

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
- OPEN SESSION -
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD ON NOVEMBER 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 November 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, November 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
November 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 November 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 4:00 PM, and those present upon roll call were as follows:

PRESENT	ABSENT
Thomas Labonte	Jessica Quinones
Angela Robles	
Willie Thomas (arrived at 4:04 pm)	
Raymond Warren	

ALSO PRESENT

Fidan Gousseynoff

Austin Harris

John Healy (arrived at 4:03 pm)

Denise Jordan

The Interim Finance Director Austin Harris presented the 1st item from the New Business agenda. Deputy Executive Director John Healy entered the Conference Room at 4:03 pm and Commissioner Thomas entered the Conference Room at 4:04 pm.

Mr. Harris explained that the information listed in the Certificates for state programs is based on the budgets approved in March of 2023 for the current fiscal year and on overall, the operating budget looks good; there are no underfunding issues and no complaints.

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

VOTED: to adopt Resolutions #9786 through 9791 to approve the submission to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities the state budget certification for fiscal year ending 3/31/2024 as follows:

- adopt Resolution #9786 to approve the submission to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities of the state budget certification for fiscal year ending 3/31/2024 for MRVP;
- adopt Resolution #9787 to approve the submission to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities of the state budget certification for fiscal year ending 3/31/2024 for program 200-A;
- adopt Resolution #9788 to approve the submission to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities of the state budget certification for fiscal year ending 3/31/2024 for program 705-A;
- adopt Resolution #9789 to approve the submission to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities of the state budget certification for fiscal year ending 3/31/2024 for program 400-1;
- adopt Resolution #9790 to approve the submission to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities of the state budget certification for fiscal year ending 3/31/2024 for program 689-C;
- adopt Resolution #9791 to approve the submission to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities of the state budget certification for fiscal year ending 3/31/2024 for program 667-A

The Board reviewed the Minutes of October 17th, 2023. With no questions or comments and upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and following a board roll call, it was by unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Minutes of October 17th, 2023.

Deputy Healy presented the materials regarding negotiating a contract for NV5 Planning and Design Inc. He explained that the ARPA funded project will allow to upgrade fire alarm systems at programs 667 (state elderly) and 689 (state handicap). He briefly described how the vendor selection process took place - the state Committee ranked the firms that responded to RFP because of the cost and size of the project and NV5 Planning and Design, Inc. was picked as the designer. In response to Commissioner Thomas's question, he provided information about the anticipated timeline of the project which will start in winter - March by the vendors surveying the sites. He explained that the project's goal is to hardwire detectors at state properties, such as Carpe Diem, Forest Park Manor, Morris School and, hopefully, others. Once the scope of services is determined, it will be more clear how many properties will be upgraded and if the \$1.5 mln allocated for the project will not cover all state properties, the state might fill the gap since health and safety issues are considered as a top priority. Executive Director Jordan added that this project was the one the SHA made a presentation on at the meeting with legislators.

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

VOTED: to allow the SHA staff to negotiate a contract to NV5 Planning and Design Inc. for the design of Fire Alarm Upgrades for the State Public Housing 667's and 689's; appoint Executive Director, Denise R. Jordan, as the Contracting Officer authorizing her to execute the contract.

Deputy Healy provided a summary of the recently completed lead based paint abatement project at Duggan Park Apartments. The project went well, only 8 units failed out of 52, then were cleaned and passed the testing. Mr. Healy praised the tenants' cooperation and the work of Santina Chiusano who coordinated the project.

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

VOTED: to accept the Certificate of Substantial Completion from Ultimate Abatement Inc. for the Lead Based Paint Abatement Project at Duggan Park Apartments, here by accepting the project as substantially complete as of October 30, 2023 and release final payment.

HR Director Fidan Gousseynoff presented the next agenda item and explained that the Board's vote is required to formally accept an increase to the funding for the RSC program. She reminded that the grant was first awarded in 2019, then renewed in 2022. In response to Commissioner Thomas's question, she provided brief information about the work done by the state Resident Services Coordinator.

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

VOTED: to accept an increased funding in the amount of \$10,000 for the Resident Services Coordinator program at Forest Park Manor (c. 667-3) and Morris School Apartments (667-6 and 667-7), bringing the total funding amount to \$60,000 a year through FY2027.

Denise Jordan started her Executive Director's report by informing the Board about completing her annual meetings with the foremen and maintenance staff and that meetings with all other departments will follow. Ms. Jordan reported about planning the next staff party and about representing the SHA at several meetings and forums, including Community Foundation Racial Equity Foundation sessions, the Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors meeting, the Mass Broad Band Alliances, Digital Equity meeting, the meeting sponsored by Rennie Center and the Davis Foundation featuring The State's Secretary of Education; the William Pynchon awards ceremony.

Ms. Jordan reported about appearing on WNPR with Keith Fairey from Wayfinders to talk about the housing shortage in the region and the CHAMP system; interviewing a Putnam student, as a part of the partnership that the SHA has established with the school to create a pipeline for future maintenance workers for the SHA; and also serving as a guest panelist for Springfield College.

Ms. Jordan informed the Board about the recent VMS HUD Audit team's visit at the Rental Assistance Office and the findings that were identified, mostly due to the ongoing coding and other issues with the new Yardi system. She praised the work of the SHA IT Department and assured that Deputy Kane is overseeing this issue. Commissioner Warren requested to provide a copy of the audit findings and inquired what is needed to respond to the deficiencies caused by the new technology issues as well as by problems with recruiting, retaining and training staff. Executive Director Jordan explained that many of the issues that the SHA is dealing with are not unique - other local housing authorities that switched to Yardi were struggling too and even the auditor from HUD who came from a housing authority shared that her organization also converted to Yardi and was experiencing problems. Deputy Healy and Austin Harris commented that Yardi is a good system but

it takes time and extra effort to fix all the problems, adjust and make all its elements work to the full extent. In response to Chairman Labonte's question about how the Rental Assistance office will be managed to make sure no mistakes happen again, Ms. Jordan explained that the managers will be overseeing the work closely.

Director Jordan continued her report by telling about the meeting with Springfield Public Schools to attend a data presentation with the Director Of Student Support Services, Dr. Yolanda Johnson. Ms. Jordan stated that the student data for SHA for students in grades 9-12 was pretty good - those with GPA between 3.1 and 4, exceeded the City's and the state's average, however, more work is to be done especially to improve performance of SHA students in higher grades and Ms. Jordan is planning to work with the RS staff to identify what can be done for that.

Ms. Jordan expressed her concern about the housing crisis with so many families not being able to find a place to live as well as about the lack of funding for capital needs. The SHA team is working on a document to be presented to the Housing Secretary Augustus to address the need for state support to the SHA.

Ms. Jordan reported that the SHA staff including Candra Cripps and Pam Wells from Resident Services distributed 114 Thanksgiving baskets donated by the Masonic Temple at Orchard Manor.

Chairman Labonte requested to provide an update on the building at 60 Congress Street at one of the next meetings. John Healy provided a brief update on the Avery building situation.

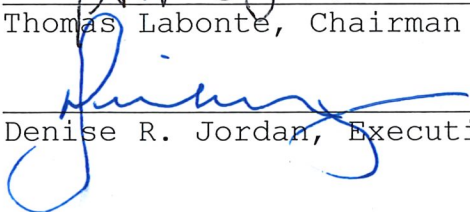
The Board accepted the Accounts Payable report for the month of October.

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 4:47 PM.

ATTEST:


Thomas Labonte, Chairman


Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director

