

Brookline Housing Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2010
90 Longwood Avenue
6:00 PM

The Meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Trietsch, at 6:00 PM. Those present included Ms. Dugan, Mr. Jacobs, Ms. Berman, and Ms. Sullivan. This being the BHA Annual Meeting, Mr. Trietsch asked the Board to take up the business of electing Board officers for the next year. Mr. Trietsch first wanted to congratulate Ms. Dugan on her reelection to the Board. **Then, on a motion from Ms. Dugan and a second from Ms. Berman, Mr. Trietsch was nominated for and unanimously approved to be the Chairman. On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Dugan, Mr. Jacobs was nominated for and unanimously approved to be Vice Chairman. On a motion from Mr. Trietsch and a second from Ms. Sullivan, Ms. Dugan was nominated for and unanimously approved to be Treasurer.**

Mr. Trietsch asked Mr. Cloonan to report on the activity of the Development Committee with respect to potential new development at the Trustman Apartments site. Mr. Cloonan said that he was impressed with the concept drawings completed by Mostue & Associates and included in the Board packet. An RFP was issued as of today for planning related legal services. There have already been a couple of inquiries related to the RFP.

Mr. Jacobs asked if the RFP would be sent out to firms. Mr. Cloonan said that he hoped to send the legal ad to some local firms by the end of the week. There is a draft RFP for design services under review at DHCD and it is hoped that this will be ready for the June Designer Selection Committee meeting.

Mr. Trietsch asked if Mr. Cloonan anticipates a legal service consultant recommendation being made to the Board at the June meeting. Mr. Cloonan said that legal service proposals are due at the end of the month. Therefore, he is hopeful to have a recommendation for the Board in June.

Ms. Sullivan asked about the rationale for the architect's bedroom breakdown. Mr. Jacobs explained that the bedroom sizes are tied into the demand on the BHA waiting list. They are also influenced by the Town's Allocation Plan as it relates to potential tax credits.

Mr. Trietsch reported that he attended a recent meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee. Their designers presented a 25% design proposal that included lots of assumptions. Nowhere in the presentation did they mention that land use would incorporate BHA property. Mr. Trietsch raised the issue and Selectwoman Betsy DeWitt understood his point. Afterwards, Mr. Trietsch spoke with Planning Director Jeff Levine, who suggested a letter from the BHA to initiate a conversation on the subject with the Town. Mr. Trietsch said that he has drafted such a letter.

Mr. Trietsch said that when the idea for Gateway East first surfaced a couple of years ago, the BHA showed its support of their pedestrian safety goals. The BHA also made it clear that land transfer will require HUD approval.

Mr. Jacobs asked about the HUD process for land transfer. Mr. Cloonan said that Sue Cohen suggests a friendly eminent domain as the appropriate process, accompanied by a fair exchange of assets.

Mr. Trietsch said that it is his intention to ask the designers to consider the developable parcel within Gateway East as a potential site for affordable housing.

Mr. Cloonan introduced the 2nd place winners in the Federal Home Loan Bank design competition for affordable housing. He explained that this team of students from Harvard and MIT did a great job of putting a proposal together within a tight timeline. He felt that they made an excellent defense of the benefits of increased density.

Laura Manville, the project manager for the team, said that the participating students are all attending MIT, except for Aaron Wasserman, who is at Harvard. All of the students are pursuing a masters degree in urban planning. The competition took six weeks.

Student Heshuang Zeng explained that she coordinated the community engagement meetings. There were separate meetings with Walnut Street Apartments residents, Steps To Success students, and neighborhood groups. Comments included apartment rooms being too small and building systems in need of upgrading.

Student Erik Scanlon explained that the team worked on a 25 year plan. They created a perimeter block with personalized spaces on the site and within the building, including intergenerational space. They called for reconditioning mechanical systems and the façade, and softening the site with plantings. The plan locates new 3 bedroom and 4 bedroom units along Walnut Street.

Student Aaron Wasserman said that he worked on the financing package, which includes low income tax credits as the central financing vehicle. A new limited partnership would be formed employing a model that the Cambridge Housing Authority and the Boston Housing Authority have used with success. Other sources of financing include DHCD, the Town of Brookline, and project based Section 8. Eligible occupants would include those in the 30% of AMI range, in addition to the 60% and 80% range.

Mr. Cloonan said that the historical narrative in the plan was very interesting. He also was interested to learn that this site is considerably less dense compared with two of its neighbors (the Brooke House and the Coops).

Mr. Trietsch asked about comments from the Pill Hill neighborhood. Mr. Scanlon said that the corridors that they look out onto along Route 9 are important to the neighbors. Therefore they were interested in the aesthetics of roofing and landscaping. Mr. Scanlon said that the stepped down townhouse design of the new buildings was appealing to them.

Mr. Jacobs asked how the group arrived at their density level. The proposal doubled the number of 3 bedroom units without incorporating much open space. Manageability could be an issue. He wondered if there was input from BHA Management staff.

Mr. Scanlon said that there is presently access to local recreational venues. A community youth center is in development with a shuttle planned. Mr. Cloonan added that BHA Housing Manager, Nereida Otero-Torres, attended planning meetings and had considerable input.

Mr. Jacobs asked how capital fund financing and Choice Neighborhoods fit into the proposal. Mr. Wasserman explained that HUD allows LHAs to borrow against their cap fund. Choice Neighborhoods is a new HUD program that is a HOPE VI spin-off. It is a pilot program where the focus is on the quality of neighborhoods.

Mr. Trietsch said that this student exercise was a good starting point and as such, very helpful to the BHA. He thanked the student team for their time and effort.

Mr. Cloonan reported that over the past 6 weeks, there have been 2 heroin overdoses at the Sussman House. This is very unusual. In both cases, family members of the lease holders were the offending parties.

Mr. Cloonan said that fiscal year-end reports will be available in June. He explained that the Kent Street, Beacon Street and Harris Street residences lost money due to capital improvement expenditures. The federal conventional and federal cost centers are in good shape. The state conventional program should also finish in the black. However, the Section 8 program will lose about \$70,000. Some of this loss is attributable to planning costs related to potential new development at the Trustman Apartments site, and some of it is federalization expenses. The hope is that the federalization costs will be reimbursed by the state.

Mr. Cloonan commended BHA Management staff for coming to work over the weekend to get notices out regarding the water emergency. Management and Maintenance staff also worked diligently the following Monday to distribute Town donated water to elderly and disabled residents.

Mr. Cloonan noted that he included in the Board packet the NAHRO position paper on HUD's proposal for Tenant Based Rental Assistance in public housing. Under this proposal, Section 8 assistance could be utilized in public housing. One benefit would be the ability of LHAs to leverage private financing.

Ms. Sullivan said that this sounded like it would require management systems similar to those used by private landlords.

David Trietsch offered condolences to Town Wide Resident Association President, Agnes Rogers, for the recent loss of her son. Ms. Rogers thanked the Board. She reported that she was not aware of any problems at the developments.

Mr. Trietsch brought forward the consent agenda. He asked why there was only one submission for the audit contract. Mr. Cloonan explained that this work is not highly competitive for an agency this size. **On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Sullivan, the consent agenda: to adopt the minutes of the regular meeting held on April 13, 2010; and to award the contract for the 2010 fiscal year audit to Hurley, O'Neill and Company in the amount of \$10,520.00 was unanimously approved.**

Mr. Cloonan reminded all Board Members that they are now required to participate in a State Ethics Commission online training and quiz. He asked that this be completed within the next month and that once completed, Board Members print and return their receipt for Agency records.

Mr. Trietsch commended Director of Leased Housing and Applications, Carol Brown, and Leased Housing Coordinator, Stephanie Hollis for successfully completing the NAHRO Housing Quality Standards exam.

Mr. Cloonan explained that there are several federal reports that must be approved by the BHA Board. The first report is the 2010 MASS (Management Assessment Sub System). This report certifies among other things that annual inspections have been completed, quantifies the number of standard and emergency work orders, certifies compliance with "One Strike" requirements, etc. There were 2,100 work orders completed this year. Vacancy turnover was 45 days, which is up a bit from the previous year.

Mr. Jacobs noted that all 438 units were inspected, but that only 6 units did not require repair. He questioned what standard is used for these inspections. Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA uses the REAC standard for inspections. This year, the BHA hired a contractor to perform these inspections and timed the inspections to occur just prior to the annual HUD inspections. The majority of repairs are minor things such as emergency pull cords not hanging freely, light bulb replacement, etc. **On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Berman, the 2010 Management Assessment Sub System submission to HUD was unanimously approved.**

Mr. Cloonan said that the second reporting category is SEMAP (Section 8 Management Assessment Program). It reviews payment standards procedures, inspections of apartments, etc. The BHA has consistently been a high performer in these ratings. **On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Dugan, the 2010 Section 8 Management Assessment Program submission to HUD was unanimously approved.**

Mr. Cloonan explained that the third reporting category is PHAS (Public Housing Assessment System). The BHA scored 86% this year as opposed to 77% the last two years. The Maintenance Department worked very hard to achieve this score, which will allow the BHA to skip a year before the next scheduled HUD inspection. The BHA is

appealing to win back a couple of PHAS points. If the BHA becomes a high performer, it will be eligible for additional modernization funding.

Mr. Cloonan said that the federalization agreement will require the BHA to create 3 wheelchair apartments by 2015 related to the Col. Floyd Apartments. Design work will be funded using 2010 capital funds. Mr. Cloonan has asked the state for commitment of some funds to assist in the unit conversions. The BHA might also need CDBG funds to supplement the effort. He hopes to locate these accessible units at 50 Pleasant Street, believing that they would not only be better apartments, but more cost effective than if located at the Col. Floyd Apartments. **On a motion from Ms. Dugan and a second from Ms. Sullivan, authorization for the Executive Director to sign the Voluntary Compliance Agreement with HUD was unanimously approved.**

Mr. Cloonan reported that Colantonio, Inc. is the apparent low bidder for the Trustman comprehensive modernization work. The cost estimate was \$8 million, so their bid was well under the budget. The architect is checking references. Mr. Cloonan would like to get contracts executed as soon as possible. Colantonio did the renovations at Town Hall and the Building Commissioner has nothing but good things to say about them. **On a motion from Mr. Jacobs and a second from Ms. Sullivan, the award of the construction contract for the Trustman Comprehensive Modernization work, subject to the architect's receiving favorable references for the contractor and subject to the approval of DHCD, to Colantonio, Inc. of Holliston, Massachusetts for a base bid price of \$6,258,367, was unanimously approved.**

Mr. Cloonan said that there is an RFP for 3,000 Section 8 vouchers nation-wide, dedicated to persons with disabilities. He met with DMH staff who are anxious to lend their support to a BHA application. The BHA could apply for up to 100 new vouchers; however, he does not think there is enough capacity to lease 100 additional vouchers within one year. There are approximately 170 disabled Brookline residents presently on the waiting list. He suggested applying for 60 vouchers with a stated minimum of 25. He will ask the Board for a vote in June.

Ms. Sullivan proposed a statement of appreciation in the minutes commending BHA staff for the work they did with respect to the recent water emergency. Mr. Trietsch agreed, and suggested that something nice be done for staff in recognition. Mr. Cloonan said that he is hoping to organize a luncheon for staff in recognition of the significant amount of work they have performed over the last year.

Mr. Trietsch confirmed that the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 15, 2010 at 4:30 PM at the Egmont Street Veterans Apartments.

On a motion from Ms. Dugan and a second from Ms. Sullivan, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 PM.