

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING  
- OPEN SESSION -  
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY  
HELD ON DECEMBER 20, 2016

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 December 20, 2016.

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, December 20, 2016 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  
December 15, 2016

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 December 15, 2016 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 4:35 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  
Michelle Booth  
Siobhan Cauley

Nicole Contois  
Fidan Gousseynoff  
John Healy  
JoAnn White

The Board reviewed the Minutes of November 15, 2016. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Labonte, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Minutes of November 15, 2016.

The Board reviewed the Minutes of November 22, 2016. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Minutes of November 22, 2016.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve the revised Smoke-Free Policy. Executive Director Abrashkin explained that now that marijuana has been legalized in Massachusetts, the SHA needs to revise its Smoke-Free policy to include prohibition of use of marijuana on all its properties. He explained that in 2009 when a law was adopted to de-criminalize marijuana, public housing was in the list of public benefits that could not be denied for a person using marijuana. Judge Abrashkin stated that even with de-criminalization of marijuana and the consequent passing of laws about medical use and recreational use of marijuana, the State still allows landlords to prohibit it on its properties. Judge Abrashkin shared his opinion that there are at least two reasons the SHA must include marijuana to its Smoke-Free policy - the odor might be harmful to other residents and smoking it sets bad example for kids. Answering Commissioner Labonte's question Executive Director Abrashkin stated that all tenants will be prohibited from smoking marijuana on the SHA property, even if those who have prescription from their health providers. He added that eventually there will be requests for reasonable accommodation from tenants having prescription and Michelle Booth indicated that when reviewing those requests the staff will have to take into consideration interests of other tenants who suffer from asthma or emphysema and whose medical condition might be negatively affected if their neighbors smoke marijuana on the property. Judge Abrashkin added that tenants who will be filing for reasonable accommodation will be advised to smoke outside the property or to get prescription for other forms of marijuana (candy, tea) that are not harmful to others. Answering Chairman Thomas's question Judge Abrashkin confirmed that even though marijuana was legalized on the state level only, tenants in both state and federal developments must comply with the Smoke-Free policy. Commissioner Warren commented that he has always been supporting the Smoke-Free Policy but he recommended to be thoughtful about those people who were prescribed marijuana and need to use it for medical purposes and as far as they are advised to use other forms, he will be supporting the suggested revision. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9677 to approve the revision of the SHA's Smoke-Free Housing Policy to include a prohibition against smoking marijuana in and on SHA properties.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve entering into the Proposal to modify Loan Agreement as per TD Bank's request. JoAnn White provided information on why TD Bank officials requested the SHA to create a lease between the COCC and the 60 Congress Street cost center which requires the COCC to pay rent. Ms. White explained that TD Bank needed those funds to appear on the [60 Congress Street cost center] books as revenue to show that the building is generating enough revenue. Executive Director Abrashkin commented that TD Bank does not consider the administrative fees the COCC is receiving from AMPs, Section 8 or State Program as a revenue and Ms. White added that those fees cannot be counted by the Bank because they are not generated by the building and the Bank does not have any control over them through their loan instruments. Commissioner Labonte inquired what changes have caused TD bank to demand to create a lease. JoAnn White and Nicole Contois explained that there have not been any changes since the loan was granted, the building is still generating enough revenue to cover its expenses and even producing small income but one of the reasons can be that the Bank had predicted higher income and less utility expenses. In response to Commissioner Warren's question Finance Director White confirmed that this change will not impact the COCC budget. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Labonte, it was unanimously

VOTED: to authorize Executive Director William H. Abrashkin to sign the Proposal to Modify Loan Agreement Letter From TD Bank and the First Amendment to Loan Agreement that includes the changes TD Bank is requesting.

The Board reviewed the materials and a recommendation to award Contract to Arbella Insurance Group for 2017 automobile insurance coverage. Purchasing Manager John Healy reminded that contract for automobile insurance must be renewed annually and provided information about the bid. IFB was sent out to 7 insurance providers and only two bids were received. The bid from Arbella Insurance of Quincy, MA will save about \$4000 comparing to the rate from current provider - Housing Authority Insurance Group. Commissioner Warren requested information about recent claims history and inquired what types of accidents are most common. Nicole Contois stated that most of the issues with the vehicles are associated with wear and tear since vehicles are used a lot and by different people. Many problems are being fixed by the staff to avoid paying high deductible and the management recently instituted a weekly check list for the foremen who will have to evaluate and address on a regular basis all the damage to SHA vehicles caused by the maintenance staff. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez, it was unanimously

VOTED: to award a Contract to Arbella Insurance Group in care of HUB International, 96 Shaker Road East Longmeadow, Ma, in the amount of \$31,709.00 based on a \$500.00 per occurrence deductible for the coverage period January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017; appoint

Executive Director, William H. Abrashkin as the contracting officer authorizing him to execute the Contract.

Siobhan Cauley left the Conference Room at 4:59 pm.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve Contract Change Order 1 to Contract with H.M.Nunes and Sons Construction Inc. John Healy explained that the Contract was for the site work on parking lot replacement at Morgan Apartments. Mr. Healy explained that a few items were added to the Project (a concrete pad installed at the rear of the property for the current dumpster; a new walkway installed across the front lawn area; a potential broken pipe near an existing yard drain was explored and repaired). It was decided to reduce the quantity of granite curbing and remove the replacement of an existing catch-basin so the requested Change Order will give \$700 credit to the Project. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Labonte, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve contract Change Order No. 1 in the amount of negative \$700 (credit) to Contract # 35 C-2016-3-9 with H.M. Nunes and Sons Construction Inc. making the new Contract amount \$134,227.00.

The Board entered into a discussion on approving the FY17 Annual Plan. John Healy explained how Capital Fund Program is prepared based in previous expenses and current needs. Chairman Thomas inquired if CFP money can be used to buy large equipment. Judge Abrashkin stated that in his opinion capital funds can only be used to purchase large items like vehicles, not for items like snow blowers however it must be verified by Wallace Kisiel. Having checked resources online, John Healy stated that capital funds cannot be used to purchase vehicles for operational purposes, only if a vehicle is used by the Capital Improvement Department staff. Commissioner Warren advised including to the Annual Plan a statement that replacing old vehicles and equipment must be identified as a goal. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: to amend the Springfield Housing Authority's FY2017 Annual Plan to add the replacing old vehicles and equipment as an objective; adopt Resolution 9678 approving the amended Plan and certifying compliance of the plan and related regulations in accordance with form HUD-50077.

Referring to a comment by a Riverview tenant attending the RAB meeting, Commissioner Labonte inquired if anything can be done to address her concerns that the apartment she has been living in since 1966 has not been painted. Michelle Booth stated that all the complaints and concerns expressed by the RAB attendees will be reviewed and addressed.

William Abrashkin started his Executive Director's report by reminding the Board about the SHA Holiday party to be held on 12/21/16. The next item on his report was informing the Board about a consideration to use proceeds from the sale of Marble Street Apartments to the City to fund the SHA software upgrade. He stated that the old software that has not been upgraded since 1970s has been costing significant staff time. If the

upgrade is done, at least one position at the Section 8 Department can be eliminated. The IT Director Stephen Ethier has been requested to put together information on the anticipated costs for the software upgrade. The package then will be submitted to HUD and the Board.

Judge Abrashkin continued his report by providing information about a plan suggested by DHCD to re-develop state Public Housing to make it Mixed Income Housing. He reported about a discussion he has recently had with DHCD and Mass Partnership Housing about this plan and informed the Board that, unfortunately, as with the HUD's RAD Program, this DHCD initiative cannot be implemented in Springfield due to its low market rents. He explained that in order for this Plan to work, the minimum rent for 2 bedroom apartment must be at least \$2,000.

Judge Abrashkin completed his report by reporting about his recent meeting with former Secretary of Education Reville, also attended by Superintendent Warwick, recently retired STCC President Ira Rubenzhal, and Colleen Jones from the Center for Budget & Policy in Boston. It was agreed to submit a proposal to the Mass Legislature to include funding for early education into the state budget. Judge Abrashkin has prepared a "shell bill" to be submitted before the deadline - 1/15/17 and will be later amended to include the actual legislative proposals. The bill will be filed under the jurisdiction of the Early Education and Children Department. Judge Abrashkin indicated that the Director of Davis Foundation Mary Wallachy, who also serves on the state Board of Early Education and Care recommended that the next step will be meeting with Strategies for Children. The Executive Director shared with the Board Superintendent Warwick's opinion that 40% of Springfield public schools students who get special education might not have needed it if proper educational and social services would have been provided to them at early age.

The Board reviewed a letter from Rachel Heller, CEO of CHAPA.

The Board reviewed and accepted the Accounts Payable report and Financial Statements for the month of October 2016.. Answering Commissioner Labonte's question about big payments to Friends of the Homeless JoAnn White and Michelle Booth explained that it was for project based subsidies for a Section 8 SRO [Single Room Occupancy] program. Commissioner Labonte also inquired about Radio Box Inspection and John Healy explained that the City Fire Department has to test signals and inspect radio boxes located in each building. Answering Commissioner Labonte's question about using the SHA staff members for fire and security alarm systems maintenance as it was discussed at the previous Board meeting, Michelle Booth stated that the management will be negotiating this matter with the Union in the nearest future.

JoAnn White provided brief overview of the financial statements and stated that most AMPs are still operating within the budget. Answering Judge Abrashkin's question on the budget preparation Nicole Contois confirmed that information about utilities has been recently received and passed to Mike Petro who will be working on the budget. She also indicated that the audit has been finalized and will be provided for the review soon. Only two findings were identified and have been addressed.

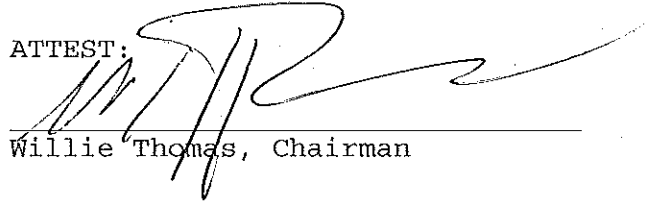
Ms. Contois and Ms. White praised the work of the auditing firm, Guyder Hurley.

Answering Commissioner Warren's question Executive Director Abrashkin provided brief explanation about the document from PHADA distributed to the Board.

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 Labonte, it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the Open Session of a Regular Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 5:58 PM.

ATTEST:

  
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Willie Thomas, Chairman

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William H. Abrashkin, Executive Director