

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
- OPEN SESSION -
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD ON JANUARY 16th, 2024

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 January 16th, 2024.

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, January 16th, 2024 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
January 11th, 2024

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 January 11th, 2024, 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 (attended via Zoom)	

Angela Robles (attended via Zoom)
Willie Thomas (attended via Zoom)
Raymond Warren

ALSO PRESENT

Stephen Ethier
Fidan Gousseynoff
Austin Harris
John Healy
Denise Jordan
Nicole Kane (attended via Zoom)

The Board reviewed the Minutes of December 19th, 2023. With no questions or comments and upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Robles and following a board roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Minutes of December 19th, 2023.

The SHA IT Director Stephen Ethier provided an update on Yardi. He explained that Yardi is a platform that incorporates a bunch of systems working under one umbrella and one of the problems that the SHA has to deal with is that the systems do not always work together. The old system -Wintegrate - was designed specifically for housing authorities and Yardi is more complex, it's used by different types of property management programs. Unlike the old system that allowed some adjustments and easy fixes and overrides and did not have a compliance piece, Yardi requires compliance, so if something is not done correctly (for example, with rent calculation or work orders), it is challenging to fix. Other challenges are that the Yardi setup is complicated and some pieces are hard to fully understand and the staff is learning its many elements while using it. There are about 200 documents created in Yardi on a daily basis and it is hard to learn and fix issues while constantly using the system so heavily. Mr. Ethier added that increasing costs and the fact that Yardi is not customized for each organization are other two factors that create a challenge to the SHA, especially affecting its VMS and financial workflow. The SHA staff is constantly communicating with Yardi staff, trying to learn the specs, understand costs but, unfortunately, there are no quick fixes.

In response to Commissioner Warren's comment, Mr. Ethier expressed his belief that the situation will get fixed, however, as with any other software conversion, it is a long process and it will take time to identify the processes and implement the correction plan.

Commissioner Robles questioned how this conversion problem will affect the SHA's score. Mr. Ethier explained that they are working on

adjusting the system elements so that the reporting data is accurate. Deputy Kane confirmed that it will affect the audit results and said that the SHA applied for a 90-days extension to submit its audit report so that there will be extra time to fix some data. The request for extension was sent to the regional HUD office and they forwarded it to the national HUD office.

Chairman Labonte questioned whether Yardi staff is helping and Mr. Ethier explained that Yardi is a big company, they do work on the tickets that SHA opens and they meet with the SHA staff. Commissioner Warren said that he understands that investing into a new software was a needed step because the agency was years behind but expressed his concern about the growing costs and all the complications. He also stressed the importance of having a system that would allow property managers to know about their District's assets to better control expenses and budgeting. Commissioners Warren and Thomas inquired whether the SHA legal team should be involved if Yardi is not fulfilling the contract and Executive Director Jordan said that the SHA and Yardi are still working on resolving the issues. Mr. Ethier added that the contract stipulates mediation in case any party is not satisfied and the contract also says that a customer is responsible for the conversion which forces the SHA staff to work and learn hard to fully understand how the system works. Mr. Ethier said that the SHA staff is actively working with the Yardi team, the fee accountant and the consultant and some progress has been done and he believes that today's challenges will turn into tomorrow's benefits.

Denise Jordan stepped out of the Conference Room at 4:28 pm.

Commissioner Warren commented that the situation with conversion to Yardi is one of the top topics for the Board and providing updates, identifying problems and finding solutions was included to the objectives list for the Executive Director. He stressed the importance of getting needed support to help the staff.

Stephen Ethier provided brief update on the VMS situation. In response to Chairman Labonte's question, he said that at least 70% of the system is running good.

Denise Jordan returned to the Conference Room at 4:33 pm.

Stephen Ethier left the Conference Room at 4:34 pm.

Denise Jordan presented her Executive Director's report. She reported about meeting with a PHA Web team to discuss current software issues. She also told about the challenges that continue to be on the agenda, including addressing homelessness and efforts to attract new workforce. She reported that her annual meeting with departments is

now almost complete. Commissioner Warren inquired what position has been the hardest to fill in and the response was the Plumber position.

The Board accepted the Accounts Payable report for the month of December and Financial Statements.

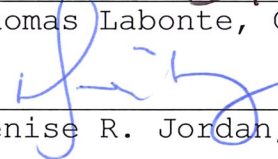
There being no further business to come before the members of the Springfield Housing Authority Board, upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez, and following a board roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn the Open Session of the Regular Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 5:08 PM.

ATTEST:



Thomas Labonte, Chairman



Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director