

Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 11-8-18, at 125 Amory Street

Family Public Hsg: *Members* Arlene Carr, Meena Carr, Phyllis Corbitt, Concetta Paul, Aracelis Tejada, Betty Rae Wade. *Alternates* Ron Johnson (Alt 1), Janis McQuarrie (Alt 4), Cheryl Semnack (Alt 10): 9

Elderly/Disabled Public Hsg: *Members* Michele McNickles, Eugenia Smith, Alex Rosin, Modesta Ballester, David Turney. *Alternates:* Arthur Alexander (Alt 1), Eddie Hartfield (Alt 2):7

Section 8: *Members* Edna Willrich, Jung Wing Lee, Lennox Tillet, Stephen Tracey, Yvette Moore, Arlette Coleman, Karen Stram. *Alternates:* Anita Morris-Merriman (Alt 1), Robin Williams (Alt 4), Georgia McEaddy (Alt 5): 10

Absences excused: Val Shelley, Family; John Maloni, Elderly/Disabled;

Others: John Kane, Joe Bamberg, Gloria Meneses, Gail Livingston, Rachel Goodman, Sahara Lawrence, Priscilla Williams, BHA; Mac McCreight, GBLS; Jane Archibald, Commonwealth; ***, Orient Heights; *** Dixon, ***; Philip Askew, Section 8; Ethel Hall, Section 8.

The meeting was chaired by Edna Willrich, and co-chaired by Robin Williams. Arlene Carr was Timekeeper; Phyllis Corbitt was Sergeant at Arms. Minutes of prior meeting were approved.

1/Presentations Related to FY 2019 PHA Annual Plan: Several BHA staff members spoke on different aspects of the proposed FY 2019 PHA Annual Plan which had been sent out to the RAB and opened for public review and comment on Nov. 1st.

Joe Bamberg (Mixed Finance Redevelopment, RAD, etc.): Joe apologized and said that after the draft had been sent out, BHA realized that there were a few missing pieces or revisions needed, and John handed out those revisions to Part 19 of the Supplement to the PHA Plan. BHA had meant to include Mission Main, Heritage, and Lower Mills as possible RAD conversions—they had discussions with residents at all three sites and started the process to explore this right before Labor Day (too late to go into Amendment #1 to the FY 2018 PHA Plan). Heritage and Lower Mills previously converted 90% of their public housing units to Section 8, and this would convert the balance to RAD. At Mission, it had gone through HOPE VI in the 1990's, with 445 units remaining public housing and 90 unrestricted market units, but it was thought to be beneficial as part of refinancing to use RAD. Joe also said that BHA realized that HUD wants more of the text from RAD documents/guarantees (such as what's in various PIH notices from HUD about grievance rights, relocation, etc.) to be in the body of the PHA Plan—so that's being added. Arlene asked if BHA was considering RAD for places that were already redeveloped, given what was said about Mission. Joe said BHA is not currently actively considering RAD for other redeveloped sites, but it could be possible to use RAD at some of them; it would be case-by-case—if a site had just recently been redone, then it might not make sense. Mac mentioned Orchard, which was done about the same time as Mission. Joe said it might be a candidate, but this only happens if the BHA, the tenants group, and the developer all think it makes sense and have started a formal process.

Phyllis asked why there were 28 RAD units for Old Colony. Joe explained that this was because BHA had Replacement Housing Factor funds (almost \$7 million) which it had built up and

wanted to use for affordable units there—but HUD doesn't allow these to be used with Section 8, but would allow to be used with RAD. Phyllis asked if this meant different people would have different rights, and if they would all be covered by Old Colony's MOU. Joe said different people would not have different rights; all would have similar rights and all be under the MOU.

Janis said that they had been told at Lenox/Camden, there was to be a split of 75/25. Joe said yes, as he had described at the meeting about Amendment #1 to the PHA Plan, HUD allows a blending of 75/25 RAD and Section 8 funds, and BHA wanted to use that option since Section 8 would allow significantly higher funding stream. Another difference is that for RAD, all the figures are the same for all unit sizes, whereas for Section 8, there are different amounts for different sizes—so BHA was intending to use the Section 8's for the larger unit sizes at Lenox (3 BRs).

Gloria Meneses (Occupancy): Gloria described several changes in the BHA's Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP): (a) there is a new on-line application that DHCD set up for state public housing, and BHA has elected to use this for both its federal and state public housing. BHA is migrating data right now, and anticipates having this "live" as of January 2019. (b) language about late appeals was added to the ACOP similar to what's in BHA's Section 8 Administrative Plan; (c) the definition of homeless was revised, similar to what was already done in the Section 8 Admin plan, so that if someone leave shelter to use a temporary program (Rapid Rehousing), they are still considered homeless; (d) there were a number of changes in the residual tenancy policy, the most important of which is that if the head of household/co-head move into non-BHA housing, the remaining family members can be considered for tenancy. The appeals process was also clarified to match what BHA does in practice (screening denials go through the applicant appeal process with a hearing officer, but the question whether someone's an eligible remaining member would go through the normal grievance process).

Phyllis said that she was concerned, given all the relocation going on at sites, and at the same time HUD/BHA pressure to house the homeless, did this mean that existing residents being relocated would not get preference? Gloria said no, relocation always gets priority, and only after that does BHA look at Priority 1 applicants (homeless due to domestic violence, etc.) and other administrative transfers (reasonable accommodation). Sometimes relocation needs mean that a particular site doesn't have any vacant units to assign. However, BHA and HUD monitor vacancy data on a monthly basis, and units can't be kept vacant, as this would reduce the funding HUD provides. Someone else asked, how long does it take to process a residual tenancy request? Gloria said that a lot of this depends on the property manager. Once the manager sends in the paperwork, then Occupancy makes the decisions. Residents have appeal rights. Eddie asked about rights of return. Gloria said it was important to look at the relocation agreements each resident signed—there were a number of options, and sometimes residents chose to move to a different development or relocate with a Section 8 permanently, and other times only did so temporarily, and have the right to return to the original development. Since assignments have to be to the right unit size, there can be changes in household composition that happen while people are away that may result in changes to assignment.

Gail Livingston (Operations): Gail explained that there is a new part of the ACOP required because of legislation Congress adopted in 2016. While, in order to get into public housing, you need to have a low income (80% of area median), there was no limit on how high your income could be and continue to stay in federal public housing. The new law says that if you are at or

above 120% of area median income for more than two consecutive years, you must either leave or pay a higher rent. That rent would be the higher of Section 8 Fair Market Rent (FMR) or the combination of subsidies used to pay for each unit (operating fund and capital fund). Gail noted that the Section 8 FMR figure has been higher. This figure is higher than flat rents, which are set at 80% of the FMR. The rule says that after a family has been above 120% for one year, BHA must send the family a written warning notice that if this is true at the next annual recertification, the over-income policy & higher rent will apply; however, if/when the household income goes below 120%, the over-income policy no longer applies, and would only apply once there was a later 2-year period of being over-income. Gail said that staff had figured that this only affected about 50 households, and it tends to happen when there are multiple wage earners in the family.

Mac pointed out that the public housing over-income policy described here is different than the Section 8 over-income policy, and that's particularly important as units may transition through Mixed Finance. For the Section 8 program, if a family's income gets to the level that no subsidy is being paid (because 30% of income covers the full rent), there is then a 6-month grace period. If income doesn't drop during that period, though, the family loses the Section 8 permanently.

Janis said that Beacon described something different in terms of being over-income as part of the Camden/Lenox conversions. Gail said that is right—they are assessing all of the Camden (state) residents now, and some have been found over-income (not clear if this was due to tax credits, project based voucher (PBV) admission limits, or DHCD income limits). BHA has made the commitment in redevelopment that no one should lose BHA housing due to the particular redevelopment requirements, and that other BHA housing will be provided.

Mr. Lee asked about the ability to issue mobile vouchers to tenants in project-based voucher (PBV) units. Gloria and Gail confirmed that this still exists, and there is a waiting list of roughly 300 for tenant-based vouchers—but generally BHA is not issuing any tenant-based vouchers except for those on the super-priority transfer list.

2/ **Ad Hoc Committee on Training:** Since John Maloni, who took the notes from this meeting, wasn't available, David Turney spoke on this, but also referred to a discussion that the Budget Committee had. He noted that Bill McGonagle had set aside \$6,000 for the RAB to do an educational piece, and the thought was, rather than spend funds for a limited number of people to go to conferences elsewhere, have the RAB put on a conference for task forces and residents and maximize the benefit to residents. However, it may be that the costs could be higher, particularly factoring in if it was an all-day event with breakfast and lunch provided—and there was an estimate that it could come to \$10,000. The committee will look into getting both sufficient space and speakers/presenters for free or at low cost. Mac suggested that it would be worth seeing if this could be done along with the Resident Empowerment Coalition (REC), since he believed that in the past, certain of the REC summits were co-sponsored by the RAB and may have used some RAB funding, and he didn't believe there was a REC summit this year. Rachel said staff could look into that—there was a different event this year celebrating the end of the Reach grant. Edna, who is the chair of the Ad Hoc Committee (Arlene is co-chair and Robin is secretary), said that the Anna Mae Cole center at Hailey Apartments is a large space and available without cost (and relatively close to the Jackson Square T stop. Georgia asked whether breakfast needed to be provided if there was a cost factor. Topics included public housing & redevelopment; Karen noted that Tenant Etiquette was another topic, and someone else mentioned public housing rights & responsibilities. Edna mentioned that at other national

conferences, issues with RAD, etc., had come up, and it was important to not only do the tours to see what was happening at sites, but also to get into the specific issues/concerns (relocation, tenant protections, rents, etc.) Priscilla suggested that if the issue was addressing resident fears/concerns, one thought would be to invite resident leaders at sites that had undergone redevelopment to share their real life experiences, strategies, etc.; Edna agreed. Mac suggested linking the training/conference with getting people interested/geared up to participate in the RAB elections for 2019. Discussion ran out of time. Committee has set up follow-up meetings, with the next one on 11/19 at 1 p.m. at the Section 8 Tenants, Inc. office at 30 Bickford St.

3/ Committee Reports: For *Policy & Procedures*, there had been no meeting in October. In Rik's absence, Mac suggested that it might make sense to use the Policy & Procedures meeting "slot" for Wed., Nov. 28th at 6 p.m. at Amory Street for a Reading Committee, both for any Policy & Procedures Committee members and anyone else on the RAB who wanted to participate, read the PHA Plan documents, and come up with comments/questions/concerns. It was moved and seconded, and approved by a Board vote to do this. David noted that the Budget Committee had authorized a bit more for regular Policy & Procedures meeting expenses, since they are often in the evening and those in attendance may need some food (pizza) to tie over—roughly \$75 per meeting. Betty, Dave, Cheryl & Arlene volunteered to come to the Reading Committee (in addition to regular Policy & Procedure Committee members); the meeting is open to any RAB members to attend, but wouldn't be for non-RAB members.

Budget: A report was handed out. Concetta asked what the withdrawals were for 10/9 and 10/15, and it was noted that these were cash withdrawals which had been authorized by the Budget Committee. Georgia said it would make sense to have more itemization so it was clear what funds were being used for.

4/ Unfinished/New Business and Announcements:

Secretary Report: Since John Maloni wasn't available, this was tabled. No volunteers for Asst. Secretary position.

Resident Capacity Program Coordinator introductions: Rachel asked that the staff who were newly hired by the BHA to assist with the Resident Empowerment Coalition and resident participation activities introduce themselves—they are Sahar Lawrence and Priscilla Williams. Sahar will be working with family developments, mixed finance, and Section 8 Tenants, Inc.; Priscilla will be working with elderly/disabled developments. People were pleased to see this and John will circulate their emails; a number of meetings are being set up with task forces.

Additional NARSAAH & Mass. Union Conference reports: Concetta reported on participating in a NAR-SAAH workshop on bedbugs, how they thrive/spread and how issues are addressed. There were no other reports.

Adding Additional Section 8 Alternate: Edna asked Philip Askew, who had formerly been on the RAB (and was a former Section 8 chair), if he was interested in joining the RAB as a Section 8 alternate; Philip said after thinking about it, he thought he would wait until the RAB's next election in the summer of 2019.

5. Evaluation: Good, interesting to get into some details, found out things didn't know from BHA's presentation (BHA staff said they learned from resident questions).