

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING
- OPEN SESSION -
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD ON APRIL 21, 2015

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 April 21, 2015.

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

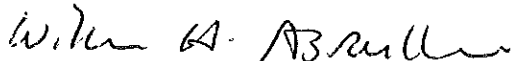
Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 23B of Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts Laws, as amended, that a Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Springfield Housing Authority will be held at 4:30 PM on Tuesday, April 21, 2015 in the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress Street, Springfield, MA 01104.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
/s/William H. Abrashkin, Executive Director
April 16, 2015

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 April 16, 2015 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

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

PRESENT

Raymond Warren
Willie Thomas
Thomas Labonte
Angela Robles
Jessica Quinonez

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT

William Abrashkin
Michelle Booth
Sean Cahillane
Atty. Priscilla Chesky, Lyon & Fitzpatrick

Nicole Contois
John Healy
Wallace Kisiel
Mary Ellen Lowney

Chairman Warren requested the Board's approval to enter into Executive Session. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: To enter into Executive Session and reconvene in Open Session.

The Board reconvened in Open Session at 4:57 PM.

Atty. Chesky and Sean Cahillane left the Conference Room at 4:57 PM.

The Board reviewed the Minutes of March 17, 2015. Chairman Warren requested a change to be made to paragraph about SHA's operating budget by substituting the word "rather" with the words "to support". Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the amended Minutes of March 17, 2015.

The Board reviewed the materials with regards to FY2016 Budget Requests for state properties. Nicole Contois provided explanation on how these formula driven budgets are calculated. As per Judge Abrashkin and Chairman Warren's requests Ms. Contois clarified what state Section 8 is describing it as state owned properties subsidized by project based federal Section 8 program. She indicated that one of these State Section 8 projects - project 667 (Gentile Apartments with 102 units) has very healthy reserves of more than a million dollars but part of that money is also used for capital expenditures since this kind of programs do not receive separate funding for capital improvement. Ms. Contois stated that the reserves for another State section 8 program - 50 units at Reed Village are also in a good shape with \$752,000 available but a part of these funds can be spent to repay DHCD for the work done for the whole Reed Village development during federalization. She explained that there is an Agreement between the SHA and DHCD that requires the agency to pay back to DHCD \$89,000 annually for several years, however for the last three years the Department of Housing and Community Development has not requested any payments from the Springfield Housing Authority.

Executive Director Abrashkin provided a historical background for the Agreement explaining that when 150 units at Reed Village were going through federalization the agency decided to take a loan from the DHCD to upgrade the 50 state units too and pledged to pay back in installments. Nicole Contois stated that it is not a SHA's fault that no payment has been made to this loan for the last years. The DHCD has no record of the Agreement so it has not been requesting its money back.

Referring to project 705 Ms. Contois explained that the six units out of 16 affected by tornado come from this Project. The reserves for this project are about \$750,000 but it includes \$400,000 insurance money that the agency cannot currently use to cover expenses for all the repairs to the units

damaged by tornado. Four offline units are in critical need for repairs. Ms. Contois explained why the budget request for Program 705 shows deficit.

Presenting to the Board information on the MRVP budget Ms. Contois stated that even though it is not reflected in the current budget request, the SHA's Section 8 program now will be allowed to charge salaries to MRVP. Ms. Contois explained that for many years the Springfield Housing Authority had not been allowed to charge any salaries to this program because of the small amount of units in its portfolio but now that the freeze of some state vouchers has been lifted the RAO will be able to save about \$73,000 by charging salaries to MRVP.

The last state program Nicole Contois provided information about was project 400 which includes all other state elderly units and scattered sites units. Ms. Contois indicated that the Springfield Housing Authority's staff has been working recently with the new DHCD staff to re-evaluate state budget for this project. She also explained that the amount of subsidy shown in the Budget request form is only an estimated amount and the actual funding will increase or decrease based on how much was actually spent on utilities.

Chairman Warren referred to Budget Certification Forms indicating the importance of certifying that no Board members are related to any SHA staff member. He also indicated that the Board members have to be mindful to certifying that the Executive Director is paid in accordance with the Schedule of Insurance and Employee Benefits Costs. In response to his question Executive Director Abrashkin confirmed that the information in the DHCD HAFS form presented to the Board is true and correct and he is not being paid any other money than what is indicated in the form. Commissioner Robles informed that her husband's cousin is a staff member at Springfield Housing Authority but it was agreed that since this relation is not immediate it does not represent any conflict of interest. In response to Commissioner Labonte's question on how Board members can know and certify that "no person or persons employed at the Authority receive financial compensation for more than one position" Chairman Warren stated this certification can only be made based on the information that the Executive Director provides to the Board.

Chairman Warren stated that the package presented does not contain a narrative requesting the Board to adopt Resolution #9629 to approve FY2016 Budget Requests. Nicole Contois explained that the Resolution to be voted on is listed in the agenda under "Adopt Resolution #9629 to approve FY2016 Budget Requests for projects 667-A, 200-A, 705-A, 400-1, MRVP and Schedule of Insurance and Employee Benefit". Chairman Warren indicated the importance of providing a Memo with the text of the Resolution the Board is requested to approve. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez it was unanimously

VOTED: To adopt Resolution #9629 to approve FY2016 Budget Requests for projects 667-A, 200-A, 705-A, 400-1, MRVP and Schedule of Insurance and Employee Benefit Costs.

The Board reviewed materials on approving Tenants Accounts Receivable write offs for Fiscal Year 2014. Nicole Contois explained that the amount to be written off attribute to the accounts of tenants who vacated the SHA units

(both through eviction or voluntarily) during the months of January - December of the previous year. She explained that the staff had been pursuing many fraud cases which left some tenants (who had not been reporting their income correctly) owing a lot of money to the agency. Among other reasons for some tenant accounts having such a big balance are large maintenance charges or ongoing Court cases when some tenants upon receiving a Notice to Quit stop paying their rent and it takes up to 90 days to take them to Court. In response to Executive Director Abrashkin's request Ms. Contois stated that approving tenant accounts write offs is needed to eliminate bad debt in the agency's books but it does not mean that the Springfield Housing Authority will stop pursuing former tenants to pay their debts. Responding to Chairman Warren's question Ms. Contois informed that the amount to be written off this year (\$62,711.07) is more than \$11,000 larger than in previous year but for some accounts like District B there is more than \$35000 decrease in debt.

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

VOTED: To adopt Resolution #9630 to approve Tenants Accounts Receivable Write Offs for FY2014.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve inventory write off for 2015. Nicole Contois informed that the amount requested to be approved is slightly higher than last year and the agency had a variance of 1.5% which is less than allowed 3%. The total amount to be written-off is \$10,492. Answering Commissioner Quinonez's question Nicole Contois explained that negative numbers mean that there are more materials in the books than actually available and it happens because some parts of supplies are not being written off in work orders. Commissioner Quinonez questioned who is accountable for losing materials. Michelle Booth indicated that foreman at each district is responsible for that and most write-offs are not due to actual "disappearance" of the supplies but to incorrect completion of work orders. Ms. Booth stated that since the highest number of this kind of mistakes has been observed at the District E, they are planning to provide a training for that district foreman who is new and not too experienced. Judge Abrashkin reminded that the write-offs are allowed as far as the variance is within 3% and this year's variance is only 1.5%. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez it was unanimously

VOTED: To adopt Resolution #9631 to approve the write-off of the overage in inventory of \$10,492.02.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve 2015 Plumbing Supply Awards. John Healy provided information on the bids. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Labonte it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve 2015 Plumbing Supply Awards and make the following contract award recommendations totaling \$86,677.29:

Suppliers	PO Amount	#Awarded Items
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Baystate Plumbing Supply Co 15 Mill Street Springfield, MA 01108	\$9,564.28	30 items
FW Webb Co. 145 Performance Blvd. Springfield, MA 01104	\$25,478.14	34 items
United Plumbing Supply 210 Hickory Street Springfield, MA 01109	\$49,537.23	84 items

Michelle Booth informed the Board that the Springfield Housing Authority is working with the Boy Scouts organization to increase opportunities for SHA residents (specifically students at Brookings and Milton Bradley schools) to participate in Boy Scouts programs. Ms. Booth indicated that since the agency is considering paying \$34 fee for those willing to join Boy Scouts organization, it is important that the legal counsel reviews a potential liability and other legal issues that can be involved. Once this matter is reviewed by Lyon & Fitzpatrick, the Board will be provided with more information.

The Board reviewed a recommendation to approve the revised Limited English Proficiency Policy. Michelle Booth stated that the revisions to the LEP which was approved by the Board last year were based on some statistical data the agency has been collecting from the applicants and tenants who were requested at the time of submitting their application or recertification papers to check a language they speak on a special *I Speak* card. Ms. Booth stated that the statistical data provided by PVPC was not sufficient to determine what languages are needed so it was important that the agency does its own survey. The information gathered showed that most widely used languages are Spanish (a majority), Somalian, Russian, Mandarin/ Chinese, Burmese and Congolese. The agency will be translating all the forms into Spanish language through UMass Translation Center with whom the SHA has a contract. Ms. Booth indicated that UMass has already been providing written translation services to translate some forms and documents into Spanish. The SHA staff usually provides interpretation services into Spanish, Russian and Portuguese languages but for languages like Somalian the agency uses services of professional translation companies. Commissioner Quinonez commented on the importance of not using relatives to provide translation/ interpretation services. In response to Chairman Warren's question on the cost of services Ms. Both said that one hour rate is approximately \$65-70. Answering Commissioner Thomas's question if the Springfield Housing Authority is considering using this LEP for the residents at state projects as well or only for federal projects Michelle Booth confirmed that the agency will be providing translating services to its residents at state developments as well and all the forms and important documents for state projects will be translated into Spanish in the future.

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

VOTED: To approve the revision to Limited English Proficiency Policy.

The Board entered into a discussion with regards to some Board members or SHA staff attending the Mass NAHRO Annual Conference. Judge Abrashkin indicated that even though the agency is in favor of supporting this organization which provides lobbying of state housing program, the agenda of the conference does not include any items that can be of special interest to the SHA staff except for the Solar Credits issue which was initially included but then deleted from the agenda. He stated that this kind of events can be very beneficial more to the staff of small housing authorities than to big housing authorities. Commissioner Robles expressed her interest in attending the conference and promised to notify the Springfield Housing Authority as soon as she makes a decision. It was agreed that if necessary the May Board meeting will be moved to Thursday, May 21st and no separate vote of the Board to authorize its members' attendance is required.

William Abrashkin started his Executive Director's report with providing an update on the art project. He stated that originally it had been planned as a mural but later it was decided to have it on a flat for more flexibility. He indicated that the artist Rachel Saloio will be starting painting it soon and Commissioner Thomas's recommendations on diversity were incorporated into revised design.

Executive Director Abrashkin continued his report by providing information about recycling issues. He indicated that it is not possible to approach this issue without looking into overall situation with trash. John Healy will be issuing a RFP for a consultant in nearest future and the Boston Housing Authority which has succeeded with recycling agreed to provide some assistance. He thanked Commissioner Labonte for his involvement.

Judge Abrashkin informed about forthcoming visit of the newly appointed Undersecretary Kornegay. The SHA will be hosting the visit which will include a presentation about different components of the agency, a lunch with representatives of HAP Housing, the REB, Home City and other organizations attending as well and a tour of Springfield.

The last item on the Executive Director's report was an update on the proposal to HUD for TRS research grant that the Springfield Housing Authority and the Regional Employment Board are working on. Judge Abrashkin informed the Board that the HUD's feedback on TRS has been very favorable and according to the information he received from them, the program was met enthusiastically by new HUD's Secretary Julian Castro.

The Board accepted the Financial, Accounts Payable, Rental Assistance, Public Safety, Waiting List, Occupancy and Communications Report. Referring to the latter Chairman Warren praised the work that has been and is being done to improve the image of the agency. Mary Ellen Lowney informed the Board she has been focusing recently on preparations to the TRS Golf Tournament which is scheduled for 7/20/15 as well on increasing the agency's presence in social media as per Executive Director Abrashkin's request.

The Board agreed to spend \$1000 to purchase a sponsorship package for ½ table together with HAP Housing at the CHAPA's 48th annual dinner.

Commissioner Quinonez asked Wallace Kisiel to provide information on what is going on at the Jenny Lane Apartments since they have been witnessing the developer marking the territory and she questioned if the residents there can move forward with planting at their small garden. Mr. Kisiel explained that the developer has not requested the Springfield Housing Authority to move the fence yet. He stated that the territory where the fence is located legally now is a territory of the SHA by adverse possession unless the owner can provide some evidence that 30 years ago when the agency was building that fence on his land, the SHA received a No-Trespass Notice. He indicated that the current owner purchased this land 10-15 years ago and at that time did not realize that the SHA's fence was running through his land. Judge Abrashkin stated that even if the agency can claim this part of the land, it would prefer not do so. Mr. Kisiel agreed that it will negatively affect the SHA's image and stated that if necessary the fence can be moved and there is money in the budget available for that but at this point the residents can move forward with their gardening project.

In response to Commissioner Quinonez's question about the land in front of Jenny Lane Apartments Wallace Kisiel informed that he has not seen the plan of the developer who is planning to construct a one story storage facility but according to the information he got from the engineer the developer will be taking into consideration the SHA needs. Judge Abrashkin stated that the SHA tenants may benefit from having this facility instead of an abandoned gas station with lots of loitering and illegal activity.

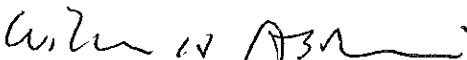
There being no further business to come before the members of the Springfield Housing Authority, upon a motion made by Commissioner, Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the Open Session of a Regular Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 6:09 PM.

ATTEST:



Raymond Warren, Chairman



William H. Abrashkin, Executive Director

