

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING
- OPEN SESSION -
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD ON MARCH 21st, 2023

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 and with Zoom video conference option for public access at 4:00 PM on March 21st, 2023.

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 4:00 PM on Tuesday, March 21st, 2023 via Zoom video conference call for public access and at the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress St., Springfield, Massachusetts.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY

/s/Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director

March 17th, 2023

CERTIFICATE AS TO SERVICE OF THE NOTICE OF MEETING

I, Denise R. Jordan, the duly appointed and qualified Secretary of the Springfield Housing Authority, do hereby certify that on March 17th, 2023, 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:



Denise R. Jordan / Executive Director/Secretary to the Board

Chairman Labonte called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM, and those present upon roll call were as follows:

PRESENT

Thomas Labonte
Willie Thomas
Angela Robles
Raymond Warren
Jessica Quinones

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT
Brittany Bezok
Fidan Gousseynoff
Michael Guyder
Austin Harris
John Healy
Denise Jordan
Nicole Kane

The Board reviewed the Minutes of February 21st, 2023. With no questions or comments and upon a motion made by Commissioner Quinonez, seconded by Commissioner Robles, following a board roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Minutes of February 21st, 2023.

The Board reviewed the Minutes of March 10th, 2023. With no questions or comments and upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Warren, following a board roll call, it was by a majority vote (Commissioner Quinonez and Commissioner Robles abstained)

VOTED: to approve the Minutes of March 10th, 2023.

Interim Finance Director Austin Harris introduced Michael Guyder from Marcum Accountants and Advisors LLC who presented to the Board item E1 - the FY2024 Operating Budget. Mr. Guyder explained that the budget was prepared based on SHA's performance in FY22 and FY23, prior experience, and certain assumptions, for example, consumption trends, utility consumption details, utility rate trends and other data. Overall, a total surplus in approximate amount of \$45 million is projected. In response to Commissioner Thomas's inquiry, Mr. Guyder explained that the surplus can be spent for any needs, not necessarily for emergency situations but the funds allocated for Section 8 program can only be used for Section 8 and the funds allocated for public housing programs can be used for specific amps as designated in the budget. In response to Commissioner Warren and Commissioner Labonte's questions about pension liability, Mr. Guyder explained that pension benefits are projected at 55%, which is almost the same as in previous fiscal year and it is expected that the required pension contributions will continue to increase, taking into consideration that the Springfield Retirement System is one of the lowest funded state retirement plans.

Executive Director Denise Jordan thanked Austin Harris, Michael Guyder and Brittany Bezok for all their work on preparing the budget.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Robles and following a board roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9774 to approve FY2024 Operating Budget.

As per Ms. Jordan's request, it was decided to move item H-2 - Audit report - up in the agenda. Michael Guyder presented provided a brief overview of the report prepared by Dooley and Vicars from VA. He explained that the audit revealed no findings on financial reports or internal controls but sampling 40 files related to the voucher program identified 2 significant deficiencies in voucher program - one related to HQS inspections and one to rent reasonableness. Both findings were consistent with the findings in prior years. Mr. Guyder stated that the financial statements reflect same financial performance as discussed in the budget. Mr. Guyder provided most important numbers for revenue, depreciation expenses, and cash flows. He said that pension liability and other postemployment expenses remain to be substantial. Page 58 of the Audit report shows that required pension contribution increased from \$2 million in 2015 to almost \$3.5 million in 2022 and makes about 40% of the authority's total benefits expenses. Page 57 of the report discloses what does retirement system hold for assets in relation to the overall liability and that is over 28%.

Commissioner Thomas inquired what would be a recommendation for the Board with regards to the audit findings. Deputy Executive Director Nicole Kane explained that the main reason for the deficiencies identified in the report was the high employee turnover - in 2022, there were 15 separations at the Rental Assistance and as of now, there are 5 vacancies in the Department. The RAO Managers and the RAO Director have been working hard to train new Program Specialists and Inspectors. She informed the Board that on March 1st, the SHA's submitted to HUD its corrective action plan which includes hiring an internal auditor to audit Section 8 program participants files to identify mistakes and needs for improvement and training. Commissioner Thomas requested suggested that that the auditor would present to the Board a written report in 3-4 months to provide information about what steps have been undertaken to remedy the deficiencies.

In response to Commissioner Warren's question about the increase in rent collection problem, Ms. Kane explained that for the last few years, many residents were relaying on rent payment assistance through the RAFT program, however, the program requirements have changed recently - it is harder to qualify for rent payment assistance for individuals on a fixed income, so a lot of applications are getting denied which leads to decrease in rent collections. Mr. Guyder stated that the income assumption for the FY24 was reduced based on FY22 and FY23 actuals.

The Board moved to item E-2 presented by Deputy Executive Director John Healy. He explained that the kitchen cabinet replacement project at Eagan and Manhattan Street group homes is projected to be

completed in July. In the course of the project implementation, it was identified that the entire kitchen floor needs to be replaced instead of patching due to the existing floor condition and in order to raise the range as requested by the tenants, the outside hose bib had to be replaced which also required repairs to the piping.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Robles and following a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve Change Order no. 1 in the amount of three thousand eight hundred sixteen dollars and eighty-one cents (\$3,816.81), to Contract # 281124 with Inglewood Development. This will increase the contract amount to two hundred twenty-five thousand seven hundred sixteen dollars and eighty-one cents (\$225,716.81).

Deputy Healy presented to the Board next item - change order to the Contract with Larochelle Construction for roof replacement at Morris School. The contract was awarded last summer and it was discovered that the duct work was not connected to the exhaust vents and that coil stock was missing in selective areas of the roof trim. The proposed Change Order will allow the duct work to be reconnected so the fans work as intended and the missing coil to be installed.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez and following a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve change order no. 1 in the amount of two thousand one hundred seventy-one dollars and twenty cents (\$2,171.20), to contract #281126 with Larochelle Construction. This will increase the contract amount to two hundred eighty-four thousand one hundred seventy-one thousand dollars and twenty cents (\$284,171.20).

The Board moved to the next item presented by Fidan Gousseynoff, the HR Director and Executive Department Manager who reminded that in accordance with DHCD requirements, the SHA has to certify every year that the organization is in compliance with lead-based paint law notifications.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Robles, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez and following a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to certify that the Springfield Housing Authority is in compliance with state and federal lead-based paint notification laws.

Denise Jordan presented her Executive Director's report which included information about expanding partnerships with Baystate through the WOW Mobil Bus to allow residents who are patients at

Baystate to receive routine screenings and assistance with scheduling appointments as well as through participating in the Digital Equity, the Alliance/Broadband Institute, to ensure that low-income residents have equal access to the internet and its services. Ms. Jordan said that the SHA represented by the ED and Director of Resident Services, Pam Wells the is entering into a partnership with Dr. Eagleson from Baystate Health, where the two organizations would join forces to study the intersection of housing and health.

Ms. Jordan informed that SHA has re-convened the Policies and Procedures committee meetings with the goal of re-visit existing policies, creating new policies to address operational needs and establishing uniformed practices.

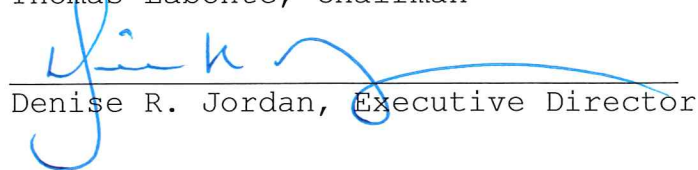
Denise Jordan continued her report by stating that all supervisors will be attending a Progressive Discipline Training with its Labor Attorney, Meghan Sullivan and that SHA continues to attend monthly meetings to discuss re-occurring quality of life issues such as regional lack of affordable housing, homelessness, workforce challenges, the impacts of the Cliff Effect. Ms. Jordan notified the Board that she has been appointed to serve of the Governor's Advisory Council on Black Empowerment and as a member of the Massachusetts Broadband and Digital Equity Working Group and that on April 6th, at the Baypath University's Women's Conference, she will be honored as a 2023 inductee to their Women Business Leaders Hall of Fame!

There being no further business to come before the members of the Springfield Housing Authority Board, upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Robles, and following a board roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn the Open Session of the Regular Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 4:50 PM.

ATTEST:


Thomas Labonte, Chairman


Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director

