

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING
- OPEN SESSION -
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD ON FEBRUARY 19, 2019

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 February 19, 2019.

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

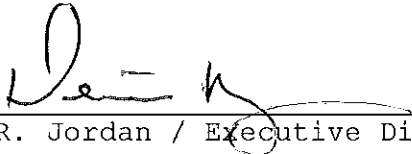
Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 23B of Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts Laws, as amended, that a regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Springfield Housing Authority will be held at 4:30 PM on Tuesday, February 19, 2019 in the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress Street, Springfield, MA 01104.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
/s/Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director
February 14, 2019

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 February 14, 2019 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 4:30 PM, and those present upon roll call were as follows:

PRESENT

Thomas Labonte
Angela Robles
Willie Thomas
Raymond Warren

ABSENT

Jessica Quinonez

ALSO PRESENT

Priscilla Chesky, Lyon & Fitzpatrick
Nicole Contois
Brad Fink
Fidan Gousseynoff
Denise Jordan
Ivette Otero
Michelle Ricker
Marieli Roman

David Thompson
Alibra Wilson
JoAnn White

The Board reviewed the Minutes of January 24, 2019. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was by a majority vote (Commissioner Warren abstained)

VOTED: to approve the Minutes of January 24, 2019.

The District manager Brad Fink introduced himself and other members of his staff, including Assistant Manager Alibra Wilson and foreman Dave Thompson. He started his overview by providing information on the District overtime hours. He explained that it is hard to evaluate and break down the numbers at this point because of all the changes at the District B, including staffing changes and making Duggan a separate District. He also explained that the over-time numbers include the hours the electrician, who is assigned to the District B has worked for other Districts, but it does not reflect the time of the plumber who is assigned to other District but has been doing some work for District B. In response to Chairman Labonte's question the Finance Director explained that the electricians' and plumbers' time is allocated to all Districts and is charged depending on the number of units. Mr. Fink noted that it will take some time to get more accurate information about his District's over-time.

Brad Fink and Dave Thompson stated that the majority of over-time is caused by heating issues. At Robinson Gardens, air needs to be bled out and many boilers are rotting out due to condensation. Sometimes it is not possible to patch the rotted parts and the entire heat exchanger needs to get replaced and each exchanger is between \$1200 and \$1600. Mr. Thompson noted that in the past the agency was receiving free exchangers from the manufacturers because of a flaw in the design but it does not get them anymore. Reed Village also has problems with its heating system due to a hot water priority system which does not give enough heat during winter time. Mr. Thompson explained that sometimes at night, if it's too cold, his crew members have to disconnect the thermostat to the hot water tank, then wait for the heating system to start working properly and then plug the water tank back. Mr. Fink expressed his hope that the new boilers, that are expected to get installed through the Energy Performance Contract, will help to reduce many "no heat" or "not enough heat" calls. He added that other common causes for after-hours calls are plugged sinks, bathtubs, toilets, snow removal and occasionally lockouts.

Brad Fink provided brief information about the situation with work orders. He explained that when he became the District Manager a year ago and Dave Thompson joined his team a little after, it was discovered that there were 3300 open work orders. It took a while for the staff to go through all orders to check if there were any duplicates or work orders that had been completed but not closed and to identify work orders that had never been addressed. Mr. Thompson explained that each work order had to be printed out, checked and completed, and now the number of open work orders is down to 292. He stated that there were many work orders that had never been addressed so it was important not only to correct the deficiencies but also to change the perception shared by many residents that SHA does not care about them. Mr. Thompson stated that reducing the number of work

orders so drastically would not have been possible without the hard work of the manager, his assistant, Mechanic 1 Ike [Jorgensen] and other members of his crew. Commissioner Warren shared his appreciation to the customer service emphasize he sees in the District B's report. Chairman Labonte added that the District reviews provide a really good view on all the challenges and accomplishments and he praised the work of the entire District B team.

With regards to the number of vacancies, Mr. Fink explained that there are 11 vacant apartments right now, three of which are off-line due to roof leaks. The current average turnover rate is 40 days. In response to Chairman Labonte's question Dave Thompson stated that bringing the number of vacancy days to 21 (as required by HUD) or 30 (as required by DHCD) would have been possible if there would not have been too many transfers. He explained that for every transfer his crew has to deal with 2 vacancies (apart from snow removal, outstanding, emergency and current work orders) and sometimes there are more than 3 transfers each month. Two maintenance staff members are assigned to work on vacancies every day but due to the high number of transfers it is not possible to catch up. Mr. Fink added that the turnover number also depends on the painting crew's schedule and if an applicant or a tenant, who is being transferred, accepts the unit or not - in that case the Applications Department have to reach out to other people on the waiting list. In response to Commissioner Warren's question Mr. Thompson said that currently 50% of vacancies are transfers and just a few months ago that number was even higher - 80%.

Answering to Chairman Labonte's question, Mr. Thompson explained that the average period of time his crew has to wait for painters is 12 days. He noted that the number of painters fluctuates mostly because of the turnover inside the pre-released crew. Commissioner Thomas inquired what Mr. Thompson could suggest to ensure a faster turnover, and Mr. Thompson shared his opinion that bringing back the painting crew (one painter per each District) could provide more efficiency, accountability and better utilization of their schedule and services. Denise Jordan explained that going back to this practice would cost half a million dollars and will not completely eliminate the problem of the painters not being able to catch up. Commissioner Thomas questioned whether a possibility of getting another crew has been discussed with the Sheriff's Department and Ms. Jordan explained that there are not enough trained people to make another crew.

Brad Fink indicated that among the toughest challenges for his District are correcting many issues that have not been addressed before, including neglected repairs and lease enforcement. He added that there is a large number unauthorized pets so enforcing the pet policy is also one of the priorities and it requires a lot of time and efforts on ensuring all proper documentation (from residents, doctors, vets, and the City) is obtained and requests for reasonable accommodation are processed. Another challenge is dealing with the deteriorating heating systems, including connecting too many fixtures to one pipe that causes clogging, poor ventilation and other issues. The galvanized piping that requires constant repairs and needs to be brought up to the code also creates many problems.

Brad Fink continued his presentation by providing information about District B's wish list. He stated that the roof project, separating the

system for hot water and heating, and building a laundry and community room at Reed Village are his top priorities. He explained that currently many units have washers/ dryers in shared basement that are easily accessible. It presents security concern because residents and their guests can access hot water tanks, boilers, breakers and other plumbing and electrical systems.

Mr. Fink concluded his overview by stating that his team will continue working on correcting the past deficiencies, helping tenants as much as possible, and improving the customer service. Commissioners Labonte and Warren praised the enthusiasm and the work of the District B. Denise Jordan added that despite all the huge workload and all the challenges, the District B team was able to score 95 at recent REAC inspection.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve the Tenants Accounts Receivable write off for FY19. Nicole Contois explained that the numbers are for tenants who vacated, and the majority did it through the court system. Some large numbers include back rent for unreported income. Attorney Chesky noted that one of the families who had to move out recently owed \$19,000 in back rent. Chairman Labonte inquired whether the staff has ever explored opportunities for using collection agencies. Ms. Contois reminded that this subject has been discussed at several prior Board meetings and the previous Executive Director was not in favor of this idea, but if the Board wants, the staff will work on it. In response to Commissioner Thomas's question Ms. Contois and Ms. Chesky explained that those people who vacated with a balance have information in their credit history and in PIC about their eviction and that they still owe money to the SHA. Some people who want to re-apply for PH pay their balance. Commissioner Warren asked how people could end up with owing thousands of dollars, and Ms. Contois explained that all tenants' income gets verified through the EIV system which is not up-to-date and it can take several months for the information about unreported income to show up. Families who failed to report income change on a timely manner get charged a back rent that can go back one year and sometimes even more. Attorney Chesky added that sometimes many families move out because it is too expensive to pay their back rent though sometimes if the amount owed to the SHA is not too big, a payment arrangement is made. In response to Commissioner Thomas's question JoAnn White told that back rent does not affect the subsidy and explained how it affects the budget. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Robles, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adopt Resolution # 9733 to approve the write off \$102,582.28 of Tenants Account Receivables for FYE 2019.

Denise Jordan started her Executive Director's report by informing the Board that DHCD had accepted the SHA's state budget. She expressed her gratitude to the Finance/Accounting team for their hard work on this matter.

Ms. Jordan reported that transfers, reasonable accommodation and service animals were the main subjects of discussions at the NERC NAHRO conference she recently attended. She informed that Attorney Chesky will be providing an update on the service animals/ pet policy at the forthcoming managers and foremen meeting scheduled for March 13th.

The Executive Director continued her report by informing the Board that the SHA team comprised of the ED, DED, Public Safety Manager and the Capital Improvements staff is still working on evaluating the elevator emergency plan, including reviewing the documents and collecting information about logistics.

Ms. Jordan also briefly reported about other important issues, including the increased efforts on enforcing safety and security measures, the job vacancies (including the HR manager, District clerk and Accountant positions), the meeting with the Finance Director and Nicole Contois to discuss budget issues and concerns, the ongoing work on improving communication with the staff. She completed her report by informing about a recent meeting with Mary Ellen Lowney and the discussion about updating SHA web-site and social media pages to maximize digital access of residents to SHA web pages, including newsletters, notices, and news.

Denise Jordan left the Conference Room at 5:28 pm.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve extension of the contract with the Sheriff's Department. Nicole Contois clarified that the contract was for both of the Sheriff Department's crews - one is for Gentile Apartments to do general maintenance and grounds keeping and another is for the painting crew. Chairman Labonte asked to correct the amount in the suggested recommendation.

Ms. Contois noted that using the paint crew is still most cost effective way for painting the apartments but acknowledged that it needs to be supplemented to cover those days when their supervisor is absent for a prolonged period. Chairman Labonte stated that the Board can take a vote now, however, he agrees with the foreman that having in-house painting crew would be more efficient and reliable. Commissioners Warren and Thomas inquired what steps can be undertaken to reduce the number of transfers, specifically, if a new policy shall be adopted to establish a certain ratio for offering units. Attorney Chesky explained that a household must be transferred if it's over-housed or under-housed or if there is a request for reasonable accommodation due to health issues. The SHA can adopt a policy and establish a ratio, however, one has to take into a consideration that delaying transfer for a tenant with medical need could cause some type of physical harm to him/her. In response to Chairman labonte's question Ms. Chesky explained that all requests for RA must be substantiated by medical verification to prove a nexus between a disability and a need for accommodation.

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

VOTED: to approve contract extension to Contract No. G-2017-12-6 with Hampden County Sheriff's Department for painting services [and additional crew/services for Gentile Apartments]; appoint Executive Director, Denise Jordan as the contracting officer to execute the contract extension. The contract extension shall be for the period March 1, 2019 through February 29, 2020 for the amount of \$148,200.00.

The Board reviewed and accepted the Accounts Payable report for the months of November and December 2018. On the AP report Chairman Labonte questioned about the payment to Wallace Tree Company in the amount of \$11,000 and inquired if it has been considered to procure a contract. John Healy explained that a contract for this kind of services has never been procured, but it can be done if necessary. Normally, each foreman calls individually and submits a requisition for approval and for some big projects at least 3 quotes need to be obtained. Mr. Healy noted that Wallace Tree Company's prices are normally the most reasonable, but they do not submit their invoices timely, so, most likely, the \$11,000 includes payment for several invoices, not just for one job.

Commissioner Warren inquired about another item in the amount of \$35,000, listed as "leaf blower", and Ms. White explained that it was not for one blower but for several equipment items, including leaf and snow blowers that were purchased for the District A.

The Board reviewed and accepted the Finance Report. The Finance Director talked about the situation at AMP 4 which is the only struggling AMP now. She confirmed that apart from correcting the issues with allocation codes, some other steps have to be undertaken to explore more ways to correct the situation. She also referred to the last page of the report and explained that a new AMP 11 had to be created for 4 units at Central Street. The Finance Department had asked HUD to provide a separate subsidy for this AMP for FY19, but because of the shutdown the approval has been delayed.

In response to Commissioner Warren's question, JoAnn White confirmed that the proceeds from Marble Street are kept in a separate account, once a plan to spend the money is developed, it will be forwarded to HUD for approval. Ms. White reminded that \$114,000 was spent to relocate the tenants and it is expected that this amount will be received back.

Ms. White reported that in general all accounts are in a good shape though it must be taken into consideration that the last 3 months of a fiscal year are usually the hardest ones because of the increase in utility expenses and over-time for snow removal.

Commissioner Warren inquired about the balances available to HCVP and the Finance Director explained that the report is not designed to show this information but she can provide it. She noted that there are about \$4 million in investments apart from \$2 million reserves that are used to pay to the landlords on the 1st of each month because HUD does not pay in advance. On the subject of using some funds to renovate office space for the RAO, Ms. Contois and John Healy told that some parts of the current office have been renovated - a new lobby area, office for receptionist and a computer area to be used by the participants have been created.

Dave Thompson and John Healy left the Conference Room at 6:00 pm.

The Board accepted the Waiting List, Occupancy, Rental Assistance and Communication and Community Relations reports.

The Public Safety Manager Michelle Ricker presented her quarterly report. She informed that there has been an increase in detecting fraud and boarders cases thanks to active investigation work. The staff uses many

tools to discover unreported income, illegal occupants and criminal activity, including Nexus reports, license agreement with RMV, towing enforcement, public safety officers' reports etc. Ms. Ricker stated that in many fraud or boarder issues have been resolved even without going to the Court.

Commissioner Warren reported about a recent conversation he had with a resident from Saab Court who was complaining that back doors to the buildings kept propped open, and Ms. Ricker told that the officers regularly check those doors and there are no cameras there. She explained that visitors, not residents jam the doors, so even if there would be cameras, it would be hard to identify who did it. In response to Commissioner Thomas's question Michelle Ricker confirmed that the SHA staff has been educating the residents to report any issues with the doors or to remove whatever was used to prop the door open. She told about the workshops, "coffee with cops" and other events organized for the tenants. She continued her report by providing brief information about the work of the Policy and Procedure Committee which is now focused on standardizing all policy and procedures.

Michelle Ricker stated that installing wireless cameras and having at least one public safety officer work full-time are on her wish list. She provided brief information on the cameras and told that the IT Department is working on identifying the most cost effective ways to upgrade the existing and to install new surveillance equipment.

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 Thomas, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn the Open Session of a Regular Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 6:15 PM.

ATTEST:


Thomas E. Labonte, Chairman


Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director

