financial management program. She learned from them about a Section 8 escrow savings program and wondered if this might be available for residents in state funded public housing. Mr. Cloonan said that New Compass was referring to a federal self sufficiency program, which unfortunately is not available to state public housing residents.

Mr. Cloonan informed the Board that the IRS recently ruled that a part-time contract employee working at one of the BHA computer learning centers who applied for unemployment compensation, is eligible for the compensation. The BHA will need to make changes in its processes to clarify that these employees are contract employees, not regular employees.

Agnes Rogers, Town Wide Resident Association President, said that she had nothing to report from the various developments. Everyone is happy.

Ms. Love-West said that trash is dumped out of cars in the parking lots all the time. She said that dogs are not being picked up after. She wondered how the BHA could encourage residents to take care of their homes. She said that there are many residents doing positive things such as planting gardens and that there is an organization called Slow Money that has gardening consultants who could help out.

Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA does not have the staff capacity to run gardening programs. However, the BHA has worked with community volunteer gardening programs such as the one run by Cathy Neal at the High Street Veterans Apartments. Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA would need a specific plan from the residents. Ms. Love-West could follow up with her Housing Manager, Solimar Calderon. Mr. Trietsch added that the BHA would be happy to play a supporting role in this type of initiative.

Mr. Cloonan introduced Janice McNiff and explained that she has been the Section 8 Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Coordinator for the BHA for over a dozen years. Under the FSS program, the amount of any rent increase resulting from additional earned income is matched and put into an escrow account. The participant can then use this money to help attain self sufficiency.

Ms. McNiff said that FSS is a 5 year program where participants set specific goals. Participants have to be fully employed and not receiving income assistance during the last year of the program. Most often, the goals of participants include attaining full time employment and/or career advancement, and the purchase of a home.

Ms. Berman asked how many people are in the FSS program and how they are selected. Ms. McNiff said that the program has been winding down for many years, as there is no longer funding for administration costs. When the program began, there was outreach to all Section 8 participants.

Mr. Cloonan said that factors making it difficult to have a viable FSS program in Brookline include the fact that so many voucher holders use their vouchers outside of Brookline. It is difficult to do case work with people who live outside of this geographical area. In addition, most BHA Section 8 Voucher holders are elderly and the program is not designed for elderly participants. In spite of these obstacles, the BHA has graduated 18 – 20 participants over the years.

Ms. McNiff introduced Arlene Cribbs, who is graduating from the FSS program. Ms. Cribbs explained that when she entered the program 5 years ago, she was working part time. She set goals of gaining full time employment in the medical field, pursuing educational and training opportunities to become an x ray technician, and owning a home. She has gained full time employment and advanced in the medical field and she is well on her way to becoming a certified x ray technician. She will be attending a first time homebuyers program next month and plans to purchase a 2 or 3 family home. She thanked the BHA for the opportunities they have provided her. Mr. Cloonan and the Board congratulated Ms. Cribbs on her achievements.

Ms. McNiff introduced Nichole Anderson, who is also graduating from the FSS program. Ms. Anderson said that FSS has provided her with the opportunity to embark on a new career path in property management, to become a role model for her son, and to save money for a home purchase. She said that she entered the program while on transitional assistance and now is a leasing consultant for a large development and management company. The FSS program at the BHA was a great opportunity, allowing her to get

focused on goals for herself and her family. Mr. Cloonan and the Board offered their congratulations to Ms. Anderson.

Mr. Trietsch asked that the consent agenda item regarding the PILOT agreement with the Town be pulled from the vote so that it could be discussed separately. **On a motion from Ms. Dugan and a second from Ms. Berman, the consent agenda: to adopt the minutes of the regular meeting held on May 11, 2010; to award the design contract for accessible units at the Sussman House to Kaffee Kang in the amount of \$43,600; to award the design contract for site accessibility improvements at the Sussman House and the Morse Apartments to William Caines and Associates in the amount of \$7,970; to authorize the Chair to sign a CFA Amendment in the amount of \$6,495,772 with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to commit funding for Trustman Apartments modernization work; to authorize the Chair to sign a CFA with DHCD to continue the Transitional Assistance Homelessness Prevention Program for 6 months; to enter a contract with Springwell, Inc. for case management and counseling activities from July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 with a contract price of \$35,500 at the Sussman House and \$35,000 at the O'Shea House for a total of \$70,000, with all other contract terms remaining the same; and to award the contract for fire alarm system upgrades at the Morse Apartments to Jupiter Electric in the amount of \$209,900 and to reject the low bid of Ewing Electric (\$209,000) for failure to provide a DCAM certification as a required submittal, was unanimously approved.**

Mr. Trietsch explained that the PILOT is part of an agreement negotiated with the Town of Brookline 5 years ago. At the time, the BHA agreed to not renegotiate the terms for 3 years. At this point, the BHA can renegotiate. Mr. Trietsch suggested adding some language to the PILOT vote about initiating negotiations with the Town regarding next year's terms. **On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Mr. Jacobs, authorization of a Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) to the Town of Brookline for various developments as per the attached agreement in the amount of \$76,145.47, and authorization to commence negotiation on next year's PILOT agreement terms, was unanimously approved.**

Mr. Cloonan said a NOFA was issued regarding 3,000 Section 8 Vouchers becoming available nationwide for disabled persons, with 1,000 reserved for those being released from nursing homes. He is recommending that the BHA apply for some of the remaining 2,000 vouchers. It is a long shot, with only about 330 vouchers available in the New England region. Mr. Cloonan explained that he has had conversations with local partners regarding their support of this initiative, and he believes that the application will score well. There are about 160 disabled applicants on the Section 8 waiting list claiming Brookline residency. The application is for 60 vouchers, with a minimum amount set at 30. **On a motion from Ms. Dugan and a second from Ms. Berman, authorization to submit an application to HUD for 60 Housing Choice Vouchers for disabled persons was unanimously approved.**

Mr. Cloonan said that there is some good news and some bad news in the 2010 fiscal summary. The federal programs had a good year with a couple hundred thousand dollars in retained revenue. The Section 8 program lost about \$72,000 due to some unbudgeted reserve expenses. Hopefully some of this can be recovered if, as expected, the state reimburses the BHA for expenses related to federalization of the Col. Floyd Apartments. On the state side, the Kent Street and Beacon Street group residences lost money due to large deferred maintenance expenses. The state program has had to absorb an \$83,000 cut starting in October.

Mr. Jacobs explained that he has drafted a statement that the Board might wish to consider adopting related to the ballot initiative to repeal the Comprehensive Permit Law, Chapter 40B. About 90% of the affordable housing built in Massachusetts outside of cities (approximately 58,000 units) is attributable to this law. If the repeal is passed, the potential for affordable housing production in this state will be gone. The Housing Advisory Board took a vote recently opposing the repeal. As the primary provider of affordable housing in Town, Mr. Jacobs feels that it is appropriate for the Board to take a position on the issue. **On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Dugan, the following statement was unanimously approved: “The Brookline Housing Authority votes to support efforts to stop the repeal of Chapter 40B (the Comprehensive Permit Law) and urges that the Town of Brookline join us in voting its opposition of the repeal of Chapter 40B.”**

Ms. Rogers congratulated the Board for taking a strong position on this issue.

Mr. Cloonan reminded the Board that they are required to complete the State Ethics Commission exam and certification. He informed the Board that there will be an event at Town Hall on June 29, 2010 to honor outgoing Town Administrator Richard Kelliher.

Mr. Cloonan explained that he would be attending a Board of Selectmen meeting later in the evening regarding the possible closing of the Brookline District Court due to budget cuts. He plans to speak about the benefits the Brookline District Court gives to the community.

Mr. Trietsch said that the BHA values the services that the Brookline District Court provides. Closing the court would be a hardship to BHA residents. The Board would be willing to take a vote on the issue at a future meeting if it would be helpful.

Mr. Trietsch asked about collective bargaining and whether or not an executive session is necessary at this time. Mr. Cloonan said that collective bargaining negotiations are upcoming. He would appreciate Ms. Dugan’s participation as the Board’s representative. There are currently no proposals from the unions, therefore, an executive session of the Board to discuss the framework for negotiations might be a bit premature.

Mr. Trietsch confirmed that the next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 14, 2010 at 4:30 PM at the High Street Veterans Apartments.

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