

## Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 4-10-14

Chaired by Edna Willrich; Phyllis Corbitt, Timekeeper; Concetta Paul, Sergeant at Arms. Minutes from prior meeting accepted (with revision showing that Donna Criel 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, Joan X. Porter, Donna Criel [*Good cause absence: Loretta Bell-Lewis (medical leave), Ron Johnson*]

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

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

Others: John Kane, Rachel Goodman, Lydia Agro, Courtney Curran, BHA; Mac McCreight, GBLS; Nancy Figueroa, CBPH.

### **1/Monitoring Committee; Mayor**

Lydia stated that the BHA had submitted names to the Mayor of nominees for the public housing and Section 8 members of the Monitoring Committee on April 9, and hoped to hear by later this month which selections he’s made. The Mayor also has to select 3 community members who are subject to City Council approval. She handed around the legislation and explained what the role was of the Committee, as well as the revisions made by the Legislature which will help to make sure that the Committee can continue to function past each City Council election. A question was raised as to how vacancies would be filled; Lydia said the legislation was not clear on this (other than the Mayor would have to appoint the replacement), but this could be one of the issues the Monitoring Committee could discuss. In addition, the legislation gives the City the ability to stagger or extend terms by ordinance, rather than having to go back to the State House for approval. The Committee is to meet at least quarterly, but in the past met more often, and meetings are open to the public and meeting dates are posted at the BHA.

Lydia mentioned that there was still an effort to get the Mayor to a future RAB meeting, and BHA’s currently thinking about the June meeting—stay tuned.

### **2/ Making Connections Update**

Courtney said that based on feedback BHA had received from the RAB, as well as from meetings with several elderly/disabled task forces and Mass. Senior Action Council (MSAC), they had revised the survey—it’s shorter(17 questions), less detailed, and more open-ended. At the end of the survey, residents can indicate if they wish to be referred for follow-up services. The program has also done a

90-minute volunteer orientation training with Friendship Works, involving 60 volunteers, orienting them about BHA developments, what to expect, how best to get responses, etc. Thank you bags were also prepared for those participating in the survey with flyers from various elder service providers as well as chapsticks, lights, magnets, etc. She provided the revised questionnaire as well as the schedule for which sites had already been covered and the schedule to go to remaining elderly/disabled sites. The Mayor kicked this off at Torre Unidad in February, 13 sites have been done already, and a 30% response rate, with 437 surveys—of these, 134 had asked for follow-up services through the Elderly Commission. 2 staff had been hired by the Elderly Commission to follow up.

Some concerns were raised about some of the questions (on whether the resident had budgeting concerns, as well as amount of income where follow-up services were sought) and confidentiality. Rachel explained that the income information would help to figure out what services residents would be eligible for, and had been suggested by MSAC. Others were concerned either that this was duplication of information BHA should already have, and/or that there wouldn't be people to help out with follow up (since the resident service coordinators were let go last year). There were concerns about whether other residents could exploit a vulnerable tenant after getting highly private information. Courtney explained that so far, no residents have volunteered to help with the survey (those who participate are CORI'd), and given the concerns, they would be careful if residents did volunteer (a suggestion was made that if there were resident volunteers, they should do this at sites OTHER than their own). Referral information will only be shared with the Elderly Commission.

Others asked if this could be expanded to elders in BHA's family sites. Courtney said that was not the current plan, but that this information would certainly inform any future efforts with that, and it was recognized that there's a significant elderly population within family public housing. Concern was also raised that the RAB wasn't invited to the Mayor's kick-off; Courtney apologized for any oversight

### **3/ Updates on Letter to President Obama, NARSAAH conference**

John reported that there was no response to the RAB's letter to President Obama (asking about possibility to meet with him while representatives are in DC at the NLIHC conference). He also said there was no information yet from NLIHC about who may receive the Resident Organizing Award .

John also distributed materials about the NARSAAH conference in Atlanta in September. The conference offers a certificate training program and is designed for resident leaders and RABs. Last year, when they met in Miami, the REC did a presentation and got a discount; John suggested that the RAB might want to do the same thing this year (presentation on the Boston RAB). Phyllis said that Samuel Little, who coordinates this, will be at the Mass. Union conference at the end of this month in case anyone wants to talk with him about this. The Board voted that it would decide who would be sent by June (submission needed by mid-August), and Policy & Procedures committee would look at a proposal to NARSAAH.

#### **4/ Mass LEAP Application**

Rachel had reported on this last month, which is an application to set up a Self-Sufficiency program for state public housing and MRVP tenants. BHA and other housing authorities apply to DHCD, who decides who is awarded funds. The application is due April 18<sup>th</sup>. BHA did a resident survey and got 20% response rate, with strong interest. The RAB voted to sign a support letter for the application.

#### **5/ Committee Reports**

Budget: Dave presented a complete breakdown of expenditures, and while the RAB didn't achieve the goal of fully spending down the budget, it got very close (\$2,879.31 left over at the end of the year from a \$48,945.00 budget).

#### **6/Unfinished or New Business and Announcements**

RAB Family Public Housing Alternate (and former full member) Julia Butler passed away. Information was given about services & burial, and John will get this to the Board by email. The RAB will send flowers.

Val asked that if people had questions for Senators while representatives were going to be at the NLIHC conference, to please get them to her.

Mac noted that there were a number of details given out at a Save Our Section 8 Subcommittee meeting with Bill & Gail last month about payment standards, number of new vouchers to be issued, etc., of importance for RAB members. He wasn't sure if John may have circulated this earlier to the Board, and unless BHA is going to get something out officially soon, it may be wise to forward Mac's email summary of that meeting. He also reported that former BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez is stepping down as Assistant Secretary of HUD at the end of June.

#### **7/ Evaluations**

Positives: Good chairing, good meeting, interesting, liked the report on how the survey was progressing.

Negatives: None.