

Boston Housing Authority Resident Advisory Board external notes
(draft) 9-21-23 (on Zoom)

Minutes from July RAB meeting were approved with 4 abstentions (people saying they had not gotten the minutes).

1/ Presentation by David Gleich

David indicated that he has a new title at BHA as Deputy Administrator for Housing Programs. He advised RAB of updates in 4 areas -voucher availability, Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, implementation of Housing Opportunities Through Modernization (HOTMA) changes in how rent/income determined, and BHA Customer Service changes. He shared Power Point slides with the RAB during the discussion and emailed them out for distribution after the meeting. David noted that BHA has \$367 million in Housing Choice Voucher Program funding for next year, but anticipates spending at \$386 million. This means that BHA will not be able to issue vouchers. BHA has some Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) left—40 out of 480—but they cannot reissue those after 9/21. BHA is utilizing 330 of 410 Mainstream vouchers and anticipates a PBV Mainstream in place by 2024. For the City funded voucher program, currently there is \$11.57 million in funding, 225 vouchers have issued, and 60 people are still looking with their vouchers. There are 65 additional committed, and there should be new Project-based opportunities in 2024 (see slides). David confirmed that, as in the past, the freeze on vouchers means that BHA will not be able to offer Project Based Voucher (PBV), tenants who have leased up for over a year and are in good standing their “choice mobility”. Options to take a voucher and move elsewhere if they like, but BHA will wait list any such families and then when there is sufficient funding, these would be the first people to be issued vouchers. A RAB member asked if Section 8 would always have a deficit and if Section 8 would be at risk. David noted that Section 8 is often favored in Congress because both residents and the real estate industry rely on it.

For FSS, David noted that the program is now roughly 1300 families, far larger than the program in the past. Most of this is Leased Housing (there are a few family public housing pilot sites (Barkley & Franklin Field & only 71 public housing families). BHA’s contract with Compass Working Capital ends this year, but they anticipate renewing it and growth would likely be in the public housing side. BHA is exploring an “opt-out” model where people are automatically enrolled (avoiding a lot of extra red tape), unless they say explicitly, I do not want to do this. Currently about 925 families

have escrowed funds from increased earnings (\$4.8 million) which can be used for program goals—homeownership, higher education, etc.

David shared a number of slides about the HOTMA program. Congress passed this in 2016, but it's taken HUD until now to issue regulations for many of the income & rent rule changes. BHA will be incorporating this into Admin Plan and ACOP changes for 2024, although will have through 2024 to implement (does not have to implement 1/1/24). There will be further discussions with RAB about all of these and opportunity for RAB feedback as the PHA Plan does to the RAB. The over-income public housing piece came to the RAB earlier in the year. There were a number of specific questions that people posed (see slides) and David can follow up if there are specific questions.

Finally, David shared slides on certain technology changes at BHA (called Zendesk) which will create a ticketing system to track calls, emails, etc., that come in and responses to the same. There are also enhancements being done on inspections and work-orders. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time to get into a good discussion on all of this.

2/ Good Standing Issue for Meriem, and Whether to Do RAB Officer Elections

Mac McCreight from GBLS noted that there were two items on the agenda—possible RAB officer elections, and question of who might attend Mass. Union convention—where the question of who could run or be funded to attend an event by the RAB were affected by whether anyone was in bad standing. A RAB member had earlier been found in bad standing due to failure to submit an expense report from a Mass. Union conference. At the RAB's meeting in July, it was agreed that this should be revisited by the Budget Committee, since health-related circumstances were identified that led to this. The Budget Committee reviewed the matter and was recommending that the member be restored to good standing. It was moved, seconded, and approved to do this.

Mac also noted that earlier in the year, the RAB had voted, by a narrow margin, to proceed with Officer Elections because it was not clear how long it would be until new overall elections for the RAB. Officer elections were to occur at the July meeting but were put off because of the major tech glitches with that meeting (those on Zoom could not log in until halfway through meeting). This month, the RAB meeting was to be hybrid, but due to health issues, it was decided that it should be Zoom. It was moved, seconded, and approved to postpone the RAB Officer elections again.

3/ Mass. Union Fall Convention—Information was shared with the Board that Mass. Union was having its fall convention at the end of October in Marlboro again (one day event, but people might elect to stay over the previous night), and arrangements would need to be made to secure hotel rooms quickly. The RAB would need to decide how many people to send and who would be going. The Treasurer noted that she had already reserved 9 rooms (to avoid them being lost to others), and the Budget Committee chair made clear that based on RAB Board desires, this could be reduced (or possibly increased, depending on availability). The Treasurer also said van arrangements similar to last year could also be made for pick up and drop off at Franklin Park. Those on the call were asked who was interested in attending. It was asked if the list could be kept open to see if interest from others who weren't present, but Mac noted that bylaws provide that the persons going needs to be determined at the Board meeting. Seven RAB members indicated a desire to attend. A question was raised about whether one RAB member was in good standing. It was noted that she was not in good standing for NARSAAH, and there was some disagreement about whether expense report or clearing of balance issues had happened since. It was moved, seconded, and approved with 3 abstentions that the RAB member should be left on the Mass. Union list, but that paperwork should get straightened out.

4/ RAB Elections

It was decided to move to the topic of RAB elections generally, and then to circle back to Budget Committee report afterwards (NARSAAH reports would likely take a while and could be done at next meeting). John Kane of BHA noted that the last RAB elections were done in 2016, and BHA had tried to procure vendors without success. He said a different path would be to see what could be done through mail-in, email, phone, and website manner to get nominations, and then to similarly have Leased Housing participants vote on nominees. (For public housing, the voting would be done by the electors designated by LTOs.) There would possibly be ways to track this by codes, possible use of QR codes, etc. If the Board were interested in this, there could be further exploration. In addition, if there are additional Board members who want to serve on the Ad Hoc Election Committee, that would be helpful—right now, it's just two RAB members. (Two additional RAB members had previously been on it.) John said he could try to set up a meeting prior to next regular RAB meeting. Fred Gomes from BHA also noted that there some sessions open to discuss how on-line voting could be done, with one on 9/29 and another on 10/13

(shared material on that after the meeting). A number of RAB members expressed interest in exploring these options.

5/ Budget Committee

The Budget Committee chair & Treasurer summarized the Budget Committee notes for the August and September meetings and related bank statements, and there were questions raised about difficulty in seeing the images of the checks (bank issue). It was noted that the Budget Committee would still need to compile the receipts from the Networking BBQ and remainder of NARSAAH expenses. It was noted that the RAB T-shirts were made up and were distributed to those at the Networking BBQ event. Some expressed a desire to have the shirts mailed out to those who did not pick them up, but there would be an expense with that, and others said people should just come to the RAB office to pick their T-shirts up if they didn't get them. Some questions were raised on specific items on reports (container, parking). The Budget Committee reports were approved after a motion and second, with 1 abstention.

Motion was made for adjournment around 8 p.m., no opposition (also no end of meeting evaluation).