

Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 3-13-14

Chaired by Betty Carrington; Edna Willrich, Timekeeper; Clarence Ware, Sergeant at Arms. Minutes from prior meeting accepted (with revision showing that Elizabeth Foundas had “good cause” for absence).

Attendance:

Family Public Housing: Phyllis Corbitt, Betty Carrington, Meena Carr, Arlene Carr, Betty Raye-Wade, Pat Santos, Valerie Shelley, Concetta Paul, Safia Mohamed, Ron Johnson [*Good cause absences: Donna Criel, Joan X. Porter, Emanuella Cadet, Loretta Bell-Lewis (medical leave)*]

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

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

Others: John Kane, Rachel Goodman, Vivian Lee, BHA; Mac McCreight, GBLS; Georgina Sanchez, Resident Corps (and Lenox resident),***, MSAC; ***.

1/BHA’s New Center for Community Engagement and Civil Rights

This is a new Center at the BHA, and there were presentations from several people.

Resident Corps and Resident Empowerment Coalition: Georgina presented a work plan for what the Resident Empowerment Coalition and the Resident Corps hope to achieve in the next year in helping to build and support resident organizations and engagement. There is a survey to find out about training needs (including how Boards work together & handling budgets) 5 new developments will be helped with elections and getting Boards in place in this year—Archdale, Orient Heights, Fairmount, Bellflower, and Peabody/Englewood. There is planning for another Legislative Summit this year. Therese, who is also on the Corps (as well as a RAB member) talked about working with Bellflower residents. Concetta (who is on the Coalition and Boston Resident Training Institute, as well as a RAB member) spoke about setting up a training of managers so that they are more knowledgeable about tenant participation and appropriate ways to work with residents.. There will be a Power Point, including the “good standing” issue about ability to run for Local Tenant Organization (LTO) Boards. Mac suggested it would make sense to also include in the workplan issues about the Grievance Procedure, both as a follow up for Mixed Finance sites as well as to insure management staff know what to do (example this week where West Broadway staff said no grievance form available).

Vivian Lee: Vivian presented a Power Point (also a handout) about how the Center will operate within the BHA structure and its goals to coordinate BHA work in four areas: resident engagement, language access, civil rights compliance, and employment and services opportunities for residents. The focus is really on building communities and opportunities.

Rachel Goodman: Rachel presented a brief update on Building Pathways progress to date (as well as future rounds expected this year). Another handout encouraged residents to take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) campaign centers to obtain tax refunds and tax help for free. (Arlene was featured in the press about EITC.). Finally, there is a brand new State initiative where the BHA is putting in an application for the Learning Employment & Asset Program (LEAP), targeted to state public housing and Mass. Rental Voucher Program tenants. Around 1000 BHA households would be eligible (those where there is at least one minor in the household, lease compliant, committed to building income & assets, has at least high school diploma or GED, and recent work experience or actively engaged in post-secondary education/job training). These households could set up an escrow account where up to \$15,000 in savings from increased income could be set aside to achieve goals. Service providers would help with employment and career planning, financial literacy & asset growth, and post-secondary training. DHCD is giving out 4-8 grants statewide, and BHA's goal would be to be awarded money, enter into a 3-year- contract with the families, and if there's good progress, extend it for up to 2 more years. Participation would be voluntary, and families couldn't lose their housing or assistance if they were not successful. Rachel said a survey will be going to roughly 1000 BHA state public housing tenants and MRVP participants in conjunction with the application to DHCD, and they would also be looking for a letter of support from the RAB.

2/ Committee Reports

Budget: David provided a summary, but noted that all of the bills weren't in. He indicated that while this says \$9,400 is left (to 4/1), it's closer to \$7,000, and this is far better than the RAB was last year).

Outreach: Betty W. reported on the outreach event at Commonwealth in Brighton, attended by 50-60 residents on a cold night, with assistance from David, Concetta, Edna W., and where Bill McGonagle and State Rep. Kevin Honan spoke about federal and state funding. Mac and Concetta helped facilitate resident questions.

Policy and Procedures: Concetta presented the report, and said they were reviewing the questions that would go to Mayor Walsh when he can meet with the RAB. The questions

seemed good, and may be supplemented with one about the soft-second program (that MAHA administers for those trying to become homeowners).

3/ Unfinished Business/New Business, Announcements, etc.

The Board acknowledged Mac's help, and presented him with a Chelsea Clock.

A meeting will be held for those going to the **NLIHC conference** to plan out how best to use the time in DC, how things will be covered, etc.

Mac noted that Congress made a change in the budget in Jan. 2014 which will require BHA to change its "**flat rent**" option for federal public housing tenants. Right now, BHA's flat rent is 70% of the Section 8 Fair Market Rent (FMR). Congress said nationwide it has to go to at least 80% of FMR. This is to be done by the end of June, but PHAs are to phase in any increases. This doesn't affect many public housing residents (since most tenants' rents at 30% of income—it's only when the flat rent would be LOWER than that). But last time there was a significant increase, it was a big concern. BHA will likely have to go through some kind of PHA Plan amendment on this.

John reminded the Board that there will be public hearings on Wed. March 19th at 11 a.m. at Amory Street and at 6 p.m. at the Copley Branch of the Public Library on the **Annual Plan amendment regarding shifting domestic violence related transfers** to the Administrative Transfer category (a higher priority than the current Emergency Transfer category). Bill gave information about this at last month's meeting. Written comments on the proposal will also be taken up through April 3rd.

Concetta asked if it would make sense to work on the **RAB website** to get good information there. Since this came up toward the end of the meeting, it was agreed it should be tabled and on a future agenda.

4/ Evaluation

Positives: Good meeting, good chairing, very useful information, great topics, everyone was involved.

Needs Improvement: None.