

Notes, BHA Resident Advisory Board 3-9-23 (external, on zoom)

RAB Family Public Housing Chair facilitated meeting, with assistance from Mac McCreight from GBLS. Agenda items were reviewed orally & OK'd. It was noted, in addition to what was said in the minutes, that at the 2/9 meeting, one RAB member had been on the call at the beginning, but her phone call got dropped, and so she wasn't able to participate in the discussion about NLIHC conference and express her interest; that was the reason for the subsequent polling about whether she could be added as a 6th person to the 5 who had been approved. Since BHA indicated that there were some edits/corrections needed to the minutes (internal and external) sent out for the 2/9/23 meeting, it was agreed that approval of those minutes would be tabled until next meeting.

1/ Introduction of New BHA RAB Liaisons; Upcoming RAB Board Meetings and REC Events:

Sahar Lawrence of BHA introduced Fred Gomes and Simone Layne, who were newly hired as BHA Resident Capacity Program (RCP) staff as of February 13th. Part of their duties will be working with the RAB as BHA liaison; they will also each be working with a number of BHA family and elderly/disabled public housing sites/tenant organizations. Fred and Simone spoke briefly and are looking forward to working with the RAB. Sahar mentioned that for the May RAB meeting, Taylor Cain of BHA could talk about a BHA "scattered site" homeownership initiative and Joe Bamberg of BHA may want to do a piece on a HUD demo/dispo proposal for the balance of the Hailey Apts. For the April RAB meeting, BHA may want to have the Youth Council speak and talk about the SPOKE program (arts). Sahar also mentioned that BHA will be getting notice out about a Resident Empowerment Coalition (REC) meeting on March 28 at 2 p.m. on Zoom. BHA is also planning a meeting at Groveland in Mattapan on April 10 at 2 p.m. and they're seeing if this can be both in person and with hybrid option; focus of this would be on resident organization compliance issues (financial reporting, etc.) and the distribution of new Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs).

Mac asked Sahar if any update on whether RAB meeting in April would be in person with hybrid option, and noted that there had been discussion on use either of the Amory Street community space that the RAB used to meet in, or the Possible Zone space near Hailey Apartments. Sahar said BHA was still assessing that and would stay in touch (if not, April meeting would remain on Zoom). It was also confirmed that the draft RAB budget and Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the period starting 4-1-23 had been approved by BHA.

2/ Rent Control Resolution: Steve Meacham from City Life/Vida Urbana (CLVU) noted that the Boston City Council had on March 8 done a historic 11-2 vote to send a proposal for rent regulation to the State House, and this was the first time this had happened in over 20 years. He noted that it would be difficult to get State House approval and important to show the legislators about local support—and had a draft resolution for the RAB to ask for legislative support. A few questions were asked, including whether it would be possible to get more protections. (Mac said you usually can't do this with a home rule proposal—the State House votes it up or down, and isn't free to amend it—and Steve said that the

proposal wasn't as strong as what CLVU and a number of groups wanted, but it was a good first step and would protect people against no-fault displacement that happens now. It was moved and seconded that the resolution be adopted, and the majority (with 2 abstentions) approved its adoption. Steve added that C:VU has been in touch with BHA about reviving the Section 8 Zip Code meetings, where CLVU arranges for a meeting place/time for all Section 8 tenants from a particular zip code (who get a notice mailed out by BHA) to attend and get questions answered. He'll keep the RAB updated on future dates and locations.

3/ Filling of Vacancies in Board Officer & Budget Committee positions: Mac noted that this has been discussed at past Board meetings, but right now, Family Public Housing is the only part that has a vice-chair. It's important to have a vice-chair so if a chair can't carry out responsibilities for a meeting or due to a temporary hardship, things can happen (such as approvals of reimbursements, etc.) A Leased Housing RAB member volunteered to serve as Leased Housing vice-chair (which was acceptable to the Leased Housing members present). An Elderly/Disabled RAB member volunteered to serve as Elderly/Disabled vice-chair (with the clarification that this wouldn't require her to stop chairing Policy & Procedures, since this is not an automatic Budget Committee position); this was fine with the Elderly/Disabled Public Housing members present. (The 2nd Budget Committee positions for Leased Housing and Elderly/Disabled remain vacant, but RAB can see at a future meeting if there are any others willing to help with that.)

4/ Committee Reports:

a/ Budget Committee: This was split partly between Mac and several RAB Budget Committee members. Mac reported on items that were not likely to be debated, reminding people that at last meeting, the RAB had authorized 5 people to attend the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) in D.C. on March 20-23. Arrangements were made for air travel, hotel & conference fees and travelers' packets with per diems (and the travel agreement saying that people understanding their potential liability if they don't give timely notice of inability to go so other arrangements can be made). One RAB member said that some medical circumstances had arisen for her so she could not attend, and she recommended that another RAB member go in her place, since she had expressed interest and since otherwise the RAB could not get a refund on the ticket & hotel. This was fine with the Board and member concerned. It was clarified that while we had discussed a possible NAR-SAAH conference in the spring, a RAB member had spoken with Dr. Little and it will be in September, so doesn't need to be discussed now. Mass. Union of Public Housing Tenants indicated it will have its spring conference in Marlborough May 5-7, but we don't yet have details about agenda, costs, etc., and so the issue of whether/who to send can be taken up at the April meeting.

The Vice-Treasurer went through the February bank statement (which went out by email, but hard copies had not), which included both a number of disbursements as electronic withdrawals (mostly for NLIHC-related air fare and hotel, but a few parking charges and purchase of office supplies), the deposit of a reimbursement of the RAB for \$402.00 that

had previously been requested at the January 2023 RAB meeting, and checks for reimbursements and for ITOA taxi (itemized in the Budget Committee notes, which had also been sent out electronically).

b/ Intersection of Budget & Policy & Procedures Committee discussions: At this point, discussions got difficult. Both the Budget Committee and the Policy & Procedures Committee agreed that there should be time at this meeting, if the Treasurer appeared, to speak to various issues that had arisen at the January and February RAB meetings; there was also the question whether prior RAB action should be reconsidered in light of a later reimbursement. A RAB member noted that Lennox had contacted her about technical difficulties; a different RAB member noted that the Treasurer had been absent from 3 or more consecutive RAB meetings, and separate from any issues of Treasurer duties, non-attendance at 3 or more consecutive meetings without good cause was grounds for removal. The first member objected to this given the tech issues.

It was noted that the Policy & Procedures Committee had met on March 6 to take up the “reasonable cost” issue—i.e., normally if there is more than one way to do something, the RAB should explore what may be the most economical (least costly) way to do it, while at the same time making sure RAB members aren’t worse off because of costs associated with being on the RAB (reason for transportation reimbursement or taxi vouchers). It was also noted that there may be particular reasons why a cheaper means might not work (waiting for the T may involve long delays, or disability-related issues). A RAB member noted that the cost of parking at the BHA garage was \$39 per day, regardless of how long there, and that can add up. The Committee had had a discussion about the “reasonable cost” issue (Mac did a memo with different points in it). On Committee roles, Policy & Procedures recommends policies on what are permitted expenses or how reimbursements are to be processed; Budget recommends approval of expenses and reimbursements following those rules. A suggestion was made that if the problem was getting sign-off on expense reports due to a chair’s absence, there should be arrangements where other chairs could OK. There was also discussion about the need for timely submission of requests for reimbursement, and that people could lose the right to reimbursement if a request wasn’t timely; on the other hand, there were some timely submitted requests that got held up because of the closing and reopening of back accounts, and the need to issue checks (once checks were available) for cumulated expenses that had the proper backup.

After the Policy & Procedures Committee meeting was held, since it was noted that there were no specific resolutions made by the Committee, the voting members of the Committee conferred and decided to submit several emails with recommendations (related to questioning past reimbursements to a RAB member for parking and other items, and asking for itemization of expenses and for the member to be placed on probation in the interim). Mac noted that this was not proper, since recommendations should only be made at the duly convened meeting where other RAB members know of the meeting date/time and agenda items and can participate. Moreover, he regularly has gone to all Policy & Procedures meetings to be sure that discussions remain within the bylaws—and the bylaws

set up the clear demarcation between the roles of the two Committees. RAB members are of course free to make motions, and any Committee action/recommendation can be overridden by a Board vote. A RAB member apologized for anything not done under protocol, and Mac said he understood how it could happen and that some committee members may have intended to do motions & seconds in the formal meeting but it didn't happen.

A RAB member said that she and others on the Budget Committee felt disrespected because they did go through a process to review all expenses before checks are approved and there is back-up for all of the expenses, and the things that were brought up in the subsequent emails were matters that the Budget Committee and RAB had already approved. A RAB member noted that there were issues of equity—certain things about reimbursements had not been allowed to her when she was RAB Secretary, nor did she think back then that RAB members could get reimbursement for the RAB garage. It was noted that a RAB member had medically related reasons for using her car rather than taking the T, and that use of taxi vouchers might be even more expensive than the parking fees.

Mac noted that there had been a suggestion to possibly convene a joint meeting of the Budget and Policy & Procedures Committees at a time that would work for all (several members can't attend Budget's day-time meetings due to work schedule), so that the issues about expenses, back-up, and what should be policy about reasonable costs could be discussed. Several RAB members said they were tired of all of these discussions and the Board just needed to move on, with people trusting each other. A RAB member made a motion to table the whole discussion, which was seconded. A RAB member objected to this, and said there should be individualized meetings with the Treasurer and Vice-Treasurer to discuss their issues. A majority of the Board, with one nay and 2 abstentions, adopted the motion to table.

Meeting then adjourned (without evaluation).