

## **Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 6-15-17, at 125 Amory Street**

Family Public Housing: *Members* Val Shelley, Kassandra Ledesma, Concetta Paul, Phyllis Corbitt, Betty Rae Wade, Aracelis Tejada, Meena Carr, Arlene Carr. *Alternates* Janis McQuarrie (Alt 4), Pamela Hoyt (Alt 9): 10

Elderly/Disabled Public Housing: *Members* Michele McNickles, Jeanne Burke Patterson, Marlena Nania, John Maloni, Modesta Ballester; *Alternates* David Turney (Alt 1): 6

Section 8: *Members* Edna Willrich, Lennox Tillet, Tara Ruttle, Jung Wing Lee, Judith Frey, Minnie Jackson, Lorena Diggs, Stephen Tracey; *Alternates*: Arlette Coleman (Alt 1). Karen Stram (Alt \*), Anita Morris Merriman (Alt \*): 11

### Absences excused:

Others: John Kane, Vivian Lee, Randi Holland, Wilbur Commodore, BHA; Mac McCreight, GBLs; Arthur Alexander (Franklin Field), Ethel Hall (Section 8), Georgia McEaddy (?) (Section 8), translator, names of ITOA & Police.

The meeting was chaired by Val Shelley; Michele McNickles was Timekeeper and Pamela Hoyt was Sergeant at Arms. Minutes of prior meeting were approved.

**1/Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing**: Wilbur Commodore provided the RAB with binders with Draft #1 of the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH). It is incomplete in not including the specific contributing factors to fair housing barriers nor the City's and BHA's five-year goals for addressing such barriers—it is intended that these will come out of the multiple community based sessions (such as those which already took place in Roxbury and Mattapan and are slated for additional communities) and feedback on the draft during the public hearing and comment process. There will be a public hearing on Tuesday, June 21st at the Anna Mae Cole Center at the Hailey Apartments in Jamaica Plain (6-8 p.m.) and BHA will take comments up until July 27th on this first draft. There will then be a 2nd draft issued in August, and another round of public review, and a final submission to HUD in October. (There were handouts about timelines, and dates for meetings and community sessions.)

BHA had to use a revised data set (HUD said that the data presented earlier was the wrong set, and this is the “first take” on that data. The binder includes in the appendix a number of maps, charts, and a list of contributing factors. However, BHA/City and the public may have a different take on that, or think there are other factors. For example, in the area of environmental factors, HUD just lists air quality. But people thought lead paint, asthma, and high blood pressure could also be factors. In looking at the data, you'd want to focus on where things were disproportionate—for example, if a particular group made up x percentage of the city's low-income population, but was a different percentage of the BHA's occupancy, why was that? Also look at where do people live. It is clear that segregation is prominent in the City for both Blacks and Hispanics, and this overlaps with economically concentrated low-income communities. People were asked to think about what impact the contributing factors have on where people choose to or are able to live and on their lives? What impact on opportunities? For example, Boston's school proficiency score for those age 4 is 25 out of 100; in suburban communities, it's 50. While colleges might have policies to attract a diverse population, that won't help if school

factors mean that Boston’s children disproportionately can’t get in. Because time was limited, RAB members were asked to forward questions to John/Wilbur who would get responses.

2/ **MOU Affecting BHA Capital Work**: Randi from the BHA’s Capital Construction division noted that the HUD Inspector General had raised concerns, not just in Boston, about how HUD had been conducting environmental reviews in the approval of capital funds, and in particular found that the wrong process had been used in soliciting feedback on issues of historic preservation. BHA has a number of sites (such as the Barkley Apartments) which are located in historic districts. It was found that this was an issue for FY 2011-2014, as well as the ARRA (“stimulus”) grant, affecting \$61 million in funding (the reviews were done properly from 2015 on). To address this, HUD, BHA, and the City entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) about how consultation with the Mass. State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the Boston Landmarks Commission, and other professionals on compliance with the principles identified in the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation’s policy statement on Affordable Housing and Historic Preservation, and training materials will be developed designed for a lay audience. RAB will be informed of the right to comment on current and future projects under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Randi provided the MOU and a handout which showed the work done in the particular years at each site and what sites either had or adjoined areas with historic preservation status. There were some comments that, for example, cameras weren’t installed at certain sites, and Randi said in some places, it may have been the wiring. Here again, there was limited time, and members were asked to pass on to John additional questions they might have.

3/ **Taxi Arrangements (ITOA)**: Senior staff from the Independent Taxi Operators Assn. (Joe Litvak, Treasurer, and Larry Meister, President), along with the account representative Cheryl Washington, attended, along with Officer Lima from the Boston Police Department’s Hackney Division. Joe apologized and said that certain things had been done improperly and will be addressed: (a) if there were multiple people on a ride, there should just be payment with one voucher—where overcharging can be verified, there will be refunds; (b) Ms. Washington will be specially assigned to stay later on the days of RAB meetings to help ensure that there are arrangements – call 617-426-8277 or 617-449-8807 or Joe Litvack 617-331-5936 (but calling earlier helps, please call before 2 pm and can reserve for getting to the meeting and getting home can reserve cab for just after 8 pm; (c) while it might not be possible to get every driver at every instance to take a voucher (some are ending their shifts or just starting and need actual cash for gas, etc.), Cheryl would make sure to get drivers who will take vouchers. A number of questions were fielded. Officer Lima stressed that the customer is always right, and people should feel free to call his officer if there are concerns—drivers are in a difficult situation too, and the City wants to make this work.

#### **4/ Committee Reports**

*a. Policy & Procedures—Bylaw Amendments*: Mac reported that because of insufficient quorum, there was no Committee meeting at St. Botolph last month (we couldn’t get the Amory space at the normal time). It was decided to simply send draft bylaw amendments to the Board in advance and do the vote directly. The first set of bylaws concerned officer elections, and is timely because of those elections in July. It proposed to substitute the term “assistant officers” for “alternate officers” (i.e., assistant chair, assistant secretary, assistant treasurer), since the other term was confusing. It also clarified (as had been past practice, but was unclear in the

bylaws), that alternates as well as members were eligible to run for the assistant officer positions. This was unanimously adopted. The other bylaw amendments went with the Travel Policy that was adopted by the Board a few months ago, and folded into the bylaws additional officer responsibilities related to travel/conferences, formalized the Budget Committee's structure, and folded in the Travel Policy provisions that would be appropriate for the bylaws. It was clarified that while the Budget Committee could make recommendations about expenditures, etc., everything was subject to Board approval. These changes were also adopted unanimously.

*b. Budget Committee:* Concetta reported that there had been little activity on the account, and the balance was \$14,526. ITOA issues were addressed earlier in the meeting. The Committee members were asked to read through minutes to remind themselves about what had and hadn't been adopted as past practices so there could be consistent action on expenditures (for example, what the policy is for paying for flowers if a former member/alternate passed away); that was still in process.

*c. Secretary Report:* This was moved to this section. John M. reported that Merle had been absent 2 consecutive times without excuse, and had 4 absences, and the question arose if she should be sent a letter. (The bylaws provide for a letter to be sent for removal after three unexcused consecutive absences, with an opportunity for the member to respond to the letter before there is removal.) Betty Walker also had absences. For Betty Carrington, Val indicated that 2 absences were excused, and she had requested a 3 month leave of absence. Minnie Jackson had 4 absences (was here tonight); Yvette Moore had 3 absences. More detail is needed to know when/whether letters should be sent. For Ron Johnson, he had requested a six month leave of absence, and leaves are to be done in 3 month increments; however, Ron is an alternate, so minimum attendance requirements do not apply.

## **5/ Unfinished/New Business, Announcements, etc.:**

*a. City Life/Vida Urbana--Work with Residents of Advanced Property Management; HUD Cuts:* Steve Meacham reminded the Board of its past decision to assist residents at APM to try to get the owner to agree to not increase rents beyond the Section 8 payment standard. There had been a commitment to doing some kind of press conference/event to dramatize the issue. It was agreed to do this on Saturday, June 24th at 10 a.m. at 480 Norfolk St., in Dorchester, where one of the BHA Section 8 affected residents lives. Steve also said there was a rally slated to have a bus go to Washington DC to push back on proposed HUD cuts, and the date would be Wednesday July 12th (go down overnight and come back the next evening. About 5 people expressed interest.

*b. Issue with Conferences, Travel Costs, and Per Diems:* An issue arose about reimbursement of mileage for those who drove to the Mass. Union conference, since there were other attendees who used their per diem to pay for train/bus and local taxis to get from train/bus to the location. It was pointed out that as part of the Travel Policy, as well as earlier votes on reimbursements, the Board had authorized coverage/reimbursement of travel/mileage for those approved to attend a local conference with RAB funding, and had separately voted for per diems and to scrap the prior system of keeping receipts and return any portion of the per diem that wasn't used (as long as the person attended the conference). For this particular

conference, though, there were no additional costs other than transportation (no meals that had to be paid for). After some debate, it was voted (17 for, 4 abstained) to authorize reimbursement to any who had travel expenses, in addition to the per diem, for that event, but that Policy & Procedures would meet to come up with additional recommendations for Board consideration on this issue.

*c. NARSAAH Attendance:* It was decided that it would make sense to pick those attending NARSAAH in Baltimore from Sept. 20-24, since otherwise there might be the danger that arrangements couldn't be made. Eight individuals requested to attend, and it was noted that the Board had previously limited this to six (2 for each constituency). The Travel Policy provides principles for selecting if more people wish to attend than there are slots, including reaching those who didn't attend a prior national or local conference with RAB funding during the current RAB term before those who did attend such a conference and a preference for RAB members over alternates if all else is equal.

For Family Public Housing, Phyllis, Arlene, and Pamela all requested to go. Phyllis and Arlene attended NARSAAH last year, but not with RAB funding. Since Pamela is an alternate, Phyllis and Arlene were selected, and Pamela would be the Back-up Traveler.

For Elderly/Disabled Public Housing, Michele, John, and David volunteered. All attended last year with RAB funding. David, however, is an alternate. (While he would move up to an alternate position if a current non-attending member is removed, that hasn't happened yet.) John and Michele would go and David is the Back-up Traveler.

For Section 8, Lennox and Anita volunteered. There was no Back-up Traveler.

The meeting adjourned by motion without an evaluation (cabs were waiting).