

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING
- OPEN SESSION -
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD ON SEPTEMBER 19, 2017

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 September 19, 2017.

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 the annual Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Springfield Housing Authority will be held at 4:30 PM on Tuesday, September 19, 2017 in the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress Street, Springfield, MA 01104.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY

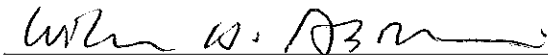
/s/William H. Abrashkin, Executive Director

September 15, 2017

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 September 15, 2017 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 Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM, and those present upon roll call were as follows:

PRESENT

Thomas Labonte
Jessica Quinonez
Angela Robles
Willie Thomas
Raymond Warren

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT

William Abrashkin
Jeffrey Bass
Blanca Berrios
Michelle Booth

Priscilla Chesky, Lyon & Fitzpatrick (arrived at 4:40 pm)
Loleta Collins
Nicole Contois (arrived at 4:40 pm)
Howard Coro
Stephen Ethier
Fidan Gousseynoff
Kathy Hardy
John Healy (arrived at 4:51 pm)
Karen Jeffers, CSO
Mary Ellen Lowney
Sara Lopes, Friends of the Homeless
Gerry McCafferty, Office of Housing, the City of Springfield
Bill Miller, Friends of the Homeless
JoAnn White

The Board reviewed the Minutes of July 11, 2017. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Minutes of July 11, 2017.

The meeting started with a presentation regarding 10th anniversary of project-based program for the Chronically Homeless. Michelle Booth introduced Gerry McCafferty who provided brief historic background of the program that started over 10 years ago when the City was facing a crisis with more than 100 homeless people living in the streets of Springfield. The City and other community organizations started working together to find a solution to this problem as it was clear that providing extra shelter space is not the best way to address it - for many it prolongs their homelessness and becomes a long-term rather than short-term solution. After a few years of meetings and planning, the City established a program that was focused on providing case management and long-term services for the homeless to reduce drug or alcohol abuse and to assist those with mental illness or other types of disability. The idea was to house people, offer them services, and if they are not stabilized or at risk, to offer more services. In 2007 the Springfield Housing Authority joined the program by offering 100 project-based vouchers - the City hired two case managers and started recruiting landlords. Friends of the Homeless also joined in supporting this program which has been providing a steady source of housing with supportive services for the chronically homeless for the last 10 years. A new facility with 32 units was built to house participants of the program which had a great community success. A resource center was built to provide services for the program and Ms. Cafferty praised SHA's help in getting funding for the center's construction.

Ms. McCafferty indicated that the program has over 90% success rate and in the last 4 years it has provided assistance to 166 families and individuals. She explained that if the program participants get stabilized they can move out and take their vouchers with them. She demonstrated some pictures of the facility.

Gerry McCafferty introduced Bill Miller from Friends of the Homeless who expressed his gratitude to the Springfield Housing Authority for its involvement to this important project. He indicated that FOH has recently

merged with Clinical and Support Options to deepen services provided to the homeless. Mr. Miller introduced Sara Lopes, a long-time service manager and Jeffrey Bass, one of the 1st tenants at the new facility who has a two-bedroom unit and was able to move in with his teenage daughter. Mr. Bass told the Board how fortunate he is to be a part of the program that helped him to find steady housing. She shared information about his individual success, stating that he has been clean and sober for 9 years and was able to find a job. He expressed his appreciation to the SHA for their support.

Jeffrey Bass left the Conference Room at 4:46 pm.

Gerry McCafferty provided a definition of chronically homeless explaining that an individual is considered chronically homeless if he has been homeless for more than a year or has been homeless for more than once in last three years and has a disability. Ms. McCafferty and Ms. Booth completed the presentation by providing information about coordinated entry system (supported by HUD) that is aimed at assessing the needs of the homeless people and matching them to housing programs that fits their interests the best.

Stephen Ethier entered the Conference Room at 4:49 pm.

Gerry McCafferty, Bill Miller, Sara Lopes and Karen Jeffers left the Conference Room at 4:50 pm.

The IT Director Stephen Ethier provided brief update on the Virtual Desktop Infrastructure project that has been already running at several departments. Answering Judge Abrashkin's question he confirmed that all the computers are secured and backed-up. The project will allow the IT department staff to fix all the computers remotely and the staff will be able to access their desktops from any office thus increasing the efficiency.

John Healy entered the Conference Room at 4:53 pm.

Commissioner Warren questioned if the new computer system will allow the managers to get better access to the financial reports and Mr. Ethier and Mr. Abrashkin explained that it will be the next step. A RFP for new software system is currently getting finalized and will be issued soon.

Mary Ellen Lowney and Stephen Ethier left the Conference Room at 4:56 pm.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to accept change order #1 from BG Mechanical services for Eagan Street Furnace/ AC Replacement. Howard Coro provided an update on the project explaining that six through-the-window type AC units were installed in each handicap unit prior to demolishing furnace/condenser. After the project completion all the AC units were turned to the Springfield Housing Authority (installed at the District B offices). The project is funded by DHCD. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve Change Order #1 to Contract DHCD Fish #281115 in the amount of (\$4,742.00) for Eagan Street Furnace/AC Replacement; this will increase the amount of the contract and the new contract amount

will be \$51,387.00 and maintain the Substantial Completion date at July 28, 2017.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to accept Certificate of Final Completion from BG Mechanical Services, Inc. for Eagan Street Furnace/ AC Replacement project. Howard Coro indicated that the contract was for 14-18 Eagan St and the project was completed in July. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the Certificate of Final Completion from B-G Mechanical Services and authorizing certification for payment in the amount of \$4,504.90 for Contract # DHCD Fish #281115 for Eagan Street Furnace/ AC Replacement, hereby accepting the project effective July 28, 2017.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve Change Order #1 to the Contract with Climate Heating & Cooling for boiler replacement at 18 Saab Ct. Mr. Coro provided explanation about the project. He explained that under this Change Order additional isolation valves in all 88 units will be installed as well as the domestic hot water recirculation pump will be replaced and relocated. Mr. Coro demonstrated pictures of the project and explained that installing isolation valves will provide more flexibility and will eliminate the need to shut off all the system in the building in case repairs are needed. Installing new pump will provide extra protection from accidental damage. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Labonte it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve Change Order #1 to Contract #35-C-2017-6-3, in the amount of \$30,547.34; this will increase the amount of the contract from Climate Heating & Cooling and the contract amount will be \$342,547.34, and maintain the Substantial Completion date at October 30, 2017.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to award a Contract to Inglewood Development for ADA renovations at 258 Shady Brook Lane. Mr. Coro explained that the project is for handicap accessibility renovations at one of the state units. It includes complete renovation of the house, building a ramp and a small addition. Mr. Healy stated that only two bids were received and the winning bid was accepted by DHCD without any requests for extra details or specifications despite high estimated costs. Answering Commissioner Warren's question Mr. Healy confirmed that the project is funded by DHCD (including extra expenses on HAZMAT charges), no special financing is required. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: to award a Contract to Inglewood Development Corp., Longmeadow, MA, in the amount of \$325,900.00 for accessibility upgrades/ renovations. Funding source is DHCD Fish #281116; appointing Executive Director William H. Abrashkin as the Contracting Officer authorizing him to execute the Contract.

Howard Coro left the Conference Room at 5:06 pm.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve new utility allowances for the HCV program. Blanca Berrios explained that under HUD regulations all public housing authorities are required to renew utility allowances annually. The numbers on the presented spreadsheets were generated by *Happy Software*. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Warren it was unanimously

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9699 to approve the Summary Allowance for Tenant-Furnished Utilities and other Services prepared by *Happy Software*.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve revision to the Homeownership Program section of the Section 8 Administrative Plan. Michelle Booth indicated that the revisions were drafted by a team comprising of Loleta Collins, Attorney Chesky, Blanca Berrios and Anna Mitkevicius, the new Assistant Director of RAO. Ms. Collins provided review of the revisions indicating major changes to the program to be as follows: 1) an increase of number of years a participant needs to have been working to be eligible in the program, from one year to two years of continued employment; 2) annual HQS inspections; 3) adding more case management, including post-purchase counseling and programming to avoid fraud and provide better budgeting and planning for capital repairs; 4) a more detailed explanation of how the SHA calculates the subsidy and the deductions.

Michelle Booth added that the revisions were designed to provide information that is most frequently asked by participants, landlords and outside agencies.

Answering Commissioner Robles's question Ms. Booth indicated that conducting HQS inspections is not required by HUD but the SHA believes that adding this requirement will provide an opportunity to confirm family composition, identify needs for services and detect needs for repairs.

Ms. Collins provided brief information about services currently offered to the program participants and added that SHA partners with Springfield Neighborhood Services and HAP. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9700 to approve Homeownership Program section of the Administrative Plan for the Housing Choice Voucher program and authorize the rental Assistance Division to operate the program under this new plan as of September 21, 2017.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to eliminate security deposits. Michelle Booth explained that security deposits are not required by regulations but there is a strict requirement of the annual accounting of interest received on security deposits held by PHAs. Residents must be advised of how much interest has accrued and provided with an option of either receiving a check for the interest or getting the interest applied towards their rental balance. Ms. Booth explained that security deposits are a big burden for the staff - sending tenants a notification about interest accrued every year takes time and money plus since the interest is too low the software does not calculate it automatically so the interest

must be calculated and entered by staff manually. The managers suggested eliminating security deposits as one of the cost-saving and efficiency improvement measures. Ms. Booth also explained that Jacque Banks [the Applications Manager] supported the idea because most of the applicants moving in do not have extra money to pay for their security deposit and have to enter into payment agreement and start their tenancy with a balance.

Ms. Booth stated that even though the Memo provided to the Board says that all security deposits will be returned to the owners within 90 days (if the Board approves eliminating security deposits), the Accounting Department just notified it would need 180 days to cut all the checks.

Answering Commissioner Warren's question Michelle Booth and Nicole Contois explained that all security deposits are kept in a separate account and cannot be used by the SHA. When a tenant vacates, his/her security deposit will be returned in full unless there has been a damage to the unit or the account is in arrears. Ms. Booth explained that most of the time if a tenant leaves unit in a bad shape, the amount of security deposit is too low (an average of \$250) to cover expenses on repairs. Besides, the staff must keep all the receipts and report all the expenses if a tenant's money was used to bring the unit back to order. Judge Abrashkin indicated that security deposits are a property of tenants, not SHA. Ms. Contois informed that total amount of security deposits held in a separate account is about \$350,000. Commissioner Robles inquired what the next step will be and Ms. Booth responded that the Applications Department will be instructed to stop collecting security deposits effective immediately. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: to amend the SHA Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy to reflect the abolition of security deposits and direct staff to return security deposits the SHA currently holds within 90 days of the vote.

The Board was informed that MaryAnn Hallas who was planning to provide an update on the status of the Housing Choice Voucher program utilization was not able to attend the meeting due to health issues and it was decided to table this item.

Election of Officers of the Springfield Housing Authority took place. Commissioner Labonte suggested adopting the same slate of officers as in 2016-17. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Warren, it was unanimously

VOTED: to re-appoint Willie Thomas as Chairman; to re-appoint Thomas Labonte as Vice Chairman; to re-appoint Angela Robles as Treasurer; to re-appoint Jessica Quinonez as Assistant Secretary, and re-appoint Raymond Warren as Commissioner.

The board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve Contract for painting services with the Sheriff's Department. Michelle Booth explained that the proposed contract is a group effort by her, Nicole Contois and Kathy Hardy. She stated that the painting contract expired in August and long before that the management team started looking for other workable and

feasible ways to get vacant units painted. The management was negotiating with the Union but was unable to get into mutual agreement especially after a proposal suggested by some Union representatives and accepted by the SHA was later rejected by the membership. As per Kathy Hardy's suggestion it was decided to reach out to the Hampden County Sheriff's Department that had recently established a new painting curriculum within its pre-release program. The program now has painting crew that has professionally painted dorms at Monson and Wilbraham Academy and Elms College.

Ms. Booth explained that under the terms of the proposed Contract the HCSD will be providing a painting crew comprised of three laborers (at times there may be a four person crew) and one supervisor for a period of 12 months. The services to be provided as directed by the SHA will include painting units and common areas. If no painting services are needed the crew might be assigned to other duties like cleaning common areas, grounds, yards. The contracted crew will be on-site 4 days a week six hours per day for the cost of \$260, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$64,220.00, the transportation will be provided by the Sheriff's Department. Materials, tools and supplies will be provided by the SHA.

Michelle Booth indicated that it is negotiating with the Union if SHA maintenance staff will continue preparing units for painting (including washing, patching, sanding and priming the walls).

Answering Commissioner Warren's question Ms. Booth explained that each Friday the Deputies will be submitting to the crew supervisor a list of units to be painted, coordinating the schedule and monitoring the performance. Answering Commissioner Labonte's question Ms. Booth and Nicole Contois provided brief information on the position of the management and the Union on the subject of negotiating painting services. Ms. Contois indicated that the proposed contract is similar to the SHA's proposal that would allow the agency to save on painting services. Chairman Thomas supported the idea of having the Contract for one year. Michelle Booth explained that the staff will now have more time before March 31, 2018 (when the Union contracts expire) to negotiate with the Union and look for other options if the Sheriff's crew does not meet its expectations.

Commissioner Quinonez inquired how long it takes to paint one unit and Ms. Booth responded that it depends on unit's size and condition. She indicated that after move-out the foremen inspect each vacant unit to see if it needs to be painted entirely or partially or if a double coat is needed.

In response to Commissioner Labonte's question John Healy provided information about most recent bid which was for \$1.1 million for three years. Answering Commissioner Robles's question Ms. Booth confirmed that the entire crew will be working in one unit to make sure it is supervised properly. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez it was by a majority vote (rejected by Commissioner Labonte)

VOTED: to authorize the Executive Director [William H. Abrashkin] to enter into a contract with the Hampden County Sheriff's Department for painting services as described above for a twelve month period, at a cost not to exceed \$64,220.00

Loleta Collins left the Conference Room at 5:30 pm.

Executive Director Abrashkin provided update on the DHCD \$2.2 million matter. Mr. Abrashkin told about SHA's plans to continue its efforts on getting reimbursement from DHCD for the 2.2 million dollars that was overspent during the federalization and had to be borrowed from the federal program. Judge Abrashkin indicated that the agency has been able to recover documents for \$1.6 million of the expenditures. Answering Commissioner Quinonez's question Mr. Abrashkin explained that all the materials and supplies spent for the federalization were accounted for. Ms. Contois indicated that the overspending was caused by not calculating the hours allocated to different segments of the project correctly and different interpretation of how the spreadsheets were supposed to be completed. Ms. Contois indicated that Bruce Siegel, a DHCD employee who was assigned to the project at that time, is no longer employed by DHCD so cannot be held accountable.

Judge Abrashkin also thanked Kathy Hardy, the chair of the organizational committee of the Isabel Serrazina Golf Tournament and all others who organized and supported this event which not only raised money for the TRS program but also attracted more publicity to the program.

Blanca Berrios left the Conference Room at 5:50 pm.

Mr. Abrashkin continued his report by informing the Board that the staff is still working on assessing options for the Rental Assistance Office upgrade.

Michelle Booth provided an update on the Marble Street project - she informed that only two residents are left in the building. She praised the work of Julia Ortiz, a former SHA employee who was assisting Marble Street families with the relocation process that has been going really smooth. Answering Commissioner Warren's question Attorney Chesky confirmed that there is an agreement with the City of Springfield in place as well as a formal approval from HUD and as soon as the building is vacant it will be sold to the City.

Judge Abrashkin reminded that part of the proceeds from Marble Street will be used to purchase new software that would improve efficiency, reduce time and costs and will improve the reporting. Ms. Booth emphasized that the SHA will need HUD's approval for spending proceeds from Marble Street.

The Board accepted the Annual Report of the Executive Director. Judge Abrashkin expressed his appreciation to all the employees who contributed to preparing the report.

The Board reviewed the Letter from HUD regarding Section 8 management assessment plan and email from TRS Outreach coordinator Zenaida Burgos.

The Board accepted Accounts payable report for the months of April 2017, May 2017, June 2017 and the Finance Report for the month of June 2017. Answering Chairman Thomas's question about a big charge on Amex card JoAnn White explained that even though it shows it as one charge, it includes

different expenditures, including money spent by Stephen Ethier to buy some expensive equipment. John Healy indicated that breakdown of charges may be provided to the Board upon request.

The Board accepted the Public Safety, Occupancy, Waiting List and Rental Assistance quarterly reports.

As per Chairman Thomas's suggestion it was decided to schedule a Special meeting for September 29th to discuss the process of hiring new Executive Director. Mr. Thomas asked the Board members to review the Scope of Work and DHCD guidelines with regards to hiring executive directors.

Judge Abrashkin indicated that Mayor Sarno requested to keep him informed about the process.

John Healy and Kathy Hardy left the Conference Room at 6:23 pm.

Commissioner Warren added that the Board shall determine how the SHA staff will be involved and suggested including Human Resources Director Kathy Hardy to the process of selecting a new director. It was suggested that a special committee will be established.

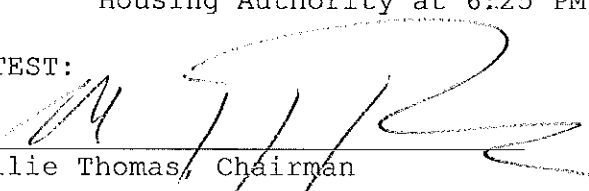
Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles, it was by a roll call vote (Thomas - Aye, Labonte - Aye, Quinonez - Aye, Robles - Aye) unanimously

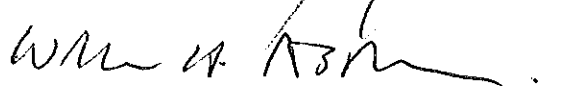
VOTED: To enter into Executive Session 1) to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property and 2) to discuss deployment of security personnel and devices and not to reconvene in Open Session.

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

VOTED: To adjourn the Open Session of the Annual Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 6:25 PM.

ATTEST:


Willie Thomas, Chairman


William H. Abrashkin, Executive Director

