

Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 5-10-18, at 125 Amory Street

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

Elderly/Disabled Public Hsg: *Members* Michele McNickles, Rick Gurney, Eugenia Smith, John Maloni, Jeanne Burke Patterson, David Turney, Modesta Ballester. *Alternates:* Alex Rosin (Alt 1), Arthur Alexander (Alt 2), Eddie Hartfield (Alt *): 10

Section 8: *Members* Edna Willrich, Lennox Tillet, Tara Ruttle, Judith Frey, Minnie Jackson, Lerona Diggs, Jung Wing Lee, Stephen Tracey, Arlette Coleman. *Alternates:* Karen Stram (Alt 2), Therese Browne (Alt 4), Robin Williams (Alt 5), Georgia McEaddy (Alt 6): 13

Absences excused: (Family); Marlena Nania (Elderly/Disabled); *** (Section 8)..

Others: John Kane, BHA; Mac McCreight, GBLs; Ethel Hall (Section 8)

The meeting was chaired by Edna Willrich. Tara Ruttle was Timekeeper; Phyllis Corbitt was Sergeant at Arms. Minutes of prior meeting (in March—there was no April meeting) were approved.

1/ **Executive Session:** The Board voted to have an Executive Session to air certain issues internal to the RAB; Mac asked if this meant that he, John, and Ms. Hall (the three persons in the room not RAB members, alternates, or translating) should leave, and the chair said no, they should stay.

A, *Computer Absence from RAB Office and Hooking Back Up:* Robin noted that the computer had been missing from the RAB office from 10/17 until 2/18, and it wasn't hooked up (she brought pictures). Rik asked if no one had used the computer in the RAB office for RAB business since 2/18 (no answer). John M. and Ron each offered to try to hook the computer back up (it was clarified that BHA could not do this, as it was not BHA property, and Ron is to go on 5/15 to see if he can make it work. Jeanne made a motion, which was seconded, that she'd like to know who removed the computer and why, since no was volunteering that information. Val reminded people that this had been discussed at a prior meeting, that Concetta had removed the computer (related to the prior issue with David and the computer); Concetta said she sent out an email on this as well. Mr. Lee noted that the RAB office door is locked and you can only get in through a BHA staff person (and there's a record of who signs in and out). Mac asked whether, in light of Val's and Concetta's statements, the motion should be withdrawn; it was.

B. *Bank Card:* Michele noted that the bank card had been available to the chairs and was particularly of importance in the rotation of food ordering for RAB meetings. However, there had been an issue and as a result, the chairs' card was frozen by the treasurer. The chairs were advised by the treasurer that although the decision to freeze the card didn't go through the Board, any action to reauthorize/release the card again for chairs' use needed to go through the Board. She didn't think this was consistent, and it meant the chairs couldn't order the food (food for meeting tonight was ordered by the treasurer. Lennox asked that in commenting on issues like this, people should use the titles of the people involved (chair, treasurer), rather than first names

or “she”. Edna said that Michele had corrected herself. Rik noted that committee chairs also order food for committee meetings. Therese noted that the freeze on the card was related to an inability to fully account for the food expenditures and to tie them to particular RAB meetings. Val noted that this was settled at a prior meeting—they figured out that in one month, there actually had been 3 RAB meetings (an extra one with Wilbur Commodore about fair housing) where food ordered. Concetta agreed that the discrepancy was now resolved. John M. moved and it was seconded that the Board reauthorize issuance of the bank card with the chairs on it and also the committee chairs. Concetta noted that there were only two more meetings until new officer elections (at July meeting), and it was possible officer positions would change—which would argue in favor of waiting until then. It was clarified that the committee chairs are not on the bank card, and John agreed to revise his motion accordingly. **Rik moved (and it was seconded) to table the reauthorization until the July elections, with the Treasurer continuing to order the food until then. This was adopted by a vote of 16 in favor, 3 opposed, and 5 abstentions.**

3. *Taxi Vouchers*: Georgia said that she had an issue with the report about use of taxi vouchers, and in particular it appeared that a “90” was actually a “40”. Concetta said she had gotten additional material to Georgia to review. Georgia said that people needed to be careful with their use of words.

4. *Sign off on Expenditures; Use of Cash Versus Checks*: David noted that there was a MOU with the BHA that required certain types of accounting on expenditures—for example, if an expense was for less than \$1,000, there would be a check signed by 2 persons (treasurer/chairs); if above \$1000, 3 had to sign. However, recently for the Mass. Union conference, cash in advance was given to attendees for their per diems, rather than checks, contrary to the MOU. Concetta apologized for this. [There was then an exchange of words that should likely be looked into by the BHA’s Office of Civil Rights from the tape.]

2/ **Conference Reports**: There were reports from those who attended the National Low Income Housing Coalition conference in Washington and the Mass. Union conference in Norwood [Robin Williams left the meeting, so did not get her report on Washington trip].

Washington: Rik said the accommodations, food & flight were good, but he found much of the rhetoric repetitive from prior conferences. He did like what was presented from New Orleans/Chicago about building economic opportunities, as well as the featured speaker. Janis said she found the meeting fascinating and informative, with sessions on resident leadership, resident management, creating Section 3 jobs, the “war on helplessness” and resident empowerment (people doing a radio show about who lives in public housing), public/private partnerships in DC, Diane Yentel’s presentation about how the tax bill will make it challenging to use Tax Credits to help support public housing redevelopment, Richard Rothstein’s book “The Color of Law” and the whole history of segregation in the development of assisted housing,. There was also a presentation on issues for LGBT residents in assisted housing, and a book about Cabrini Green. On lobby day, the snowfall was a challenge, but joined with those there from Castle Square and Mass. Alliance of HUD Tenants to talk with staff for Congress members Moulton, Capuano, Kennedy, and Clark.

Mass. Union: Karen said 4 people from the conference agreed to help her, where there are 150 people in her expiring use complex facing loss of protections. David and Minnie both mentioned

the workshop on medical insurance as informative. Arlene said she had been preoccupied because of Meena's medical emergency, and didn't have her notes, but could share with Board. Therese said that she went to the bylaws & working with tenant organization presentations, which someone from GBLs did. She noted again the concern that there was no substantive discussion of Section 8 issues.

3/ Policy & Procedures Committee (including Bylaw Amendment): Rik noted that the committee had met twice since last RAB meeting, and the notes discussed the Orientation Packet, and the Section 8 rent increase policy. He noted that the "contact sheets" issue was more an issue about "flaming"—i.e., how people used email. Mac noted that after the meeting he had looked back at past RAB notes, and while the Board had included bylaw provisions about disrespectful communications at RAB meetings, they had left for further discussions with BHA about email because of First Amendment issues. Val said that the chairs had discussed this, and thought it would make sense for Mac to write up something about options in this area (to balance 1st Amendment concerns with the proper operations of the RAB). The question was, who should Mac report back to? Her suggestion was, rather than the chairs, it should be a committee which included some RAB members and some BHA members. **This was moved & seconded, and was adopted by the Board.**

Rik noted that there was also a proposal for a bylaw amendment to address issues like occurred during the Washington trip, and giving a majority of the chairs the ability to authorize emergency expenditures where it wasn't possible to wait for a RAB meeting (with a report back to the Board afterwards. John K. had suggested that the language be broader than just conferences, so that other unforeseen emergencies (like food purchases if a vendor fell through) could be done. **This was moved, seconded, and adopted by the Board.**

People were identified to follow up on groups that were helping to organize tenant campaigns, with the recognition that different people might have different interests/skills. An issue about timely reimbursement (where RAB members had to advance an expense) was tabled by Policy & Procedures for its next meeting (since it wasn't on the agenda and the Travel Policy wasn't available). On tenant participation, Mac noted that he was working on a memo for the Committee, but BHA has also indicated that it is revising its Tenant Participation Policy because of state regulation changes, so this may be a drawn out process. There was also a report on the issue of accessibility, particular as to height of toilets, grab bars, etc., as there are replacements, with both John looking into some procurement issues and the need to consult with Doug Wilcox, BHA's reasonable accommodation coordinator, on what is required by accessibility law. The committee wasn't sure if the Board would want the meeting with Doug to be with the full Board or just the Committee. **It was moved, seconded, and approved that this meeting with Doug would be with the Committee.**

4/ Budget Committee: Concetta noted that there was roughly \$2,000 left in the budget from the prior period, and normally the RAB could ask for the first installment (roughly \$10,000) for the new fiscal year—but people might want to wait until after the officer elections in July. In response to questions from the Board, it was clarified that there should be enough money in the budget to cover the necessary expenses for the June-July meetings (food, taxi, translation) and no other significant expenses were anticipated. **It was moved, seconded, and approved to hold off on pursuing the release of the new funds from BHA until after the July officer elections.**

Concetta also indicated that various people had turned in their paperwork or returned per diems after conferences, and should be considered in good standing—Rik, Robin, Janis, Judith, Concetta, Eddie, Dave, John M., Minnie, Eugenia. Karen said she'd get her paperwork in.

Phyllis noted an expense related to the death of a family member of a RAB member/alternate, and whether this was covered in bylaws. Mac noted that the bylaws were silent on this, and it was more a question of what the Board had approved in past minutes. Val noted that the past practice had extended to both RAB members/alternate and members of their immediate family (like flowers—didn't know about the specific item) [I have a note here: DT—expenses—March board—but I'm not sure what David said about expenses, can no longer recall, and possibly this can be deleted.]

5/ **Outreach:** John M. thought it was important to reach out to the various BHA buildings, and would volunteer for this. Michele said that Arthur had spoken with Mass. Senior Action Council, and should be able to confirm that they can come to the June board meeting. She also spoke with Mayor Walsh at the event at Old Colony this week, and he said he would come to the June meeting.

Evaluation: Some said good meeting, others were neutral or passed, or said that the Board talked about the same things it had in the past. Several people said they were disappointed (without elaborating on their disappointment). Someone said it was time to refresh the Board on the use of Robert's Rules. Several said they thought Janis' summary of what she learned at the Washington conference was great.