

Brookline Housing Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes
September 10, 2019
61 Park Street
4:30 PM

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Jacobs at 4:35 PM. Those present included Ms. Dugan, Ms. Katz, Ms. Sullivan, and Ms. Cohen.

Board Reports

Ms. Katz reported that Steps To Success had its back to school event at Emerson Park on August 26, 2019. There was a great turnout.

Executive Director Report

Mr. Dober reported the following:

- Congratulations to BHA Director of Subsidized Housing and Applications, Carlos Hernandez, and his staff for achieving a Section 8 Program High Performer ranking.
- The Gateway East construction project is well underway. The BHA had the architect it hired to monitor the BHA-related work on site this past week. He verified that the work on or abutting the Walnut Street Apartments is proceeding according to plan.

Ms. Dugan said that the Gateway East work near the BHA senior buildings is noisy and dirty, but the construction workers are proceeding professionally and efficiently. She heard that a locked gate was going to be installed on Juniper Street limiting vehicle access to the condos and the BHA townhouse apartments on that section of the street. She asked if the street is Town owned. Mr. Dober said that staff would look into this matter.

Construction Report

BHA Director of Capital Improvements, Sharon Cowan, reported the following:

- The Sussman House fire alarm upgrade contractor has commenced work. An informational meeting was held for residents and was well attended.
- The Egmont Street Veterans bathroom fan ventilation project will be out to bid next month.
- The architect selection process is underway for the High Street Veterans and Egmont Street Veterans Apartments front door and lock replacement project.
- A walk-through for architects has been scheduled for the project to replace water lines and to reseal the parking lot at Col. Floyd Apartments.
- The architect selection process is underway for the concrete balcony repair project at the Walnut Street Apartments senior buildings.

Resident Association Report

Brookline Housing Town Wide Tenant Association Officer, Shawn O'Neal said that on August 19, 2019, she kicked off a weekday after school activity program for children at 22 High Street called the "Brookline Mini Recreational Activity Access Program". She has received donations from the Brookline Recreation Department. Activities include arts and crafts, games, and day trips.

BHA Commissioners commended Ms. O'Neal for her good efforts.

State Representative Tommy Vitolo

Rep. Vitolo said that he wanted to check in with BHA residents, staff, and Commissioners on initiatives his office is working on, including:

- Child care vouchers. There are too few vouchers to meet demand, and the value of the vouchers is not adequate to cover program costs. He would like to get the Brookline Public School's after school programs to accept vouchers and to get more day care centers to accept vouchers. He also wants to raise public awareness of the need and to garner support for child care voucher initiatives.
- Section 8 vouchers. Market rents are too high to make Section 8 vouchers widely usable in Brookline. He would like to see higher subsidy rates from the federal government in towns like Brookline.

Ms. Katz said that Steps To Success is going through the process to get certified by the state to accept vouchers.

Ms. Sullivan asked if there is a coalition of communities working on these issues. Rep. Vitolo said that advocacy groups are promoting these issues, but he feels that there are unique challenges in towns like Brookline and that the solution may fall outside of the state legislature.

Mr. Jacobs said that one of the most pressing issues facing the BHA is the fact that the federal government has a formula for redeveloping its public housing stock, but the state has no equivalent program.

Rep. Vitolo said that there is a conversation in Brookline on taxing the sale of property and spending the added revenue on affordable housing. Mr. Jacobs pointed out that a Brookline Town Meeting warrant article would allow the use of such revenue for the development but not the preservation of affordable housing and that the warrant article should be amended.

Ms. Cohen said that preservation of the BHA public housing inventory is the only way to maintain the primary source of low-income housing in Brookline. It is a line item issue in the state budget. She feels that preservation should take priority over new development. Ms. Cohen said that the state could use federal resources, such as its large inventory of Section 8 vouchers to help preserve state funded public housing.

Ms. Katz said that affordable housing is often associated with workforce housing. The discussion needs to include the lowest income strata.

Rep. Vitolo said that he agrees with the BHA Board entirely on these subjects. He will be working on his initiatives with a variety of constituent groups.

RAD Update

BHA Director of Redevelopment, Maria Maffei, reported the following:

61 Park Street

- Construction got underway on August 5, 2019 focusing first on issues such as tree removal, vehicle access, storage, etc.
- Work in the units is occurring in pre-designated sections of the building; currently the top three floors in the front of the building. Demolition and abatement measures within these units has been completed and reconstruction has begun.

- The first units should be ready for reoccupancy in about a month.
- Weekly meetings with the construction team and BHA staff and consultants are ongoing.
- Temporary resident relocation is proceeding well.
- Residents are in the process of the technical transition from the public housing program to the Section 8 program. BHA Director of Subsidized Housing and Applications, Carlos Hernandez, has held four Section 8 briefings for residents.
- With proceeds from the financial closing, the Town’s redevelopment line of credit has been fully repaid.

90 Longwood Avenue

- Plans for the Morse Apartments RAD conversion are proceeding.
- Staff is holding interviews for Construction Manager.
- An RFP has been issued soliciting the best terms for equity and debt financing.
- The BHA will soon be hiring an Owner’s Project Manager.

Consent Agenda

On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Cohen, the consent agenda was unanimously approved and authorized the following: the minutes of the Board Meeting held on August 13, 2019; acceptance of DHCD Sustainability program funds in the amount of \$100,000; Final Completion of the contract with Valiant Group LLC for the playground and stairs project at High Street Veterans Apartments; a contract to Nationwide Construction, Inc. in the amount of \$49,400 for repair of the exterior stairs at 1057 Beacon Street; and a contract to Bonz & Company in the amount of \$5,000 to prepare an appraisal for Morse Apartments.

Steps To Success

Mr. Dober said that Steps To Success is one of the BHA’s closest and most important partner organizations. The BHA provided Steps To Success with financial support for many years but discontinued this practice when the program began running budget surpluses. Steps To Success is currently facing budget challenges and would benefit from renewed financial support from the BHA. He recommends a three-year financial contribution, subject to the availability of funds.

On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Cohen, a contribution to Steps to Success, Inc. in the amount of \$25,000, in the current BHA fiscal year and each of the next two fiscal years was approved by roll-call vote as follows:

AYES	ABSTAIN
Mr. Jacobs	Ms. Katz
Ms. Dugan	
Ms. Sullivan	
Ms. Cohen	

Contract Amendment

Ms. Maffei said that Luke Fallon has been an excellent financing consultant for the RAD redevelopment projects. The budget for his contract, however, is being expended at a faster rate than was expected. For him to continue as a consultant, a contract amendment would need to be executed. He is now only available only on a limited basis, and his hourly rate has risen. The BHA will need to hire a new consultant in the long term.

Mr. Jacobs and Ms. Cohen asked about how public bidding regulations apply to the facts and circumstances of the proposed contract amendment.

On a motion from Ms. Katz and a second from Ms. Cohen, an amendment to the contract with Fallon Advisory LLC for RAD program financial consulting, increasing the maximum contract value to \$70,000 and increasing the hourly rate to \$200, was unanimously approved, subject to the signoff of the BHA's law firm regarding procurement regulations.

Contract Award

Mr. Dober said that the BHA is seeking assistance in planning a groundbreaking ceremony for 61 Park LLC which will also serve as a kickoff for the BHA's redevelopment effort at all of its federal developments. Staff is recommending S.H. Event Planning, a local female owned firm with strong credentials.

On a motion from Ms. Katz and a second from Ms. Cohen, a contract to S.H. Event Planning to coordinate a groundbreaking ceremony for the 61 Park redevelopment project for a fixed fee of \$10,500 was unanimously approved.

Warrant Articles

Mr. Dober said that there are two important affordable housing proposals that will be considered at the upcoming Town Meeting in November.

Mr. Jacobs said that one proposal would prevent fossil fuels in all future development and redevelopment projects. This would have significant financial implications for upcoming BHA redevelopment projects. The other proposal concerns a real estate transfer tax.

Mr. Dober said that some BHA federal developments are powered by fossil fuel and some with electricity. The fossil fuel ban would add a premium to construction costs. Mr. Jacobs said that operating costs would be affected as well. Ms. Maffei said that the increased electrical load could be an added complication.

Ms. Cohen said that the warrant articles are conflicting: the transfer tax supports affordable housing but not affordable housing preservation; and the fossil fuel ban would increase costs to affordable housing. Cambridge Housing Authority has used high efficiency fossil fuel systems in recent redevelopment projects. She suggested approaching the Town about an exemption to the fossil fuel warrant article for upcoming BHA redevelopment projects, and the inclusion of affordable housing preservation in the transfer tax article.

FY 2020 Section 8 Rents

Mr. Hernandez said that each year the Board approves new payment standards for the Section 8 Voucher program based on Fair Market Rents (FMRs) published by HUD. This year there is an opportunity to consider using Small Area FMRs (SAFMRs) which can be implemented within zip codes where rents are significantly higher than the surrounding metropolitan area. The BHA intends to publish a public notice indicating that the BHA is considering utilizing a SAFMR.

Mr. Dober asked if the BHA would need to amend its Section 8 Administrative Plan if it adopts a SAFMR. Mr. Hernandez said that he would research to see if this would be necessary.

Other Business

The Board confirmed that the next meeting will be held at 190 Harvard Street on October 22, 2019 at 4:30 PM.

On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Katz, it was unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 6:00 PM.

**A TRUE COPY
ATTEST**



**Patrick Dober
Executive Director**