

Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 3-15-18, at 185 W. Ninth Street

Family Public Hsg: *Members* Arlene Carr, Val Shelley, Kassandra Ledesma, Concetta Paul, Aracelis Tejada. *Alternates* Janis McQuarrie (Alt 4), Cheryl Semnack (Alt 10): 7

Elderly/Disabled Public Hsg: *Members* Michele McNickles, Rick Gurney, Eugenia Smith, David Turney, Modesta Ballester, Marlena Nania. *Alternates:* Arthur Alexander (Alt 2): 7

Section 8: *Members* Edna Willrich, Lennox Tillet, Tara Ruttle, Judith Frey, Minnie Jackson, Arlette Coleman. *Alternates:* Karen Stram (Alt 2), Therese Browne (Alt 4), Robin Williams (Alt 5), Georgia McEaddy (Alt 6): 10

Absences excused: Meena Carr, Betty Carrington, Phyllis Corbitt, Betty Rae Wade, Betty Walker, Alyce Lewis, Ron Johnson (Family); Jeanne Burke Patterson, Bettie Cutler, John Maloni, Alex Rosin, Eddie Hartfield (Elderly/Disabled).

Others: John Kane, Joe Bamberg, Dana Dilworth, Rachelly Suriel, BHA; Mac McCreight, GBLs; Chris Johnson (Bellflower)

The meeting was chaired by Val Shelley with assistance from Arlene Carr. Kassandra Ledesma was Timekeeper; Eugenia Smith was Sergeant at Arms. Minutes of prior meeting were approved. Thanks to Rik and Marlena for hosting us at West 9th and all the nice St. Patrick's decorations! Perhaps for other meetings we could visit other locations around the City.

1/ **Real Estate Development:** Joe Bamberg did a presentation on the proposed Demolition/Disposition to HUD for Amory Street. BHA had requested submission of proposals in 2014 for redevelopment of the site in recognition that it needed to obtain more funding than was available through normal public housing operating & capital income to preserve this and other sites. Originally the thought was to renovate (but not displace) the building at 125 Amory Street, leave the PACE/office building at 125A Amory Street alone, and develop 3 new apartment buildings since there is underutilized land here, using the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program. However, when it turned out that capital needs would exceed \$25 million (one estimate is \$40 million), the thought was to see if BHA could have HUD determine the site to be "functionally obsolete" so that it would qualify for tenant protection vouchers under Section 8, which would be significantly more funding than what's available under RAD (which is limited to dollar amount of old public housing funding streams, turned into a project-based subsidy contract). This could then support the kind of construction loan needed. In addition, the new units (which would include market units, as well as "affordable" but not deeply subsidized units) could cross-subsidize the rehab costs for the deeply affordable units (by about \$4 million). BHA would retain control of the land through a ground lease, but it would no longer be public housing nor managed by BHA; The Community Builders would manage 125 Amory Street and 2 of the 3 other buildings (one would be managed by Urban Edge). There would be no net loss of any deeply affordable units (and a small increase as office space was converted to apartments), and rents in those deeply affordable units would remain 30% of income, and adjust to reflect changes in family income. A handout was provided to the RAB showing the layout and what types of units would be in each building. RAD would still be an option if HUD didn't accept the proposal for the tenant protection voucher funding.

There were questions about whether people would park, since the new buildings would be in areas currently used for parking; this has been discussed with residents, and there will be parking spaces in the rear of the property, as well as underground space. There was concern about whether the “affordable” units would really be affordable—Joe acknowledged that the non-deeply affordable units would be low-income housing tax credit eligibility (60% of area median income) or higher as the City guidelines said (up to 70% of area median); some felt this was not right, and the units should be more affordable to those of moderate income. People were told if they had questions or comments to get them in writing to John or Joe within a week’s time (by March 22) and BHA would include in the submission comments received and its response.

2/ State Public Housing Capital Plan and Bond Bill: Dana Dilworth presented to the RAB a revised 4-year capital plan for BHA’s state public housing developments. BHA had a \$5 million reduction last year, and this means that a number of the items that Dana provided to the RAB last year would have to be shifted to later years so that no more than \$2 million was being spent in a year. He noted that the State Legislature is currently considering its state public housing bond bill which would provide \$1.7 billion state-wide, and urged RAB members to get involved in pushing for that (currently pending in the Senate). Arlene asked a question about which buildings at West Broadway would be getting security cameras; Dana said he could get back with the RAB on that.

3/ RAB Budget; Budget Committee: Concetta provided the RAB with a revised budget for the coming fiscal year (April 1, 2018 through March 31, 2019); John confirmed that BHA had approved the overall number (\$46,000), but it was up to the RAB to confirm the specific line-items. Concetta had updated this from what the RAB reviewed last month so that the numbers added up. There was a discussion why there were so few slots for the Mass. Union spring conference (3) and so many for the fall (15); it was pointed out that the fall event was one day and far cheaper (no overnights, etc.) There was some discussion about whether the numbers should be increased for the spring conference, but if this was done, the Board would have to figure out where it was taking money from. For this spring’s conference, the RAB still has unspent money from the budget year ending 3/31/18, and so could send more. It was finally decided to leave the draft budget alone, but as it gets to the spring of 2019, if there is money left over, considering sending more people then. The budget was approved by a majority vote.

There remained some question about whether expenses for RAB food costs in September 2017 were reconciled; it was confirmed that there had been 3 RAB meetings that month where food was ordered (Joint meeting of Policy & Procedures & Budget, regular RAB meeting, and a special meeting about Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing). It was voted to table this while the records were examined further.

4/ Policy and Procedures Committee Report, Including Bylaw Amendments: Rick asked if Mac could present on this, since he had been in and out on the conference call on this. Mac noted that the Committee proposed 3 bylaw amendments—(1) clear up language on which alternates vote; (2) eliminate language about special elections, since not needed; and (3) allow participation by conference call in RAB meetings where members homebound by weather, illness, etc. On the last one, the notes from the Committee reflect that the conference call option would only be when the RAB met in a BHA facility that offered this technology. The Board voted to adopt these three changes.

The Committee also recommended that instead of having to sign the Travel Agreement each time people were approved to attend a RAB-funded event/conference, members/alternates would sign the agreement once on joining the RAB and that would remain binding for the rest of that RAB term. In addition, it was agreed that there would be an orientation packet developed which would be provided to the RAB members/alternates as they joined, laying out these and other policies (such as the rules about per diems) and that when a new event/conference was being considered, people would be given ballpark figures for what costs were involved, so they knew what they might be taking on if they failed to follow through with timely cancellation, etc. (not all events have the same costs). These recommendations were approved by a Board vote.

Finally, the Committee decided that it would start getting into some “policy” issues, both for the BHA and on local/state/federal policies, and will first take on some issues about concerns about tenant participation and memoranda of agreements between BHA and tenant task forces and whether those should be improved. Rick asked as homework that people look at their own MOAs and the BHA’s tenant participation policy and bring concerns to the next Policy & Procedures Committee meeting. Concetta cautioned that it was fine to get into this, but we should be cautious in not being seen as telling any task force what it should be doing.

5/New Business: It was decided, given registration deadlines for the Mass. Union spring conference and availability of funding to spend prior to March 31, that the Board would authorize 9 people to attend the Mass. Union conference. Arlene, Rick, Judith, Concetta, Karen, Cassandra, David, Michele, and Minnie all asked to attend and this was authorized by a Board vote. In addition, it was asked to use the balance of any funds remaining to pre-register for 6 slots for the NARSAAH conference in the fall (as had been done in prior years; this was okayed).

There was a discussion about whether the RAB card could be used for incidentals for those staying in DC for the NLIHC conference. This was identified as an access barrier; some RAB members might not have their own credit cards. (It was clarified that if any members traveling preferred to use a card that they had for incidentals, that was up to them.) If the incidentals were things where the per diem could be used for it (like a meal), then the member could reimburse the RAB card from his/her own per diem; if, on the other hand, there was an incidental expense that wasn’t a permissible per diem expense (like a movie rental), this would be up to the member to reimburse from own funds and not from the per diem. It was noted that the RAB had identified rules on all of this and clear consequences if there was improper spending. The Board voted to authorize this.

The Board voted to shift the meeting date in April from the 2nd Thursday of the month to the first Thursday (April 5th instead of April 12th). Meeting broke up without evaluation since cabs had come.