

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING  
- REGULAR/OPEN SESSION -  
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY  
HELD ON JUNE 18, 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 June 18, 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, June 18, 2019 in the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress Street, Springfield, MA 01104.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY

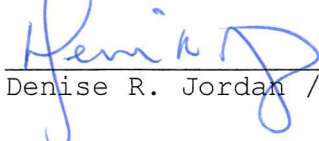
/s/Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director

June 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 June 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  
Jessica Quinonez  
Angela Robles  
Willie Thomas  
Raymond Warren

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT

Priscilla Chesky, Lyon & Fitzpatrick  
Samore Cottle (arrived at 4:36 pm)  
Zyaire Cottle (arrived at 4:36 pm)  
Zyuaire Cottle (arrived at 4:36 pm)  
Stephanie Diaz  
Fidan Gousseynoff  
Denise Jordan

Mary Ellen Lowney (arrived at 4:36 pm)  
Jimmie Mitchell (arrived at 4:36 pm)  
Ivette Otero  
Paul Pereira  
Lizaundra Rodriguez (arrived at 4:36 pm)  
Taisha Rodriguez (arrived at 4:36 pm)  
Marieli Roman  
Anna Smith  
Pam Wells  
Joann White

The Board reviewed the Minutes of May 29, 2019. Commissioner Warren suggested making a correction on page 1, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, to reflect that Tim Simmonds was representing Eversource, not PVPC. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Robles it was by a unanimously

VOTED: to approve the amended Minutes of May 29, 2019.

Mary Ellen Lowney, Jimmie Mitchell, Samore Cottle, Zyaire Cottle, Zyuaire, Lizaundra and Taisha Rodriguez entered the conference room at 4:36 pm.

Jimmie Mitchell thanked the Springfield Housing Authority for supporting the Farris Mitchell scholarship for 24 years. He shared a success story about one of the former Mitchell scholarship recipients, a UMass graduate who is now practicing at Baystate Hospital. Mr. Mitchell stated that providing scholarships to young people like the current scholarship recipients open great opportunities which many years ago were not available to many families living in public housing. Jimmie Mitchell introduced the scholarship winners.

Lizaundra Rodriguez from Sullivan Apartments thanked the Springfield Housing Authority and the Mitchell family and noted that the scholarship will help her to buy all the books to study health science at UMass Amherst.

Zyaire Cottle from Duggan Apartments thanked the SHA, the Mitchell family and his Mother and stated that the scholarship will help him to put a deposit for Westfield State University where he will be studying business management.

Executive Director Jordan gave the recipients a lot of credit because there were so many good applications this year. She added that she was able to help another outstanding student - Shakiya Smith from Duggan to get a \$500 scholarship through Raymond Jordan Center's Annual Teen program. Ms. Jordan told that Ms. Smith was accepted to 12 out of 15 colleges and universities and will be attending the Fitchburg State. Denise Jordan also thanked the parents of the scholarship recipients.

Commissioner Thomas expressed his hope that more information will be provided to the Board about the doctor mentioned by Mr. Mitchell and Mary Ellen Lowney promised to follow up on the story.

Mary Ellen Lowney, Jimmie Mitchell, Samore Cottle, Zyaire Cottle, Zyuaire, Lizaundra and Taisha Rodriguez left the conference room at 4:56 pm.

The property manager Ivette Otero and foreman Paul Pereira presented their District profile. Ms. Otero stated that since the District was operating in full capacity only starting from last October, she is only able to present information on the over-time hours for the last 8 months (November through May). In total, \$31,309.26 was paid for the over-time with 279 hours of the over-time hours was spent on a fire unit. Currently the District's average overtime per month is 9 hours. Ms. Otero noted that right now there is no over-time work on vacant units, only for emergency repairs.

Ms. Otero indicated that there are currently 13 vacant units - 4 units became vacant in just one month (May) - and in the last few days 3 more units became vacant. She stated that as of July of last year the number of vacant apartments was 24.

Ms. Otero provided information on the current work order status and noted that the number of open work orders has reduced from September from 351 to 146, 108 of those are for annual inspections.

On the subject of the turnover time Ms. Otero said that it takes about 67 days to turn over a unit, the main reason for such a long time is that there is never enough staff to start working on the vacant units as soon as they become available.

In response to Commissioner Warren's question Ms. Otero explained that the high number of vacancies is caused by both transfers and people moving out. She said that some families leave due to legal actions (increased lease violation, retro rent for discovered unreported income) and some families become more self-sufficient and purchase their own home.

Ms. Otero continued her presentation by providing information about transfers - she indicated that even though the transfer requests number has recently decreased, it still affects the District's turn-over rate and gives an extra burden to the crew.

Ms. Otero indicated that her District's goals are focusing on lease enforcement and delinquent accounts, reducing the turnover days, ensuring safe and sanitary condition of the units, and changing the tenant mind set of thinking that the SHA does not do enough. She listed damage caused by tenants, neglect, leaks in ceiling, and floods in basements during or after rain, high number of vacancies, and high maintenance demands at Duggan as the current challenges for the District. Ms. Otero shared some positive news too - the feedback from the tenants has been improving, the grounds are looking better, the number of work orders has decreased and the collection of back rent for unreported income has increased (\$20,381).



The District F manager stated that hiring a part-time clerk, getting a new lawnmower and a bigger garage for the equipment, modernizations of bathrooms, repairing flooded cellars, installing pads for dumpsters and having a full-time crew to help with grounds, grass, leaves, snow are the items on her **"wish list"**.

Chairman Thomas stated that he was hoping that splitting one District into two would help to improve the situation but it seems that the plan is not working. He expressed his frustration on the high turnover time and inquired whether there is a plan to reduce it. Foreman Pereira explained that the only solution would be adding more staff - there are only 5 members in his crew (including himself) and the District is understaffed frequently because of

employees' medical or personal leave. Ms. Otero and Mr. Pereira explained that the units are in a very bad condition and require not just cleaning and patching the walls - it takes a lot of time to replace floors and kitchen ceilings and address other issues to prevent future problems. Mr. Pereira added that it is hard to cut the turnover time because there are so many vacancies and there are a lot of routine and emergency work orders, especially due to leaking bathrooms that are located above kitchens - every time there is a leak, it requires replacing the bathroom floor tiles and repairing the kitchen ceilings. Besides, many basements at Duggan get flooded, even in those units that are located on the top of the hill and draining water takes a lot of time and manpower, even if there is just a small amount of water. Mr. Pereira also added that without the Sheriff Department's crew it is hard to keep up with the grounds maintenance - there is a lot of grass and leaves. In response to Commissioner Warren's question whether there is any engineering solution to improve the situation with the basements getting flooded, Paul Pereira said that the staff is looking into that and installing sump pumps in some units did help however it will be too expensive to install it in each unit.

Ivette Otero added that the high turnover time is also explained that 196 units at Duggan are 2-4 bedrooms and it takes much longer to work there than in a one bedroom apartment.

Commissioner Thomas inquired what work was done during the modernization at Duggan if there are still so many problems and what other capital projects have been implemented. Ms. Otero responded that the kitchen cabinets and windows were replaced but no plumbing upgrades were made. Executive Director Jordan stated that because Duggan was federalized, it was considered by HUD as "a new development" and was not eligible for any capital funds for 5 years.

Foreman Pereira stated that as the crew has been working hard on making major repairs (for example, replacing floor tiles instead of installing new tiles above damaged ones) and once Duggan starts receiving capital money, in the long run the situation will be better. Chairman Labonte suggested the staff looks into what can be done to improve the situation which he characterized as critical.

Commissioner Quinonez commended the work on identifying unreported income and collecting back rent.

Mr. Labonte asked Mr. Pereira and Ms. Otero to thank the staff for all their hard work and stressed that his frustration was not about the District's staff efforts but about how the District was organized.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to acknowledge the DHCD Notice 2019-16 regarding Wage Match system. Fidan Gousseynoff reminded that the same item was approved by the Board in 2016 but now a new approval is needed because a new Notice was issued. She explained that the Wage Match System is only used to verify income of tenants residing in state public housing units while all other tenants and program participants' income is verified through the federal EIV system. The purpose of the Wage match notice is to make sure tenants going through annual or interim recertification process are aware that their social security numbers will be used to verify their income. Wage Match notice is included to all recertification packages and filed upon obtaining tenants' signature. There are only a few SHA staff members who have access to the Wage Match and all of them received and reviewed Notice 2019-16. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas and seconded by Commissioner Quinonez, it was unanimously

VOTED: to acknowledge receiving and understanding the DHCD PH Notice 2019-16 regarding Wage Match for State Housing Program Tenants and to authorize the Executive Director Denise R. Jordan and the Board Chairman Thomas Labonte to sign the Executive Director/ Board Approval form.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to accept the CDBG Public Service Grant for the Duggan Youth Program. Ms. Gousseynoff stated that this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the row that the SHA receives this grant from the City. Last year's grant allowed to establish a new program at Duggan, similar to one that has been running at Robinson Gardens for several years. The Resident Services Director Pam Wells noted that the Duggan program run by Eric Griffith who is a teacher working for the Springfield Public Schools system, has been operating since October of 2018. He agreed to continue his work as the program coordinator. Ms. Wells told that 11 people have been attending the program and all of them will be working this summer through the Regional Employment Board and New England Farm Workers youth employment programs.

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

VOTED: to accept the 2019-2020 Community Development Block Grant in the amount of \$12,000 and authorize Executive Director Denise R. Jordan to sign the Contract with the City of Springfield.

Anna Smith, the Director of Operations of the Rental Assistance Office presented materials and a recommendation to adopt the new amendment to the Section 8 Administrative Plan. Ms. Smith explained that the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Housing and



Redevelopment Officials which manages the centralized Housing Choice Voucher Program's waiting list, has recently made some changes to the administration of the waiting list and all PHAs including SHA are required to obtain their Boards' approval to accept the amendments. Ms. Smith stated that Mass NAHRO will be utilizing GOSession8 software and will be offering new features to the users, including ability to apply through smartphones and apply for project-based vouchers along with mobile vouchers. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren and seconded by Commissioner Quinonez, it was unanimously

VOTED: - to adopt the new amendment to the Administrative Plan of the Housing Choice Voucher Program

- To adopt the new amendment to the Administrative Plan for Project Based Voucher [Program]
- To authorize the Executive Director to execute the GOSession8 Sub-License agreement with MassNAHRO

Denise Jordan started her Executive Director's report by stating that the thoughts and prayers of the SHA staff were with the family of Tim Doyle.

Ms. Jordan informed that two staff members of the HUD Inspector General's office are currently conducting a routine audit in the SHA office. She also informed that she recently attended the PHADA conference and one of the hottest topics of the discussion was the new 14-day Notice for REAC inspections. She shared her feedback with the PHADA officials by advising to post the agenda at least 1-2 months before the conference start date.

Denise Jordan expressed her satisfaction about the course of the union negotiations that had to be postponed due to Mr. Doyle's absence. She noted that she will be meeting with the foremen to address some rumors disseminated between staff members and to make sure everybody understands that she is open, transparent and available to answer questions.

On the subject of the Avery building she reported that the SHA is waiting for the response from HUD and attorney Chesky is working on this project. The Executive Director also informed that Ms. Chesky conducted an information session on live-in aides to make sure everybody understands the requirements and obligations and the SHA's cases in court are not jeopardized.

The report was continued by informing the Board about a recent meeting with Judge Fein, which was also attended by Priscilla Chesky and Pam Wells. The topic of the discussion was improving the system of communication with the Department of Children and Families so that the eviction process won't cause families losing custody over their children.

Ms. Jordan reported about recent REAC inspections and stated that even with the new 14-day rule the SHA has not been having any issues. She stated that even the inspector was admitting how the new rules were making the PHAs work harder.

Executive Director Jordan also informed that public safety and policy and procedures meetings are conducted now twice a month and the Board can expect that some amendments will be presented for their approval once some policies are updated by the Committee and reviewed by the General Counsel.

Ms. Jordan informed about a recent meeting with the Section 8 investigators and their supervisor Anna Smith. The goal of the meeting was getting better understanding of their roles and responsibilities and ensuring the investigators have access to necessary tools.

Ms. Jordan completed her report by informing that the part for the elevator has been shipped and KONE will be soon replacing it. She also told that the SHA team will be facing the Holyoke Housing Authority in a softball game.

Commissioner Warren shared his feedback about the Districts presentation. He expressed his hope that some ideas and suggestions shared by the staff members will be reviewed and evaluated. He suggested compiling a list of the ideas so that the staff's wish lists will be addressed. Ms. Jordan noted that she is familiar with all the issues raised by the presenters and some were discussed during her meet and greet sessions in October. She stressed the need to properly evaluate the feasibility of the requests.

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 Quinonez, it was unanimously

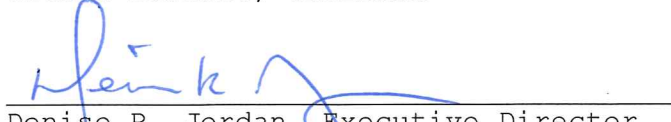
VOTED: to adjourn the Open Session of a Regular Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 5:25 PM.

ATTEST:



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Thomas Labonte, Chairman



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Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director