

Brookline Housing Authority  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
October 13, 2009  
61 Park Street  
4:30 PM

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

Mr. Cloonan said that BHA Scholarship application essays have been included in the Board packet. He would like to meet with a review committee comprised of Ms. Berman, Agnes Rogers, Susan Barnette, and possibly someone from the Steps To Success program to come up with award recommendations. He suggested the awards be approved by the Board in November so that the recipients could attend the December meeting to receive the scholarships.

Ms. Sullivan asked how the dollar amount of the awards is determined. Mr. Cloonan said that the value of the scholarships vary from year to year depending on the number of applicants and the amount of scholarship money available.

Mr. Cloonan said that he is pleased to report that the BHA is months ahead of schedule with respect to CDBG modernization expenditures.

Mr. Cloonan explained that he is still moving federal stimulus money around and will be working on timelines to present to the Board. The stimulus money includes a competitive award of \$523,000 received in October. This money will go to ADA work, including: a new wheelchair accessible unit; automatic door openers; the widening of doorways; and exterior access improvements.

Mr. Cloonan said that there is also \$878,000 in non competitive stimulus money. If the BHA chooses to federalize state units, it would need to use \$2,000 of the stimulus money per unit for improvements at any state development being federalized.

Mr. Trietsch asked what the dollar figure would be to bring BHA developments up to adequate physical standards. Mr. Cloonan said that it would take approximately \$20 million to accomplish this. Mr. Trietsch pointed out that although the stimulus money is extremely welcome, it does not come close to addressing all the physical needs.

Mr. Jacobs asked about the talk of a merger with BIC. Mr. Cloonan said that he had a conversation with Fran Price at the Brookline Planning Department about financial assistance for a BHA planner. She recommended a BHA – BIC merger as a possible opportunity. Their planner position is currently vacant. Mr. Cloonan wants to have a conversation with BIC member Christina Wolfe and possibly Mike Rosenberg.

Mr. Jacobs asked about wheelchair accessibility at the Col. Floyd Apartments. Mr. Cloonan said that DHCD has not yet had a conversation with HUD on how the lack of

accessible units might affect a development being considered for federalization. Mr. Cloonan said that he is starting to get some feedback indicating that HUD is softening its resistance towards federalization and may be willing to consider a few proposals. The state is hoping to come up with a boilerplate to assist housing authorities in applying for federalization.

Mr. Cloonan said that he and Mr. Trietsch had a conversation last week about the possibility of adding the Egmont Street Veterans Apartments for federalization consideration. If the Col. Floyd Apartments and the Egmont Street Veterans Apartments were to be federalized, \$360,000 would have to be reprogrammed out of the stimulus money into these developments by March of 2010.

Mr. Jacobs asked if the BHA could go to the Town to ask for CDBG money for this purpose. Mr. Cloonan said that he believes there will be opportunities in the future for federal – state partnerships. Mr. Jacobs said that there is a good opportunity now.

Ms. Dugan asked about the possible negative impact of federalization if the BHA was left with the High Street Veterans Apartments and the Trustman Apartments as the only developments in the state portfolio. Mr. Cloonan said that hopefully, if significant numbers of units are federalized statewide, there would be more state operating and capital money for the state developments that remain.

Mr. Trietsch said that he would like to set up a meeting with the Town to inform them of the critical issues facing the BHA and to see what they can do to help.

Mr. Jacobs suggested asking the state to gradually reduce the existing BHA subsidy if it is to take developments off their hands.

Mr. Trietsch said that the BHA sued the state a few years ago for inadequate funding. The state needs to meet their obligation to adequately fund public housing. He does not want to leave any BHA state developments vulnerable.

BHA resident, Maria Rosenthal, asked why the BHA was considering federal conversion if it would cost \$360,000 to do so. Mr. Trietsch said that federalization would immediately yield more funding. Mr. Jacobs said that the goal is to improve standards in the converted developments without hurting those in the remaining state developments.

BHA resident, Carol Holt, asked about the legality of using federal money for state developments. She wondered what would happen to the plans for roof work at the O'Shea House if federal money went to state developments. Mr. Cloonan said that using stimulus money for this purpose is legal. He explained that the BHA could use 2009 capital fund money for the O'Shea House roof instead of stimulus money.

Agnes Rogers, Town Wide Resident Association President, reported that things are going well at most developments. However, there is still resident infighting and turmoil at the

O'Shea House. She also said that a resident informed her that there are mouse problems at the Kickham Apartments and the Morse Apartments.

George Lalli, BHA Director of Maintenance, said that he regularly reviews the pest extermination reports and he has not seen an up tick in mouse problems. Mr. Cloonan said that fall is the season that usually sees mice trying to infiltrate into buildings. He asked Ms. Rogers to speak to Matthew Baronas, BHA Assistant Executive Director, about the specifics of the resident complaint.

Mr. Trietsch brought forward the consent agenda. Mr. Cloonan said that the August Board minutes were not ready for a vote. Mr. Jacobs asked if consent agenda items concerning the Financial Manager job and the Fair Market Rents be pulled from the vote so that they could be discussed separately. Mr. Trietsch said that he would have to abstain from voting on the consent agenda because he was absent from the September meeting and therefore couldn't vote on the minutes. **On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Berman, the consent agenda: to adopt the minutes of the regular meeting held on September 15, 2009; to authorize the solicitation of donations to the BHA for the November 26, 2009 BHA Thanksgiving dinner for residents; and to dedicate the Col. Floyd Apartments sitting area in memory of former BHA employee and BHA resident, Jack Hollowell, was approved. The votes were as follows:**

<b>AYES</b>	<b>ABSTAINED</b>
<b>Mr. Jacobs</b>	<b>Mr. Trietsch</b>
<b>Ms. Dugan</b>	
<b>Ms. Berman</b>	
<b>Ms. Sullivan</b>	

Mr. Jacobs asked about the nature of the Finance Department staff position. He wondered if the BHA had the money to support such a hire considering the budget cuts facing the agency. Mr. Cloonan said that the former Finance Department employee, Kelley Chambliss, was recently promoted to Housing Manager. The new hire will be filling Ms. Chambliss' full time position vacancy. He believes this is an essential job at the BHA and that it takes someone with the right set of skills. **On a motion from Ms. Dugan and a second from Ms. Sullivan: the hiring of Margarita Montero as a Financial Manager at an annual salary of \$34,000 per year was unanimously approved.**

Mr. Jacobs asked about the vote to adopt either the 2008 FMR payment standard at 120% or the 2009 FMR payment standard at 110%. He wondered why the BHA wasn't asking for 120% of the 2009 FMR payment standard. Mr. Cloonan said that the maximum the Board can approve as a payment standard is 110%. Otherwise, the BHA would have to ask for a waiver from HUD. The BHA already has a waiver allowing a 2008 payment standard of 120%. The 2009 FMRs for 2 bedroom units only went up \$10. He doesn't know if it is worth it to submit a new waiver request to HUD for an increase of just a few

dollars. He wants to look at the impact on the other bedroom sizes first because it takes time and money to submit a waiver request to HUD.

Mr. Jacobs suggested that the BHA try to determine if the difference in the FMR payment standard will have an impact on whether or not voucher holders will be able to stay in Brookline. Mr. Cloonan said that he will update the Board next month. **On a motion from Ms. Berman and a second from Mr. Jacobs, authorization to use either the existing BHA exception rent (120% of the 2008 FMR payment standard) or 110% of the 2009 FMR payment standard for Brookline Section 8 voucher program rents, effective October 1, 2009, was unanimously approved.**

Mr. Cloonan said that on September 29, 2009, the state notified the BHA of a 4.7% budget cut, effective October 1, 2009. This cut amounts to \$42,000. Another \$42,000 needs to be cut as of April 1, 2010 for a total cut of \$84,000 over the next 12 months. Because of this, there is a need for a budget revision. He has shared some ideas with the Board. One certainty is that the BHA cannot cut \$84,000 without decreases in services or staff. He wondered if the Board wanted to create a subcommittee to review options.

Mr. Trietsch clarified that the Board would be looking to approve budget revisions next month as opposed to tonight. He pointed out that the conversation with the Town is very relevant to this matter.

Marsha Steinberg asked how the BHA could approve \$35,000 for a new Financial Department staff person when it is facing such steep budget cuts. Mr. Trietsch said that the BHA needs this staff position in order to do its job. There are complex federal and state financial reporting requirements and penalties if the BHA is deficient in this area.

BHA resident, Stephen Berenson, said that the positive aspects of federalization have been explained. He wondered what the negatives might be. Mr. Cloonan said that there could be a negative impact with respect to economies of scale if the number of state developments is cut in half from 4 to 2. Some residents' rents would increase because of differences in rent calculation formulas, although other residents would see their rents decrease. There are also differences in regulations regarding eligibility.

Mr. Cloonan said that HUD has not embraced federalization as of yet. The BHA could end up spending money on a conversion package, only to be rejected. At this point, there are an estimated 2,500 state units being considered for conversion to the federal program. Mr. Trietsch added that because of this lack of clarity from HUD, the BHA will proceed with caution.

Mr. Cloonan said that he asked the state today how HUD would handle lead paint issues in units being considered for federalization. They said that this question has never been brought up before.

Ms. Steinberg complained that the O'Shea House is filthy and suggested that cleaners are only now working in the building because the Board is meeting today. She said that she has a checklist of complaints that have not been addressed.

Mary Kickham, another resident in the building said that she lives on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and that her hallway has been kept relatively clean, considering staffing limitations.

Mr. Cloonan said that the BHA used to have a Maintenance Department staff of 18. There are now 13 staff members. Contractors clean BHA developments on a quarterly basis and their schedule has brought them to the O'Shea House this week by coincidence, not for the benefit of Board members.

Mr. Trietsch advised Ms. Steinberg to give Mr. Cloonan her checklist and said that Mr. Cloonan would report back to the Board on the subject next month.

Stuart Feldman, a BHA resident, said that he got stuck in the O'Shea House elevator for 2 hours two nights ago. Although, he appreciated the fact that there was a phone on the elevator, he wondered what could be done to prevent something like this from happening again.

Mr. Cloonan explained that work is being completed on elevator mechanical systems in all federal buildings. Elevator control panels were replaced several years ago. The contractors are trying to get the control system and the mechanical system working together. The elevators have been signed off by the state, but bugs are still being worked out.

Mr. Trietsch asked if the contractors are responsive when there are problems. Mr. Cloonan said that they are very responsive.

Mr. Jacobs asked if the problems relate to the contractor or the designer. Mr. Cloonan said that he did not have an answer to this and that he would have to look into it further.

Mr. Trietsch asked that Mr. Cloonan examine the performance levels of the elevators and the numbers of breakdowns and to report back at the next meeting.

Mr. Trietsch confirmed that the next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 10, 2009 at 4:30 PM at the Morse Apartments.

Mr. Cloonan explained that the regular meeting would be adjourning and that the Board planned to reconvene in executive session in order to discuss personnel issues.

**On a motion from Ms. Dugan and a second from Ms. Berman, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 PM.**