

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING  
- OPEN SESSION -  
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY  
HELD ON AUGUST 19, 2014

The members of the Springfield Housing Authority met in Open Session at the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress St., Springfield, Massachusetts at 4:30 PM on August 19, 2014.

A copy of the Notice of Meeting, pursuant to Section 23B of Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, with the Certificate as to Service of the Notice, was ordered spread upon the minutes of the meeting and filed for records.

NOTICE OF MEETING


Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 23B of Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts Laws, as amended, that a Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Springfield Housing Authority will be held at 4:30 PM on Tuesday, August 19, 2014 in the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress Street, Springfield, MA 01104.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY  
/s/William H. Abrashkin, Executive Director  
August 14, 2014

CERTIFICATE AS TO SERVICE OF THE NOTICE OF MEETING

I, William H. Abrashkin, the duly appointed and qualified Secretary of the Springfield Housing Authority, do hereby certify that on August 14, 2014 I filed in the manner provided by Section 23B, Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, with the Clerk of the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, a Notice of Meeting of which the foregoing is a true and correct copy.

Attest:



William H. Abrashkin/Executive Director/  
Secretary to the Board

Vice-Chairman Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM, and those present upon roll call were as follows:

PRESENT

Willie Thomas  
Thomas Labonte  
Angela Robles  
Jessica Quinonez

ABSENT

Raymond Warren

ALSO PRESENT

William Abrashkin  
Michelle Booth (arrived at 4:32 pm)  
Sean Cahillane  
Nicole Contois

Candra Cripps  
Michele Decoteau  
Fidan Gousseynoff  
John Healy  
Wallace Kisiel

The Board reviewed the minutes of June 17, 2014. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the minutes of June 17, 2014.

The Board reviewed the minutes of June 19, 2014. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Quinonez, seconded by Commissioner Robles, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the minutes of June 19, 2014.

John Healy left the Conference Room at 4:33 PM.

By Mr. Abrashkin's request, two items were moved up in the agenda - Financial Report and the Resident Services Coordinator's report.

Real Estate Project Administrator Sean Cahillane briefed the Board on the financial situation of the new office. He expressed his gratitude to Accounting Manager Michele Decoteau and DED Nicole Contois for the assistance in managing the finances and preparing the report. He stated that during the 1<sup>st</sup> year of operation of the new office at 60 Congress Street, the total income from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Section 8 and other sources made \$308,098 while the expenses were at \$184,742. He explained what PVPC electric pass through means and indicated that total common area shared expenses (for services like snow plowing, cleaning and cleaning supplies, landscaping, elevator maintenance etc.) made \$111,893. Therefore, the building's net income was \$8,462. He finalized his report with stating that the assets are in a pretty good shape and the SHA has established excellent relationship with the PVPC.

Executive Director Abrashkin continued with informing the Board that effective September 1, 2014 the management of the building is being transferred to the team of three deputy Directors - Michelle Booth, Nicole Contois and Wallace Kisiel. Mr. Abrashkin reported about a meeting that took place the day before with the PVPC top management staff and said that a new contract has been drafted and pending approval. He indicated that even though SHA is an agency that specialized in property management, this is the 1<sup>st</sup> venture into a commercial management.

John Healy returned to the Conference Room at 4:39 PM. Sean Cahillane left the Conference Room at 4:40 PM.

Candra Cripps, who has been Resident Services Coordinator at the SHA for 13 years, started her presentation by asking the Board members to

introduce themselves. She provided information on various services she has been offering for the elderly residents in all developments, including Brown Bag food assistance through the West Mass Food Bank; referrals to personal care programs; organizing blood pressure and glucose screenings, pneumonia, shingles and flue clinics; Alzheimer, breast cancer, diabetes and other awareness sessions; a very popular among residents nutrition program through the UMass Extension; information sessions from the District Attorney's office on identity theft prevention, and SHINE services to help residents with Medicare, Masshealth and other health insurance related issues. Director of Resident Services Department Pam Wells added that Ms. Cripps also works with all the property managers to intervene, provide assistance and do case management to residents who have financial hardship and can't pay their rent or have problems with housekeeping.

Candra Cripps and Pam Wells left the Conference Room at 4:47 PM.

Nicole Contois reminded the Board that the items 1 through 6 were presented to the Board earlier this year and stated that now the Board just needs to certify the year end financial statements for each state project. She acknowledged the hard work of Michele Decoteau, the Accounting Manager (who has been with the agency for 27 years) in preparing the statements.

The Board reviewed a request to approve FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for program 667-A. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez it was unanimously

VOTED: To adopt Resolution No. 9617 approving FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for program 667-A.

The Board reviewed a request to approve FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for program 689-C. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Quinonez, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: To adopt Resolution No. 9618 approving FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for program 689-C.

The Board reviewed a request to approve FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for program 200-A. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez it was unanimously

VOTED: To adopt Resolution No. 9619 approving FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for program 200-A.

The Board reviewed a request to approve FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for program 705-A. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: To adopt Resolution No. 9620 approving FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for program 705-A.

The Board reviewed a request to approve FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for program 400-1. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Robles, seconded by Commissioner Labonte it was unanimously

VOTED: To adopt Resolution No. 9621 approving FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for program 400-1.

The Board reviewed a request to approve FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for MRVP. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez it was unanimously

VOTED: To adopt Resolution No. 9622 approving FYE 3/31/14 year end statements for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program.

John Healy presented for the Board's review bids and a recommendation to award Contract for painting of vacant apartments to the lowest responsible and responsive bidder, Exterior Cleaning Place. Answering Commissioner Quinonez's question, Michelle Booth explained that the time on preparing a unit for painting varies, depending on wear and tear condition, the damage previous tenants might had caused and time needed for initial repair works. Answering Commissioner's Robles question, John Healy explained the big gap between the quotes submitted by ECP and other bidders. He indicated that ECP, a family operated small company, had been providing painting services to the SHA for years. The company owner who provides the services himself and does not hire any subcontractors, was very anxious to get the contract with the SHA again, so he suggested to decrease his rates. He confirmed that the rates include paint supplies.

Mr. Abrashkin inquired about a possibility of using ROCA for this kind of services. Ms. Booth explained that ROCA, who had been providing hallway and other exterior painting services to the SHA at Riverview Apartments, lacks the skills and resources to paint vacant apartments.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Robles, seconded by Commissioner Labonte it was unanimously

VOTED: To award a One (1) Year contract, with options for two additional years to be renewed annually (\$137,025.00 per year), pending funding availability, to Exterior Cleaning Place Inc. of Leicester, MA. This contract will be paid for utilizing funds from the operating budget of each AMP; appoint Executive Director, William Abrashkin as the Contracting Officer authorizing him to execute the contract.

The Board reviewed materials on Change Order No.1 from Meadows Construction Inc. requesting a change order credit to contract #35C-2014-13-2 for a credit of surplus materials that were not used for the roof replacement at Moxon Apartments.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve contract Change Order No.1 in the credit amount of \$4,125.00 to contract #35C-2014-13-2 with Meadows Construction Inc. making the new contract amount \$222,875.00

The Board reviewed the materials on final closeout documents for Meadows Construction Inc. for the roof replacement at Moxon Apartments. The final cost of the project was \$222,875.00. John Healy indicated that the work was completed in less than three weeks.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez it was unanimously

VOTED: To accept the Substantial and Final Completion paper work for the roof replacement project at Moxon Apartments, release Retainage to Meadows Constuction Inc. in the amount of \$18,007.50, and closeout the project.

The Board reviewed a request to approve spending \$1250 to sponsor materials on the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual CHAPA Dinner to be held in Boston on October 28, 2014. Last year the agency contributed \$1000.00 and this year it is considering to upgrade its commitment by choosing a "Supporter" tier together with HAP Housing.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Robles, seconded by Commissioner Labonte it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve spending \$1250 from the COCC account to co-sponsor with HAP Housing the CHAPA's 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner on 10/28/14.

The Board reviewed the materials on implementation of New Flat Rent Amounts in accordance with the Appropriations Act of 2014 (Section 210) and Additional HUD Direction and Revision of SHA Revised Annual Plan. Michelle Booth reminded about the approval of flat rent changes in April 2014 and explained that since that time HUD has recommended several other changes to the Flat Rent Policy, including a requirement to allow tenants opting to pay flat rent to get a utility allowance that could help them in paying increased rent.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: 1) to approve the revised Flat Rent Policy, effective October 1, 2014, and the flat rent section of the SHA's Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plan; 2)to approve amending the SHA's Annual Plan to include the implementation of a new flat rent policy in accordance with Appropriations Act of 2014 (Section 210).

The Board reviewed a request to establish initial rents at the Eastbrook Apartments as Floor Rents. Michelle Booth provided the information on the subject and explained how rent is calculated, how this change affects the tenants' rent and what happens if a tenant's income decreases/ increases.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Quinonez, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve establishing initial contract rents at the Eastbrook Apartments as the floor rents and authorize the Executive Director to execute a Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) rider to the Section 8 project-based voucher housing assistance payments contract with Winn Residential, the owner of Eastbrook Apartments.

The Board was presented with the materials on approving SHA Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Language Assistance Plan Policy. Michelle Booth explained the significance of adopting and implementing the plan to make sure that all applicants and residents, whose primary language is not English, get an access to all SHA programs, documents and understand the SHA rules, regulations and practices. Ms. Booth indicated that it is hard to determine exactly the number of languages used by the residents and applicants because at this point the only metrics available is ethnical and racial data and more research on linguistic demographics is required. The SHA is in the process of identifying translation companies in the area that would be providing interpretation services to the SHA tenants and applicants and translating all the paperwork (that also requires simplifying the language of the documents). The SHA will start with translating all its forms and other documents into Spanish and will be reviewing a possibility of translating to other languages spoken in the area. As a part of this new policy and in accordance with the Voluntary Compliance Agreement the SHA is planning to organize a training for its staff concerning meeting the needs of persons with LEP and providing language assistance to residents, program participants and applicants both for public housing and Section 8.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the adoption of the SHA's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Language Assistance Plan.

Mr. Abrashkin started the Executive Director's report with an update on Chairman Ray Warren's condition. He informed that Mr. Warren's surgery was successful, he is recovering at a rehab and is expected to be back for the next Board meeting.

The next item he provided an update about was Talk!Read!Succeed! program. Mr. Abrashkin informed the Board members that the COX Foundation will not be funding the program anymore but the \$250,000 received from the State will still make possible to run the program although it cannot be expanded. Mr. Abrashkin will be meeting with the DHCD Undersecretary Gornstein to discuss how the funding has to be managed, distributed and reported and what needs to be done to institutionalize this Line Item in the state budget.

Mr. Abrashkin continued his report with an update on replacing the units destroyed by tornado of 2011. He indicated that due to FEMA bureaucracy, confusion about project worksheets, and numerous staffing changes at the DHCD, the SHA still has not been able to get any money. It looks like the money for the SHA had been paid to a contractor that never did any repair works because the buildings had been demolished and the money or part of it ended up in the DHCD General Fund. This problem delays the unit replacement as well as other issues like de-concentration of poverty, building code requirements and refusal of the City of Springfield to provide information on how much money the SHA will be receiving from the Community Block Grant Disaster Relief Fund. The City of Springfield demands the Springfield Housing Authority to provide the plans and design of the buildings to be built and the SHA cannot provide it without knowing how much money will be given for the project. Mr. Abrashkin indicated that 6 state units will be re-built at the Carpe Diem development and Ms. Booth explained that in accordance with VCA the new units have to be handicap accessible. 4 federal units will be replaced on its old site at Central Street and the agency is still in the process of negotiating with the City of Springfield on where the 4 other units will be re-built, possibly at 16 Acres or in East Springfield.

Mr. Abrashkin then informed the Board that following previous discussions with the Board about Move To Work Program, the Springfield Housing Authority has established some good relations with the Boston Housing Authority whose director hopes to develop partnership with the SHA to get a legislative support for the Program. He continued his presentation with providing brief information about the Public Housing Legislative reform which has now become a law. The SHA is being considering by DHCD as one of the 7 regional authorities that could provide capital planning assistance to other housing authorities around the state. Once RFP and more details are released, the agency will be reviewing this opportunity.

The Board reviewed and accepted Financial/ Accounting report including financial statements for the month of June 2014 and accounts payable report for the month of July 2014.

The Board reviewed and accepted Occupancy and Waiting List reports for the month of June 2014.

The Board reviewed and accepted the Public Safety and Investigative Services Department's Quarterly Report (April - June 2014). Ms. Booth indicated that in response to increased number of domestic violence incidents DEDs, Resident Services Director Pam Wells, Crime Prevention Office manager Rosa Lebron and Section 8 Participants Services Director Loleta Collins met to discuss measures to address this problem. Ms Booth informed the Board that gang related activity has decreased.

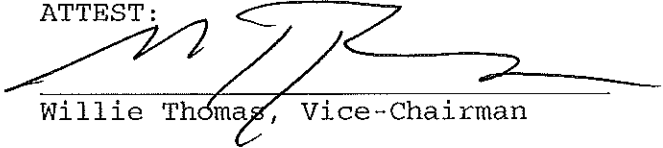
The Board reviewed and accepted the Rental Assistance Office quarterly report (April - June 2014). Ms. Booth informed the Board that Springfield Housing Authority's Homeownership Program has become a number one agency in the state overtaking Lynn Housing Authority in the number of participants. Michelle Booth indicated that a new Department

within Section 8 has been established headed by Homeownership Coordinator Lolita Collins, who will be overseeing apart from this program also family self-sufficiency programs and mobility counseling.

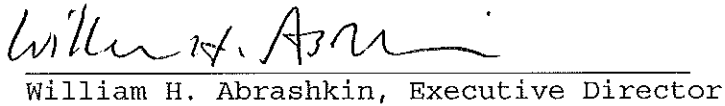
There being no further business to come before the members of the Springfield Housing Authority, upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles, it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the Open Session of a Regular Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 5:52 PM.

ATTEST:



Willie Thomas, Vice-Chairman



William H. Abrashkin, Executive Director