

Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 6-14-18, at 125 Amory Street

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

Elderly/Disabled Public Hsg: *Members* Michele McNickles, Eugenia Smith, John Maloni, Marlana Nania, David Turney. *Alternates:* Arthur Alexander (Alt 2), Eddie Hartfield (Alt 3): 7

Section 8: *Members* Edna Willrich, Tara Ruttle, Lerona Diggs, Jung Wing Lee, Stephen Tracey, Yvette Moore. *Alternates:* Anita Morris-Merriman (Alt 2), Therese Browne (Alt 4), Robin Williams (Alt 5), Georgia McEaddy (Alt 6): 10

Absences excused: Betty Carrington, Kassandra Ledesma, Aracelis Tejada (Family); Modesta Ballester, Jeanne Burke Patterson (Elderly/Disabled); Arlette Coleman (Section 8)..

Others: John Kane, BHA; Mac McCreight, GBLs; staff from Mass. Senior Action Council.

The meeting was chaired by Michele McNickles. Robin Williams was Timekeeper; Phyllis Corbitt was Sergeant at Arms. Minutes of prior meeting were approved. Mayor Walsh was not available, so we skipped that part of the agenda.

1/ **Mass. Senior Action Council; Linkage:** Brandon Gibbs and Youssef El Harmani [check spelling] were there from the MSAC staff, at the invitation of Arthur Alexander, who also talked about the group's work (including seniors willing to engage in civil disobedience to accomplish goals, like dramatizing fight against escalating transportation costs). Group began 37 years ago—handout with list of organizing successes, including dental bill that passed last year (dentists must take Mass. Health). Big push on transportation costs & Medicare. 6 out of 10 in MA can't afford health costs. MA 49th in country in what is covered for health care costs for seniors. In 2014, MSAC organized against increased in costs for The Ride, and teamed with young people about their transportation costs—now have legislation that rolled back costs and limits how much they can be increased. MSAC efforts helped get security officers maintained for many of the BHA elderly/disabled sites. Complaint process on transportation has helped bring reforms. Issue now is that those who are on Mass.Health and turn 65 aren't eligible if more than \$12,000 in income or \$2,000 in assets, This means many members pay more for their health insurance than they do for subsidized housing. The pending legislation would require \$40 million from Commonwealth, but \$280 million would then be available from federal program. People were told how they could join organization (\$10/year) and regular monthly chapter meetings.

John Maloni mentioned a hand-out on the table about increases in linkage fees from the Mayor which would provide more funding for affordable housing and job training. \$837 million in construction was generated using linkage funds at 39 developments, and 2300 jobs were generated through training programs.

2/ **Committee Reports:**

Policy & Procedures: Rik was out, and the other Committee members said it was OK for Mac to do report (including in meeting notes). On the committee's recommendation that

reimbursements would happen in a similar time frame to the submission of expense reports (i.e., within 10 days of getting in verified expenses or by next RAB meeting), and that this could cover travel/conferences or other expenses (such as if a committee chair purchased light refreshments for a meeting), a motion was made, seconded & approved to adopt this.

Budget: Concetta reported that there was \$1989.00 in the bank as of May, 2018, and there had been reimbursements applied against this (\$340.06 for Rik's transportation costs, \$66.84 for food for a committee, and \$60.00 in translation), as well as food at the last meeting. It was asked how much the food was at the last meeting, and Concetta said \$375.00. Val said that there had been a limit of \$300.00. There was some discussion about whether it was proper to exceed the cap.

3/Old Business, New Business, Announcements, Etc.:

Secretary Report: Betty provided a handout with updates on attendance and excused absences. There was a question whether any more letters had gone out for those with 3 or more consecutive absences without good cause. Betty wasn't aware of any since the last round of letters; it was agreed this should be reviewed. Tara announced that she would be leaving the Board, since she is moving out of Boston and will no longer be on the BHA Section 8 program, but she may visit. She was thanked for her service.

Follow-up on Board Request on E-mail Use/Policy Generally: Mac noted that at the last RAB Board meeting, it was decided that there should be a joint committee to look into what policy/guidelines should be generally on use of email for RAB-related matters (both in communications among members and with BHA), and he was asked to write up something to start the discussion. This was handed out. BHA has selected a few people to be on this committee. The chairs were recommending that the RAB select 3 people—one from Section 8, one from family public housing, and one from elderly/disabled housing—to assist with this. There was no vote on selection at this meeting (could be carried over to next month's meeting).

Whether Good Cause For Removal of Concetta Paul Related to E-mail: Val made a motion for the Board to send a notice and consider whether there was good cause to remove Concetta Paul as a member (or such other sanction as the Board saw fit) related to an e-mail that was sent to John Kane on April 6, 2018. The email was distributed to the Board members. People asked for the context in which the email occurred. Michele and Val said that the Board had overpaid Mass. Union for its conference, and the question was whether the funds should be refunded to the RAB and then be applied by the RAB toward NARSAH conference costs, or if Jack Cooper from Mass. Union, who is also on NARSAH board, could just arrange for this to be forwarded/applied directly; it was clarified that this was fine with the chairs, and worked out with Mass. Union. John Maloni said his concern was the language—it was not the sort of professional language used in doing business or the relationship the RAB has with BHA. David said he didn't agree with Val, and he thought this was sufficient cause to ask for immediate removal. Anita asked if this was related to not getting proper training as a treasurer, and questioned whether this was a witch hunt; Michele said that there had been training provided for both 1-year officer terms. Val said that her issue was the email and its language; there was no issue about carrying out of treasurer duties; she was appalled when she got the email but didn't know what to do. She didn't think this was a witch hunt, but an issue of unacceptable behavior. Mac pointed out that there had been no second to Val's motion, and Michele noted that people needed to read the email before they could discuss the issue; there was then a second.

In further discussion, Ron noted that in a prior issue of removal, it went to a committee and then nothing happened, and he didn't think this was as bad as the other matter the Board let go. Betty said this was the first she had seen this, and she was appalled. She would like a process to be followed like before, and for a committee to be formed, and would like to hear from Concetta. Mac pointed out that, under the bylaws, the Board first sends a notice and gives the individual an opportunity to request that a committee investigate it. If there is a request, the committee reviews it and reports back to the Board. In the prior removal proposed for David Turney, the committee made a recommendation, but it was up to the Board whether to accept it. In a couple of prior cases with prior RABs, no request for a committee was made by the individuals, and they either resigned or the Board took up the issue at the next meeting. As to David's suggestion of immediate removal, this would be contrary to the bylaws. Meena asked, why was this sent to BHA. Once something is on line, could be universal. What will they think of us as RAB members? This could be seen as threatening. Concetta said she could tell the Board what she would do if they asked; Mac noted this would again not follow the bylaws, which have certain steps. Concetta said that she doesn't like to fight; she believes in karma, let time pass, and people will see where the truth lies.

The motion was adopted by a vote of 12 in favor and 4 abstentions. Members were told that, as occurred the last time with a "good cause" issue, if they thought other issues should be considered than just the April 6th email, they should let Betty as Secretary know within 7 days, and Betty will then get out the notice.

Conference Reports: Therese said she could report from the last conference she attended, or could do her report by email; Michele said to send an email. Arlene reported that she had gone to a presentation on bylaws, and another on use of social media. Message was clear that residents needed to stay vigilant and not compromise on the issue of maintaining affordability.

Evaluation: Good meeting. Ok. Interesting. Disappointed that the Mayor didn't come again. Will miss Tara no longer being with us.