

Brookline Housing Authority
Meeting Minutes
June 9, 2020
By Teleconference
4:30 PM

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Jacobs at 4:30 PM. Those present included Ms. Dugan, Ms. Katz, Ms. Sullivan, and Ms. Cohen.

Board Report

Mr. Jacobs reported the following:

- The Executive Director Search Committee has made great progress and is prepared to recommend a candidate to succeed Mr. Dober. An extra BHA Board meeting is scheduled for next week to consider offering the position to this candidate.
- A warrant article has been drafted to make the Town's Affordable Housing Trust Fund compliant with state law. This will result in the addition of a Select Board Member to the Housing Advisory Board.

Executive Director Report

Mr. Dober reported the following:

- The BHA Board and staff are deeply aware of the pain, frustration, and anger brought forward by violence against African Americans. The BHA fights for racial justice as part of its mission. Mr. Dober and the Board plan to draft a public statement on this subject.
- BHA Property Manager, Ana De La Puente, is being fast tracked to permanent employee status. Ms. De La Puente previously worked at Cruz Management, and has extensive experience in tax credit program property management.
- The spread of coronavirus has slowed in Brookline. No BHA staff members have thus far been infected, and a very small number of BHA residents have tested positive.
- The BHA has had a great deal of unplanned coronavirus expenses during the last few months. Through various sources, staff is expecting reimbursement for much of these expenses.
- The BHA has a great opportunity to receive \$6.5 million in development funding from the Town for the redevelopment of Col. Floyd Apartments.

Mr. Jacobs asked if the coronavirus is having a negative effect on the numbers of vacancies at BHA family developments. BHA Assistant Executive Director, Matthew Baronas, said that the shift in BHA focus toward maintaining the health and safety of residents and staff at the onset of the health emergency made filling vacancies very difficult. Some good progress is now being made, however, in filling vacancies in family developments. Because of the higher risk to elderly and disabled populations posed by COVID-19, the turnover of vacant apartments in high rise elderly developments is still on hold.

Mr. Jacobs said that the BHA might want to consider holding vacancies at federal developments pending the outcome of the Col. Floyd redevelopment plans.

Construction Report

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

- Due to social distancing restrictions, two projects in the middle of construction are still on hold because the work occurs in occupied apartments: the fire alarm upgrades at Sussman House; and bathroom exhaust fans at Egmont Street Veterans Apartments.
- The replacement of front entrance doors and frames at High Street Veterans and Egmont Street Veterans Apartments is expected to proceed soon.
- The Col. Floyd domestic water line replacement project has started.
- A building permit is being sought for the Walnut Street Veterans Apartments elderly building balcony repair project.

Consent Agenda

On a motion from Ms. Cohen and a second from Ms. Katz, the consent agenda was unanimously approved and authorized the following: the minutes of the meeting held on May 12, 2020; and a contract for the replacement of the retaining wall at High Street Veterans Apartments to Woodall Construction Co., in the amount of \$33,998.

Contract Award

Mr. Dober said that at the April Board meeting, the Board gave approval to execute a payroll services contract under emergency procurement regulations. Key BHA Finance Department staff have health conditions that put them at risk during the pandemic, and outsourcing the payroll function will enhance the ability of staff to work remotely. The recommended firm is a local business, with adequate staffing, and with excellent references from municipal agencies, including housing authorities.

On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Katz, a contract award to Harpers Payroll services for BHA staff payroll processing in the amount of \$6,500 per year, fixed for three years, with a month-to-month contract term for the BHA, was unanimously approved.

Grant Application

BHA ESOL Director, Danielle Mendola, said that an opportunity has arisen on short notice (application due July 17, 2020) to submit a grant proposal for the DHCD Self Sufficiency Program. An endorsement of the application from the BHA Board is required. The grant provides up to \$100,000 to support economic security for residents of state funded public housing through personal asset building. As a graduate of this program, Ms. Mendola can personally attest to its effectiveness.

Ms. Katz said that she has observed how well the program works for residents.

Ms. Sullivan asked about the length of the program. Ms. Mendola said that the participants commit to the program for three to five years.

Mr. Dober said that the program caps a resident's rent, with future rent savings going into the resident's escrow account. This application is timely because the BHA recently became ineligible for continued federal ROSS program (Resident Opportunities for Self Sufficiency) funds because RAD projects are ineligible for such funding.

On a motion from Ms. Katz and a second from Ms. Cohen, the submission of a grant proposal for the DHCD Self Sufficiency Program was unanimously approved.

Resident Service Report

Ms. Mendola reported the following highlights:

- The BHA partnered with the Brookline Town Clerk to provide absentee ballot applications to all BHA residents, along with pre-paid return envelopes.
- COVID-19 email and text capabilities for communications to residents have been enhanced through a new online platform called Sendinblue.

Redevelopment Report

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

61 Park Street

- A phased construction restart is set to begin on June 15, 2020.
- Only two residents will need to be relocated in the next grouping of apartments undergoing renovations.
- A construction health and safety plan has been submitted to the Town and a draft relocation health and safety plan will soon be submitted.
- Up to \$600,000 in extra coronavirus related expenses are anticipated, including extra labor costs due to COVID protocols and ongoing monthly carrying costs. Staff is confident that these expenses will be covered by \$1 million in existing unspent contingency funds. The anticipated LEAN grant award of \$950,000 will also help cover such costs.
- The construction delays have pushed back the placed in service date for tax credit delivery, resulting in a loss of equity.

90 Longwood Avenue

- Project closing is expected at the end of June or early July.
- The Select Board will vote next week on financial commitments.
- Construction is expected to start in August.
- The construction timeline includes extra time to account for coronavirus related slowdowns.
- The revised budget shows a deferred developer fee of \$200,000. The hope, however, is to not have to defer any of this fee.
- Plans are in place for temporary office space in two vacant units on the second floor.
- A temporary reception desk kiosk will be set up on the ground floor during office renovations.

Col. Floyd Apartments

- If Town Meeting votes to support the BHA's Col. Floyd redevelopment plans with inclusionary zoning funds from Welltower's redevelopment of the Newbury College campus, this project could be next in the pipeline.

Preconstruction Amendments

BHA Staff Consultant, Garrett Anderson, said that these amendments do two things: reconcile some financials that were approved at the April Board meeting; and advance some funds to enable early preconstruction activities.

On a motion from Ms. Cohen and a second from Ms. Sullivan, the affirmation of amendments 1 through 3 to the preconstruction scope of work and fees under the contract with Colantonio, Inc. for the 90 Longwood Avenue renovations, in the total amount of \$76,200, in substitution for the preconstruction changes affirmed by the Board on April 14, 2020, was unanimously approved.

FY 2020 Year End Income and Expense Review

Mr. Dober reported the following:

- Overall, the BHA's finances ended the year in good shape.
- Board Member signatures are needed on DHCD required certifications, including: budget approvals, compliance with lead paint laws; and the top five salaries of BHA staff members.
- FY 2020 ended with a small surplus of \$43,000 which was very close to projections.
- Some modest deficits in the public housing program were offset by real estate activities and the developer fee received last year.
- 61 Park LLC operated on a surplus.
- As the RAD conversions progress, the program will become more profitable for the BHA. A tipping point is expected when somewhere between two to four RAD developments have been completed, and development fees will no longer be needed in order to run profits.
- 61 Park LLC is included in the financial review, but there were only five months of operations reflected in FY 2020. This led to some statistical anomalies and less of a surplus.
- The real estate cost center includes 61 Park and 86 Dummer. Expenses charged include the BHA's development staff, and interim funds to support pre-development activities for 90 Longwood LLC.
- Costs relating to maintaining old public housing properties are rising at a rapid pace, including: maintenance contracts; materials and supplies; and extraordinary maintenance.
- BHA reserves are a source of strength. During the past seven years, reserves have grown from \$2.8 million to \$4.8 million (equal to five months of operating expenses).

BHA Property Database

BHA Graduate Fellow, Connor Clark, said that he has been working on a project to put together as much BHA property data in one place as is possible. In this way, staff can generate quick insights for modernization and development projects, grant applications, presentations, etc. The basic data includes: occupancy statistics, subsidy type, building systems, lot size, density, parking, bedroom counts, unit square footage, etc. The project is a work in progress.

Mr. Jacobs said that he has used this database several times and found it to be incredibly helpful.

Ms. Cohen asked how this information is accessed. Mr. Clark said that it is located in a BHA shared drive. Ms. Katz recommended that a staff member be assigned the task of updating this data.

Mr. Dober said that Mr. Clark has been vital resource to the BHA, especially so during the pandemic. He is very pleased to report that Mr. Clark has agreed to stay on with the BHA for six more months.

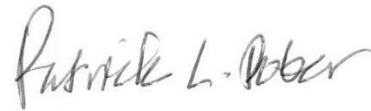
Other Business

Mr. Jacobs said that he would like to thank the BHA staff for their incredible efforts and accomplishments during the pandemic.

The Board confirmed upcoming meetings on June 18, 2020 at 4:30 PM and on July 14, 2020 at 4:30 PM, both by teleconference.

On a motion from Ms. Sullivan and a second from Ms. Katz, it was unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 5:50 PM.

**A TRUE COPY
ATTEST**



**Patrick Dober
Executive Director**