

Brookline Housing Authority  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
July 14, 2009  
55 Egmont Street  
4:30 PM

The Meeting was called to order by the Vice Chairman, Mr. Jacobs, at 4:35 PM. Those present included Ms. Dugan, Ms. Berman and Ms. Sullivan.

Mr. Cloonan said that Mr. Trietsch had planned to attend this Meeting but learned at the last minute that he would be unavailable.

Mr. Cloonan reported that June was a very busy month. Much time was spent reviewing, preparing, and filing stimulus grant applications. Complicating matters was the fact that the grant guidelines were repeatedly revised.

Mr. Cloonan explained that the waiting list for 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom family applicants was opened at the beginning of the month and the lists for all family bedroom sizes were closed at the end of the month. Approximately 1,300 applications were received. A computer program was run today to randomly scramble these 1,300 lottery applications to determine their waiting list control numbers.

Mr. Cloonan reported that the Brookline Center's contract for CRS case management services for approximately 70 Brookline Housing Authority (BHA) residents will be ending. The new service provider will be Vinfen.

Mr. Jacobs asked how this change will affect the contract for services between the BHA and the Brookline Center. Mr. Cloonan said that this will be evaluated and discussed.

Ms. Sullivan asked if there was a reason for this change. Mr. Cloonan said that in the bid package, the geographic service area was enlarged to the point where Vinfen gained a competitive advantage over the Brookline Center.

Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA has filed paperwork with the EPA to close out the underground contamination saga at the Kickham Apartments.

Mr. Cloonan said that parking spaces in one of the lots behind Walnut Street are underutilized. He would like to consider leasing out some of these spaces for added income to the Agency. To do so, the BHA would first have to file an application to the Town for a license.

Ms. Sullivan asked if leasing parking spaces would add liability exposure to the Agency. Mr. Cloonan felt that there would be some added liability exposure but nothing out of the ordinary.

Mr. Cloonan said that he would appreciate the Board's thoughts regarding the BHA tenant selection policy, particularly with respect to whether or not the Board should reconsider the existing priority and preference system.

Ms. Sullivan felt that it was an opportune time to review the policy, especially with the large number of new applications.

Mr. Cloonan explained that the BHA has a local preference for persons who live or work in Brookline.

Ms. Sullivan suggested that it might be helpful to look at tenant selection policies of similar sized housing authorities. Mr. Cloonan thought this was a good idea.

Ms. Dugan thought that the Board should seriously consider the "Broad Questions" at bottom of Mr. Cloonan's tenant selection questionnaire.

Mr. Jacobs said that Metco student families have been given a local preference in some communities. He added that income mixing is something the state might encourage in order to reduce their subsidy burden. He mentioned that another option is project based waiting lists.

Mr. Cloonan said that he did not think project based waiting lists in Brookline would create a disparate impact with respect to fair housing, as it might in some other communities. He noted that there is a lot of diversity on BHA waiting lists.

Mr. Cloonan said that he is starting to get proposals from energy suppliers. Prices are now at a historically low level. Last year the BHA locked into a 3 year natural gas contract after extensive market research. Unfortunately, prices have continuously come down since then. He welcomed input from the Board.

BHA resident from Egmont Street asked if it would be possible for the BHA to renegotiate the natural gas contract. Mr. Cloonan said that he looked into it but found that there is no such option.

Agnes Rogers, Town Wide Resident Association President, reported that things are very quiet at the developments. There was a conflict between two residents at the Kickham Apartments, however, the parties did not want to make the issue public. She will discuss this situation with Mr. Cloonan at a later date. There was also a report of a mouse problem at the Kickham Apartments. One Col. Floyd Apartments resident appears to have a serious health problem. She plans to discuss this issue with Mr. Cloonan as well. Also, some High Street Veterans Apartments residents complained that they didn't get notice of a meeting at their development.

Mr. Cloonan said that notices were posted in all High Street Veterans Apartments hallways for last month's BHA Board Meeting that was held at their site.

Some residents might have been referring to a smaller meeting where Housing Managers invited a few families to talk about how things are going.

Ms. Rogers felt that having small meetings by invitation does not send a good message.

Mr. Cloonan said some people will not come to meetings without a personal invitation.

Ms. Dugan said that many developments don't have Resident Associations, and this presents a problem. These small meetings have been helpful in promoting back and forth communication. Different people are invited each time.

Ms. Rogers said that she is put in an awkward position if she is not aware of the meetings or what is being discussed. She felt that there is a growing population of residents who would like to not be seen or heard. Resident associations grew strong through crisis in the 1970's. The absence of crisis has diminished resident association power. The advent of on site managers has helped to address a lot of issues before they become critical.

BHA resident from Trustman Apartments felt that housing authorities need to have strong resident associations and that the BHA needs to do more to promote them. She said that HUD is planning to reduce funding to housing authorities that don't have resident associations. BHA resident from Trustman Apartments added that she has a problem with her rent calculation which has never been addressed.

Ms. Rogers disagreed with Ms. Roberts. She said that the Town Wide Resident Association meets monthly. Residents come to her if they have problems and she follows up with BHA Management. However, some residents choose to bring their personal issues directly to the BHA Board. She feels that this is very disruptive.

**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 June 11, 2009 as previously emailed; to renew the Springwell contracts for service to the Sussman House and O'Shea House for the period of July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010 at an annual cost of \$35,000 per site (no change from 2009); and to authorize the Chair to sign CDBG contracts for 2010 CDBG awards to support the Next Steps Program in the amount of \$10,500, and the Brookline Learning Project in the amount of \$10,000, was unanimously approved.**

BHA resident from Trustman Apartments asked if job training was being expanded as a result of the new CDBG money. She wondered if it had anything to do with workforce development.

Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA will attempt to have area providers of job training and workforce development conduct some programming in Brookline. However, it is unlikely that actual job training will happen at a BHA development. However, with stimulus money dedicated to job training, the BHA will do everything in its power to make sure that BHA residents get their share of the benefit.

BHA resident from Trustman Apartments asked if the CDBG money was going directly from the Town to the BHA and if so, what will be done with the money.

Mr. Cloonan said that the Town is planning to provide the BHA with around \$20,000. This should allow the BHA to expand the Next Steps Program from 3 ½ days per week to 5 days and should also enhance programming at the computer learning centers.

Mr. Cloonan said that he provided the Board with a copy of Ameresco's energy audit summary for federal properties along with their recommendations for performance contracting. Their recommendations include: toilets and shower heads; upgrading common area lighting; refrigerators; exhaust fan controls; 22 High Street heat conversion; programmable thermostats; and window replacement and modification of the HVAC system on the first floor of 90 Longwood Avenue. The BHA will need to examine the budget and payback information closely. The goal is to submit a proposal to HUD in the fall for implementation next summer.

Mr. Jacobs asked about the comments from Dave Anderson.

Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA hired Enlightened Energy and Dave Anderson to act as a consultant to review and interpret the Ameresco data in order to insure that the BHA gets the most benefit from any performance contract.

Mr. Jacobs asked if the BHA was getting any consultant assistance about green technology with respect to future modernization work. Mr. Cloonan said that he has asked for a proposal from New Ecology regarding the services they might be able to provide with respect to green technology and environmentally friendly products.

Mr. Cloonan reported on mid year progress with respect to the annual plan. He explained that he has spent an inordinate amount of time formulating capital plans for smaller properties such as 11 Harris Street, 1057 Beacon Street, 153 Kent Street, and the Brown Street condominiums. However there have been some annual plan successes including the areas of: program compliance; Section 8 utilization; and sound property management. The BHA has not done as well in the area of improving advocacy. Mr. Cloonan hopes to begin working on improving communications with residents, including generating a BHA newsletter.

BHA resident from Egmont Street BHA resident from Trustman Apartments suggested that residents be included in discussions with New Ecology. Mr. Cloonan felt this was a good idea.

Mr. Jacobs suggested that the BHA Board Meeting agenda be posted on the BHA website. Mr. Cloonan felt that this was a good idea. He said that he would look into it. The only drawback would be the timing, as the Board Meeting agenda is often not finalized until just before the meeting.

BHA resident from Trustman Apartments asked if the minutes of the Board Meetings could be published on the BHA website. Mr. Cloonan said that this might present a timing issue as well since the minutes are not official until they are voted on the following month. He added that the BHA is always willing to send minutes to residents upon request.

Mr. Cloonan asked for a consensus from the Board on two issues: to proceed with a parking lot permit application to the Town for the Walnut Street lot; and to proceed with a grant application from the US Department of Commerce that will fund computer learning centers. A third initiative to apply for stimulus employment funds for youth with Metro South Employment unfortunately had an impossible deadline to meet and is no longer being considered.

The Board gave unanimous support for proceeding with the Walnut Street parking lot rental and the US Department of Commerce grant initiatives.

Mr. Cloonan reported that there is an override vote scheduled in the state legislature with respect to the public housing operating subsidy being reduced from \$65 million to \$62 ½ million.

Mr. Jacobs asked about the implications of the subsidy cuts. Mr. Cloonan said that the state will inform the BHA if further budget cuts are necessary. Mr. Jacobs thought that the BHA should keep income tiering in mind as a possible way to increase income and avoid the impact of budget cuts.

Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA received a letter last week from the state indicating that the Trustman Apartments modernization job has been put on hold. He said that he is working on a strategy to get some commitment on at least part of the work for next year. He is also thinking about alternative funding sources such as Housing Trust Fund for relatively low cost and high impact work items like the conversion of the 2 St. Paul Street 5-bedroom townhouses into 4 separate units.

BHA resident from Trustman Apartments said that she has a meeting scheduled later this week with her Housing Manager to discuss what she believes are errors in her rent calculation. In reviewing her rent ledger, she identified several places where she believes the rent is not consistent with the income in her household. She said that her son overpaid rent by \$200 per month for several months. She said that because her income is sporadic, the BHA used income tax documents as verification of income, and she feels the outcome was not accurate. She also feels that the BHA should consider her rent separate from her son's.

Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA met with BHA Resident from Trustman Apartments in March. Management staff involved included, Matthew Baronas, Solimar Calderon and Nereida Otero-Torres. Staff spent an estimated 20 hours over 10 days to reconsider her rent. Complicating the matter were constant changes in income and family composition.

Mr. Cloonan felt that the BHA ultimately skewed the process in favor of the tenant and the redetermined rent was more than fair.

Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA's relationship with BHA resident from Trustman Apartments is defined in the lease. The lease lists BHA resident as the "tenant" and others in her household as "members". The "tenant" is responsible for upholding all tenant obligations, including reporting income changes in a timely manner and paying the rent. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, BHA staff prepared a credit check for Ms. Roberts, and he stands by the amount of the credit. The BHA has a process. It heard her appeal and made modifications to her rent. If BHA resident is not satisfied, she can hire a lawyer to seek a remedy.

Mr. Jacobs said that the role of the Board is to see that the process is followed.

Mr. Jacobs confirmed that the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 11, 2009 at 4:30 PM at the Kickham Apartments.

**On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Dugan, the meeting was adjourned at 5:50 PM.**