

Boston Housing Authority Resident Advisory Board (BHA RAB) meeting notes (external), hybrid meeting of Nov. 9, 2023

Elderly/Disabled chaired. Minutes from last meeting were approved. Chair noted that given the need for the RAB to get out of the building promptly at 8 due to systems work being done after hours, certain items on agenda (unfinished & new business, including NARSAAH and Mass. Union reports) would have to be put over.

1/ BHA Presentation on Capital Plan (Randi Holland & Brian Sandiford). Randi did a brief federal update that BHA had gotten some additional funding from HUD which meant some additional work items were added for last year. \$1.6 million was available for fire alarms (Hassan, Hailey, MLK Blvd, Barkley, Doris Bunte, and Torre Unidad), and fire pumps (Alice Taylor, Ausonia, Hailey, and Roslyn). \$2.2 million was added for lead paint abatement at McCormack. Originally 1-BR units hadn't been included in abatement there, under assumption no children in such units, but BHA has been finding that's not always so and so these were added.

Brian did a presentation on the State Capital Plan, but noted that there were some corrections to be made to what the RAB had previously received--(a) Section 2.3 of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) mentioned an Alternate CIP, but BHA is not pursuing an Alternate CIP. (b) Table A is in inverse order, and should be, a, b, c, etc. (c) For Table A, first time homebuyer info needs to be updated (will be provided). (d) On energy usage, waiting for some data (will update). He asked people to look at the large spreadsheet [RAB to distinguish state from federal handout by BHA logo and development names], which discusses 5 year plan for capital, and \$8.5 million in regular capital and \$3.2 million in regular American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds and \$2 million in ARPA targeted funds—see codes on sheet. This includes heating system revamps at West Broadway and Gallivan Blvd. BHA will be getting rid of Pacific panels & breakers, and provide updated electrical panels. Authority wide roofing, and addressing of vacancies at South Street & Archdale. Special occupancy reduction work will be done for group homes. Envelope improvements (windows, siding & doors) are slated at a number of locations. Building electrification work will happen at 21 Maryland Street to take it off gas, heat pumps, dryers, induction ranges. For the scattered site portfolio, looking at homeownership, right of first refusal for existing residents. Mac McCreight of GBLS asked if BHA had held LTO meeting today (John Kane later clarified all LTOs had gotten materials), as well as whether 21 Maryland Street was in the disposition packet (Taylor Cain had done presentations to Monitoring Committee but not sure same for RAB or same depth). Brian said 21 Maryland was being set aside from the first set of Chapter 705 scattered site dispositions, but the electrification work there would happen whether it was ultimately part of disposition or not.

2/ BHA Presentation on State Annual Plan Maintenance & Repair (Victor Williams). Victor noted that much of the draft was not new, and he would focus on new items, focusing on increasing efficiency, improving customer service & use of technology. BHA now has more ways in which work orders can be reported (other than call-in number or going to office). There is an on-line link from BHA website. BHA had negotiated a new Maintenance Mechanic III which could do a

range of work where a building trade's license was not required, and this would allow BHA more efficient targeting of staff. For Living Unit Inspections, staff that had been doing Leased Housing inspections will also do public housing inspections—greater knowledge of what's needed and more consistency.

A RAB member said maintenance staff at Alice Taylor for past 6 years weren't doing what they did before (getting resident sign-off to show work completed, changing air filters, having slop sinks at each building so mops not taken from building to building. A RAB member said similar issues of staff not addressing repairs or getting sign-off at Franklin Field. A RAB member asked about security issues at Commonwealth, and ability to find out who's buzzing before letting people in (particularly issue if people are on upper floors), status of cameras. Victor said he'd look into this. (See also related discussion under David Gleich's presentation, below.)

3/ BHA Presentation on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (Virginia Albert). Virginia noted that BHA is not yet required to provide a full set of strategies on this, and final HUD rule is expected. However, in the meantime, the City did an assessment of fair housing and assigned 21 goals to BHA. BHA convened a working group. BHA recently presented its action steps to the Monitoring Committee appointed by the Mayor, and BHA meaningfully advanced about 14 out of 21 of those goals. Several of the main examples are included in the summary in the PHA Plan—the ECHO initiative to increase location of Leased Housing families into Opportunity Areas, revisions to the ACOP, bolstering the BHA's Minority/Women contracting and hiring opportunities. The chair asked for a summary of one of the goals as an example, and Virginia said ECHO mobility's increased staffing & enhanced capacity. Karen noted that more people might benefit from getting into areas with greater space outside the City. Mac asked if there was a written document on what BHA presented on the 14 action steps taken so far, and Virginia agreed to share that with the RAB.

4/ BHA Presentation on Section 8 Administrative Plan and Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) Revisions (David Gleich). David noted that in addition to what Victor said, the inspectors had hand-held devices and cameras and so could record both conditions at time of inspection & re-inspection. This might obviate the need for sign-off in some cases where the images would show what was done. (See discussion below.) He then discussed changes to the Admin Plan and ACOP. He noted that earlier in the year, he had said BHA might have to make a number of changes to rent & income determinations to comply with federal changes as part of the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA). However, HUD needs more time to implement, and so BHA isn't doing HOTMA changes now but will likely come back in the middle of next year on those.

On the Admin Plan, David noted an added Super-Priority where an existing Project-Based Voucher (PBV) or Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation (Mod Rehab) landlord couldn't provide the accommodation required by a person with a disability. Priority 1 verifications will be uniform across the portfolio, so being approved or denied Priority 1 affects all places listed. Court-ordered eviction will require less documents. Rent receipts would be one form of acceptable

verification. Working preference is being removed (it was creating more barriers to get needed verification that it was worth). SRO referral priority points are added, so that a Section 8 SRO owner who might have appropriate referrals could refer and make sure units get filled. Owners could verify that work was completed by submitting photographs. For interim recertification (either an increase because previously on zero income, or a decrease due to income loss), 30-day time frame added to provide info. Added language about other owner incentive fees to be consistent with Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) requirements. Added language to clarify when PBV participants can exercise Choice Mobility. For the ACOP, information was added about finding material on BHA website. On priority/preference, residency preference points were removed, but the Displaced Boston points are retained. Points were removed for transfers related to pro-ration, given the separation between the federal and state portfolios, but BHA will do these as administrative transfers to the state portfolio.

Mac noted that he had submitted some comments already, but wondered if there was some risk that an unscrupulous landlord could submit a photo of the wrong unit to get a “pass” on a Section 8 unit (and the cited unit remained unrepaired). David noted this was just for non-emergency items, and there would still need to be a way to inform the resident so if the resident said, “That’s not so”, BHA could follow up. A RAB member described her experience with a BHA Leased Housing inspector who had gotten too friendly with her landlord and said everything was done and she had to submit her own photos to show that wasn’t so. David said she did the right thing. A RAB member raised a concern about inspectors taking pictures of things for which residents have not given consent. David said inspectors were trained to focus just on the items in the inspection list. A RAB member noted that with Choice Mobility, sometimes there were few places where people could move. She asked if someone had a tenant-based voucher & moved to a project-based site, could then retain mobility. David said probably not (and the member thought that was unfair). The RAB member had other questions which she included in chat which were not discussed but where BHA will follow up.

5/ BHA Presentation on Annual Plan Process (John Kane). John noted that there was one more RAB meeting on Dec. 7 (1st Thursday) and the BHA Administrator Kenzie Bok would like some time on the RAB agenda then, but RAB could identify who else it might want to hear from on the Annual Plan. He noted that there were public hearings on Monday Dec. 11th and Tuesday Dec. 12th. The Dec. 11th hearing will be in person at Boston City Hall (8th floor) at 1 p.m., and the Dec. 12th hearing will be on-line at 6 p.m., but you have to register in advance for that. John noted that sometimes the RAB had asked to set up Reading Committees to review certain parts of the PHA Plan and/or had invited BHA staff to come to an extra session for a more in-depth discussion, and Mac had indicated willingness to help with this. Mac noted that although people didn’t need to decide it tonight, for in-person hearings in the past, usually one or more RAB members volunteered to greet people as they came in and give them info about the RAB (particularly helpful in a RAB election year). A RAB member noted she had done that in the past. In addition, for both on-line and in-person hearings, one or more RAB members (not necessarily

the same people for both hearings) could speak briefly to what the RAB's role has been in the PHA Plan process.

6/ Committee Reports

Budget Committee—A RAB member noted that the Budget Committee had met on Nov. 2nd, and had voted to continue her as chair of the Committee. It also voted to meet on Dec. 7th and Jan. 4, since RAB is also meeting on those dates before going back to its 2nd Thursday of each month schedule. (Time will be at 4 rather than 1 so people can go from Budget directly to RAB meeting.) The Treasurer presented on the Bank Statement for month ending 10/31/23, with initial balance of \$10,153.47, deposit of \$213.51, withdrawals of \$2,470.93 and checks for \$1,733.50, and an end of month balance of \$6,172.55. Committee also will explore with Mass. Union any possibility for a RAB training. The last installment of the BHA's payments to the RAB will be on Dec. 1st.

The Committee had also voted to recommend, as a reasonable accommodation for the Treasurer's disability, that her parking fees for the time when she uses the RAB office for Treasurer business be reimbursed, and that RAB ask that BHA have its reasonable accommodation coordinator available to meet with the RAB early in the year to discuss reasonable accommodation. A motion and second was made to accept this recommendation. There was discussion. A RAB member asked if the Committee had looked into use of The Ride as an alternative, and another RAB member said it was his understanding that anyone with a handicapped placard on their car could park at any meter near BHA and not be charged/ticketed/towed, even if the handicapped spaces near the BHA were already utilized by BHA staff with such needs. A vote was taken, and the ayes had it, with 4 nays and one abstention.

Ad Hoc Election Committee—John reported that there was some progress with Mass. Union's interest with outreach.