

## Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 2-20-14

Chaired by Frank Christmas (with assistance from Betty Carrington), Edna Willrich, Timekeeper. Phyllis Corbitt, Sergeant at Arms. Minutes from prior meeting accepted

### *Attendance:*

Family Public Housing: Phyllis Corbitt, Betty Carrington, Donna Criel, Meena Carr, Arlene Carr, Betty Raye-Wade, Pat Santos, Valerie Shelley, Concetta Paul [*Good cause absences: Emmaneula Cadet, Safia Mohamed, Loretta Bell-Lewis, Ron Johnson*]

Elderly/Disabled Public Housing: Frank Christmas, Dave Turney, Marlene Nania. Red Cunningham, Eddie Hartfield [*Good cause absences: Jeanne Burke Patterson (medical leave)*]

Section 8: Edna Willrich, Jung Wing Lee, Alice Fonseca, Deborah Duffy, Therese Browne, Tara Ruttle [*Good cause absences: Robin Williams, Philisbert Andrew, Charles Mulvey, Elizabeth Foundas*]

Others: John Kane, Edna Carrasco, Bill McGonagle, Gail Livingston, Gloria Meneses, Vivian Lee, BHA; Mac McCreight, GBL; Maximo Vasquez, CBPH;

### **1/Proposed Amendment to ACOP (Priority for Victims of Domestic Violence)**

BHA Administrator Bill McGonagle said he had intended to speak with the RAB first about this, but because we had to reschedule due to weather, the notices have gone out. Due to full occupancy (98.6%--something which has been steady since 11/13, and is something to be proud of), as well as the Section 8 freezes (which hopefully will be lifted soon), there are very few options for domestic violence victims. The proposal is to shift these to Administrative Transfers so they can be done more quickly; it is a substantial amendment to the public housing Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP). There are public hearings on March 19 and written comments will be taken up to April 3, and BHA is interested in knowing what the RAB, residents, and the public think.

Bill said that a broader dilemma, though, is what BHA can realistically do given its limited resources. There are 34,700 on the public housing waiting list, with 13,000 units. Whole question of what are realistic expectations. Valerie said she had heard that at Mandela Homes, the market units were being bought up and the development would be tax credit. Bill clarified that Mandea was not a BHA development. There was a whole discussion about how "affordable housing" is defined, and that many cannot afford it. Bill said he had met recently with Michael Curry, head of the Boston NAACP, and discussed gentrification. Donna agreed that gentrification was a huge issue.

Concetta asked, wasn't there the model in the past about public housing being transitional in nature, and could BHA do more to help with self-sufficiency so people can move out, or rent-to-

own arrangements. Bill said BHA had done work in the area, but you needed to be realistic about the lack of affordable housing and where would people go. Tara asked about how developers were paying into the City's trust fund rather than having affordable housing within their developers, and is there a way to force the developers to have affordable housing. Bill thought this was possible, and noted that there was a whole audit pending about the BRA trust funds and what money was there.

David asked what impact the prioritizing of domestic violence transfers would have, and asked what had happened with BHA's proposal from a year ago to give higher preference to Boston residents. Bill noted that giving super-priority to domestic violence transfers would mean that other transfers would have to wait longer. He noted that BHA does give points for Boston preference; Gloria noted that there was the issue raised by homeless advocates about those who were in shelter in the Boston area but whose last residence prior to shelter might have been in Woburn, for example. Betty C. said she didn't question homeless preference, but there were reports that people are coming from out of state who are not homeless and getting "free housing" before MA residents; Bill said that wasn't the case for BHA.

Betty C. also asked about the benefits of the mixed income model at Harbor Point, and you couldn't distinguish between the units there that low-income and market tenants occupy, and why couldn't all BHA housing be of that quality. Bill said it was a question of money--\$200 million went into Harbor Point, and 1100 public housing units were lost, but 400 units were being retained. He said Harbor Point was a major focus of the conversation with Michael Curry.

## **2/ RAB Budget for April 2014-March 2015**

David presented a draft budget to the RAB for approval. Mr. Lee and Phyllis had assisted him in developing it. It provides for level funding (slightly less than last year's budget). NLIHC budgeted expenses were higher by \$4,000 due to increase hotel & airfare. Mass. Union & CHAPA conferences were the same (and had been valuable smaller conferences). Food costs were slightly higher (reflecting what caterers had done), but budget for food for Policy & Procedures committee had been cut in half. Transportation, interpreter, and member support expenses (such as coverage for a PCA or childcare) were left at same levels; education & training interpreter and refreshment costs were reduced, and RAB office operating expenses were reduced. Postage and printing expenses were retained (those had been valuable in helping out the Save Our Section 8 campaign at the end of last year). David noted that an unknown is whether there will be another NARSA conference this year (location likely Atlanta); it had been valuable last year. Could be possible to reduce NLIHC allocation in early 2015 if this happens. The budget was approved by a Board vote.

## **3/ National Low Income Housing Coalition Conference in April**

The following people were approved to attend the event in DC in April: Family public housing: Phyllis, Valerie, and Betty C.; Elderly/Disabled public housing: David, Eddie, and Frank; Section 8: Mr. Lee, Edna, and Therese. Deborah will be an alternate if someone drops out.

There was an executive session at which several letters were discussed (one proposing the RAB for the NLIHC Regional Organizing Award, and one to President Obama asking to meet with him during the NLIHC conference and Lobby Day period). After the executive session, the Board went back into open session. There was some confusion about whether both letters had in fact gone out, and if not, there was discussion about whether the letter to President Obama could use some polishing. It was clarified that the letters had in fact gone out, and discussion ended.

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

Policy and Procedures: Did not meet.

Outreach: David reported that there had been an event at Columbus Avenue, attended by a number of Board members/alternates, and another meeting is set at Villa Victoria/Torre Unidad in 2 weeks. There will be an event at Commonwealth next week which BettyR-W is pulling together. Charlestown would like outreach. The Outreach Committee will also be coordinating with the person doing the survey of elder needs and go to developments with her.

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

Bylaw Amendment: Mac summarized the bylaw amendment which had gone out in the mailing (and had been preliminarily voted on last month), to permanently extend the RAB's term to 3 years (instead of the existing system which was for a 2-year term, which could be extended for 3 years). Eddie asked for an explanation why the change was being done; Mac noted that for the past 3 RABs, the Board had always extended the term, and people thought it made sense to just go to a 3-year term and let people know this when they run in the RAB elections. John asked if there was an option to extend to a 4<sup>th</sup> year; Mac noted that this hadn't been floated in last month's discussion, and might cause problems in that HUD requirements for comparable LTO elections have a maximum 3-year term. The Board voted to approve this amendment (one abstention).

CHAPA Lobby Day: A number of RAB members attended the Lobby Day conducted at the State House by the Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), and David and Deborah did reports. It was well coordinated and people were teamed up with others to visit their legislators. The evaluation forms were a good template and could perhaps be a model for other lobbying. It was good to lead with thanking legislators for past support and then emphasize

priorities on public housing spending, leased housing, homelessness, and Brownfields (restoring land to use for housing).

Invitation to Mayor Walsh: Betty C. mentioned that she had invited Mayor Walsh to attend a RAB meeting (this month it didn't work out due to the snowstorm), and this could be March's meeting. Valerie recommended planning an agenda for meeting with him, and Mac noted how this intersected with some of the work of the Save Our Section 8 Committee (which had met earlier in the afternoon but wasn't aware of this invitation).

Mass. Union Spring conference: John mentioned that the Mass. Union spring conference is coming up; it's around the same time as the NLIHC conference, and it would be wise to find out which RAB members wanted to attend. One Section 8 member (Alice) and four family public housing members/alternates (Arlene, Betty R-W, Pat, and Concetta) were interested and were approved by the Board to attend.

Personal Privilege: Frank spoke of going through a recent scary experience with his health, and that all is well, and he's grateful and thanks others for their support.

## **6/ Evaluation**

Positives: Good steps on rules/regs. Enlightening. Good presentation on the RAB budget. Good report on CHAPA Lobbying Day and possible model for future work.

Needs Improvement: Confusion/miscommunications about the letters, and departed from the usual rule that correspondence not go out without a prior Board vote. Discussion was out of control at times. Need the criteria about what qualifies for domestic violence, and we should have a Boston residency preference. A little confusion on who was chairing. Better if not in close quarters.