

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING
- OPEN SESSION -
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD ON MARCH 20, 2018

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 March 20, 2018.

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, March 20, 2018 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

March 16, 2018

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 March 16, 2018 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
Nicole Contois
Fidan Gousseynoff
John Healy
JoAnn White

The Board reviewed the Minutes of February 20, 2018. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the Minutes of February 20, 2018.

Executive Director William Abrashkin provided update on Eastern Avenue "tornado parcels". He reminded the Board about the agreement to sell the parcels to Springfield College to become a part of an "Educare Learning Center" and informed that Springfield College intends to sign a ground lease with the entity that was formed to lease the overall project site. Included in the RFP for disposition of the tornado parcels was a restriction that the parcels could only be used for educational purposes in support of low-income children and families in Greater Springfield. Mr. Abrashkin explained that Springfield College did not want to get locked into this restrictive covenant (the low-income part, not the educational part) in perpetuity and wants the covenant to remain in effect for as long as the ground lease for the Educare project remains in effect (60 years). Springfield College is requesting that after the termination of the ground lease, the parcels shall still be restricted to educational uses, but not only educational uses for low-income people.

Judge Abrashkin demonstrated a map showing SHA parcels within the proposed Educare campus (see Exhibit 1). He emphasized the importance of supporting this project that is beneficial for the entire community. He explained that if the Board approves this modification, it has to be approved by DHCD as well. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the following resolution: whereas Springfield College, as Lessor, and EC Springfield Realty, Inc., as Lessee, are parties to a ground lease dated as of January 1, 2018 covering certain premises located at the corner of Hickory Street and Eastern Avenue, Springfield, Massachusetts (the "Ground Lease"), and whereas the leased premises under the ground lease include the SHA parcels, the use of the SHA parcels shall be restricted to educational uses in support of low-income children and families in Springfield, Massachusetts and the surrounding region for as long as the Ground Lease remains in effect. Following the termination of the Ground Lease, the use of the SHA parcels shall be restricted to educational uses.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to vote that the SHA is in compliance with the State and federal lead-paint based paint notification laws. Nicole Contois indicated that each year SHA has to go through this compliance certification process. She explained that each tenant at the beginning of his/her tenancy is provided with accurate information regarding lead based paint in the apartment and the agency is also obliged to provide tenants with information pertaining to lead if there are any construction projects in their units. Answering Chairman Thomas's question Ms. Contois stated that the apartments are not lead free but lead safe which means that they were either abated or the paint is encapsulated and that all construction/modernization projects were completed in accordance with safety requirements. In response to Commissioner Labonte's question about a penalty that was imposed on the SHA years ago for not submitting correct forms Ms. Contois confirmed that the issue was resolved. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez it was unanimously

VOTED: to certify that the SHA is in compliance with state and federal Lead Based Paint Notification Laws.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve the SHA State Capital Improvement plan. John Healy provided brief information on the Plan and planned projects including boiler replacement at program 689, exterior door replacement at Orchard Manor, kitchen modernization at Harry Hogan and an active project listed under priority 1 - kitchen cabinets and sink replacement at 75 units at Carpe Diem which also includes some hazmat work and replacing electrical panels as the current panels and their parts are not manufactured anymore. Mr. Healy indicated that there are two place holders in the Plan - for projects 689 operated by the Department of Developmental Services and Department of Mental Health. In response to Commissioner Warren's question about how the numbers in the Plan are so specific Mr. Healy explained that DHCD provides the numbers. He stated that 10 years ago DHCD representatives were evaluating the needs and categorizing the items to be repaired and at that time all the data was entered into their estimating software template. The SHA with the input from property managers and maintenance staff has to prioritize the needs. Answering Commissioner Warren's question about the initial list drafted by DHCD Mr. Healy indicated that many of the items on that list have been completed and a few were postponed based on the recommendation from the SHA staff. Answering Chairman Thomas question he explained that DCD means designed contract date and TDC means total development costs. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Labonte it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Springfield Housing Authority's Capital Improvement Plan 2018 submission for our state portfolio.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to award a contract for elevator services. John Healy explained that the contract includes preventative maintenance plan and emergency and other services not listed in the scope of work. Mr. Healy indicated that KONE Elevator is the current vendor and even though no elevator vendor is perfect KONE has been pretty good with meeting the agency needs and responding to emergency situations. Commissioner Labonte inquired if the issue with not keeping enough parts in stock was addressed properly by this vendor and Mr. Healy responded that the situation has been pretty good which is especially important for Riverview Apartments where there is only one elevator in each building. In response to Commissioner Labonte's question Nicole Contois explained how the management is keeping track of the preventative maintenance services provided by the vendor and indicated that no bill is paid by the Accounting unless it was verified with the District Manager that the services had been provided. Mr. Healy explained that replacing some elevators is included into the CFP. Commissioner Warren suggested that the SHA would facilitate a connection between the vendor and a young resident interested in a career in trades. Mr. Healy stated he will reach out to his contact person at KONE Elevator to explore opportunities for referring SHA tenants to their apprenticeship program. He explained that SHA is required under Section 3 to reach out to its public housing tenants to promote awareness about employment and training opportunities in the community. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: to award a three (3) year contract with two (2) additional one (1) year options, to be renewed annually, pending funding availability, to Kone Elevator for \$235,998.00. This contract will be paid for utilizing operating funds; appoint Executive Director, William H. Abrashkin as the contracting officer authorizing him to execute the contract.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to award a contract for fire alarm systems and sprinkler systems. John Healy explained that three bids were submitted, one was submitted after the deadline and could not be accepted and one of the two accepted bids did not specify rates for year two and year three. Wel-Design is a current vendor and they have been doing a lot of work for the Springfield Housing Authority. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Labonte it was unanimously

VOTED: to award a three (3) year contract to be renewed annually, pending funding availability, to Wel-Design Alarm System Inc. of Wilbraham, MA in the amount of \$40,428.00 annually. This contract will be paid from utilizing funds from the operating budget of each AMP; appoint Executive Director, William H. Abrashkin as the contracting officer authorizing him to execute the contract.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to accept budget request presented by Finance Director JoAnn White. Ms. White explained that the budget was prepared using conservative approach. The proration level of funding has been pretty high (90 and 94%) in the last two years and since the Accounting staff was not feeling comfortable calculating the budget based on such a high proration, it used an average of proration levels in the last 5 years (88%). The estimated drop of \$217,200 is expected in federal funding. Ms. White explained that the budget does not include expected income for Marble Street relocation costs since no information on how much money will be received is available yet. Ms. White stated that even with the anticipated income drop there is a probability that the agency will be getting more income than listed in the budget. She explained that pension allocation is decreasing from 14% to 5-6% because it depends on the staff salaries and since last year several positions were eliminated and some high level staff members retired, the total salary amount has decreased. She stated that the staff keeps looking for more cost saving measures. Every time a position opens, the management is looking into a possibility of replacing it with a lower level position or making other staffing changes to save money.

Ms. White also provided a review of the state programs budget, stating that all state programs are in a good shape except for 200-A showing a loss due to a one time request for extraordinary maintenance to address failing roofs. Capital Fund cannot be used to fund this project so the funds are expected to come from reserves with the State approval. COCC is also has a positive total. Having ROSS grant and extra funding for TRS program helps to save money on some Resident Services staff salaries. COCC continues charging AMPs admin fees for less than the federal proration rate thus leaving them a little bit more money for operating expenses.

Commissioner Warren indicated a need to be flexible especially with staffing in case there is a necessity for short-term hires at the time of transition to a new management. He also inquired what is budgeted for the software and Ms. White and Ms. Contois responded that it will be around \$250,000 for the acquisition (1st year) and \$60,000 a year for training, support and

maintenance. Ms. White indicated that transitioning to new software will not only yield savings in staffing time but can also decrease expenses on supplies. Many new software programs allow going paperless and provide extra opportunities for increased mobility and efficiency (for example, inspectors using tablets vs paper). Mr. Warren inquired if new hardware must be purchased as well and Ms. White explained that data storage capacity and other technical requirements are now being reviewed by Stephen Ethier and the need to upgrade the computers mostly depends on where the data center will be hosted.

Answering Chairman Thomas's question Ms. White indicated that the budget was prepared by herself, not Mike Petro whose involvement in the last years was mostly limited to subsidy calculation and submission. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve FYE 2019 operating budget and adopt resolutions as follows:

- Resolution #9709 to accept FY19 budget request for federal programs
- Resolution #9710 to accept FY 19 state budget request for MRVP
- Resolution #9711 to accept FY 19 state budget request for program 705-a
- Resolution #9712 to accept FY 19 state budget request for program 689-c
- Resolution #9713 to accept FY 19 state budget request for program 667-a
- Resolution #9714 to accept FY 19 state budget request for program 400-1
- Resolution #9715 to accept FY 19 state budget request for program 200-a

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation regarding approval of tenant accounts receivable write offs for FY2018. JoAnn White reminded that the SHA typically pulls out data on balances for all tenants who moved out as of December 31st. She indicated that this year the amount to be written off is less than in 2016 (\$59,605) and 2015 (over \$62000). The decrease is mostly explained by stronger legal action against the debtors. Nicole Contois explained that information on debts gets reported to credit agencies and the debtors will get bad landlord references. Cases when tenants leave with a big balance (mostly fraud cases for unreported income) are brought to small claims court. Answering Commissioner Robles's question she explained that usually there is no dollar threshold and the writing off is date based versus income base but the debt threshold for bringing cases to court is \$2000. Ms. Contois indicated that the proportion of the amounts to be written off is very small comparing to total amount of rents paid (over million dollars) and Judge Abrashkin added that in many cases the debtors are judgement proof. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve Resolution #9716 to approve the write-off of \$50,241.81 of Tenants Account Receivables for FYE 2018.

Executive Director Abrashkin started his Executive Director's report by providing information about some progress made in union negotiations involving all bargaining units. He reported that he had requested the negotiations team to address the issue of disparity between wages of clerical staff (mostly female) and maintenance staff (mostly male). Mr. Abrashkin indicated that sometimes the discrepancy can be as high as 40%. The changes that were negotiated have to be ratified by the Union on April 17th. The only item that was deferred was about after hour calls and both teams agreed to work together on this issue.

Judge Abrashkin continued his report by informing the Board that the agency is expecting to get \$1.7 million from DHCD. He reminded that after the federalization when the SHA submitted federalization reimbursement request to DHCD the staff did not adequately track the federalization expenses and many of them got rolled into operating budget. Getting back most part of the requested \$2.2 million will be a tremendous step in getting rid of the state deficit.

Executive Director also reported that the SHA is close to concluding two other projects - Marble Street and Central Street. He expressed his concern that due to bureaucratic hurdles the newly constructed units at Central Street still remain unoccupied while there are so many people on the waiting list. He explained that HUD has just accepted a recommendation from the SHA legal Department to accept new Declaration of Trust reflecting changes in unit count (4 units instead of 8).

William Abrashkin completed his report by informing the Board about plans on using services of a Call Center for answering calls coming to the Rental Assistance Office which administers over 3000 vouchers and gets hundreds of calls on a daily basis. When all RAO lines are busy, their calls get re-directed to the Executive Office which is very inefficient and disruptive to the work of Administrative Assistant who has to process so many requests for reasonable accommodations.

Referring to a complaint received from one of the tenants at Reed Village Commissioner Labonte inquired on the status of the case and asked if the documents requested by the tenant have been provided to him. Nicole Contois responded that this is an active court case and Brad [Fink] has been communicating with him on the matter of the documents request.

The Board entered into a discussion regarding calling a Special Meeting to meet with Leo Dauwer in order to get an update on the status of the Executive Director search and to discuss further steps in the process.

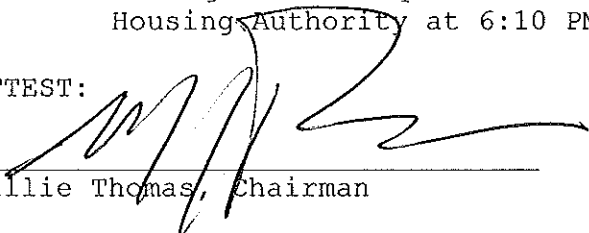
Nicole Contois and John Healy left the Conference Room at 6:03 pm.

It was decided to hold a special meeting either on April 4th or April 5th and Chairman Thomas indicated he would contact Mr. Dauwer to check his availability.

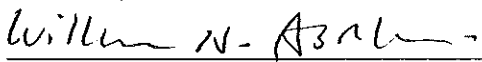
There being no further business to come before the members of the Springfield Housing Authority Board, upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn the Open Session of a Regular Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 6:10 PM.

ATTEST:



Willie Thomas, Chairman



William H. Abrashkin, Executive Director

EXHIBIT 1

