**Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 9-14-17, at 125 Amory Street**

Family Public Housing: *Members* Val Shelley, Concetta Paul, Phyllis Corbitt, Betty Rae Wade, Betty Carrington, Meena Carr, Aracelis Tejeda, Arlene Carr. *Alternates* Ron Johnson (Alt 1), Janis McQuarrie (Alt 4): 10

Elderly/Disabled Public Housing: *Members* Michele McNickles, Jeanne Burke Patterson, Marlena Nania, Betty Cutler, Modesta Ballester, Richard Gurney, Eugenia Smith,David Turney, John Maloni: 9.

Section 8: *Members* Lennox Tillet, Tara Ruttle, Judith Frey, Stephen Tracey, Arlette Coleman, Minnie Jenkins. *Alternates*: Karen Stram (Alt 2), Anita Morris-Merriman (Alt 2), Therese Browne (Alt 4), Georgia McEaddy (Alt 6): 10

Absences excused: Kassandra Ledesma; Lerona Diggs; Edna Willrich

Others: John Kane, Wilbur Commodore, Joe Bamberg, Caitlin Curran, BHA; Charlene Regan (consultant to BHA); Mac McCreight, GBLS; Arthur Alexander (Franklin Field); Ethel Hall Section 8); Steve Meacham (CLVU), others

The meeting was chaired by Val Shelley; Betty Carrington was Timekeeper and John Maloni was Sergeant at Arms. Minutes of prior meeting were approved. Steve Meacham had indicated he might have to leave early, thanked the RAB for its past support of the APM tenants in their efforts to stabilize their rents, and distributed a flyer for a rally that City Life/Vida Urbana was having on Sept. 16th to march to the home of the APM owner.

1/  **Wilbur Commodore, BHA General Counsel**

*a. Assessment of Fair Housing—*Wilbur noted that the 2nd Draft of the AFH was issued for public comment, there was a public hearing on 8/22, BHA had gotten oral and written comments from a number of individuals and groups, and the comment period ends 9/25. He also noted that BHA had sent out surveys to all of its public housing residents & Section 8 participants, had received about 2,000 responses, and was in the process of compiling those responses, but encouraged people to still get in survey responses. Several RAB members said they hadn’t gotten the survey (and there was a question about whether the mixed finance/privately managed properties had gotten them). John said he could get the surveys out to RAB members and Wilbur said he would forward them to John. Wilbur said it would be helpful, before the final deadline for shipping the AFH to HUD of 10/4, to get RAB feedback on the post-comment version of the goals, etc. that BHA/City were doing, and suggested that either a special RAB meeting could be set up between 9/25 and 10/4 or a committee could be convened. It was discussed that 9/28 would be the only Thursday that would not be the day before the HUD submission, and the chair for this meeting suggested that this be done by a committee, but there was no formal RAB action taken to convene a special meeting or a committee.

*b. Grievance Procedure:* Wilbur went over what action had been taken and was being recommended by the BHA. BHA had proposed to eliminate the Grievance Hearing Panel as part of the FY 2017 PHA Plan, but after feedback, the Administrator decided to pull that. The Administrator and the RAB instead recruited additional tenants to serve on the Panel (and opened this up to Section 8 participants as well), and said each grievant could choose to either have his/her case heard by a single hearing officer or a hearing panel. A revised draft with these terms was provided to the RAB. Mac asked when this would be implemented. Wilbur said that since the earlier proposal had been pulled, BHA would need to go back through the formal PHA Plan process to make the change, either prior to or as part of the FY 2018 PHA Plan process, and the implementation date would not be sooner than the HUD approval date. In the meantime, the existing hearing panel system will be used (but will include the newly trained panel members).

2/ **Update on RAD and Demolition/Disposition for Certain Public Housing Sites Being Redeveloped**: Caitlin Curran and Joe Bamberg provided a two sided handout—the front was about the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, and the back was a list of BHA developments where redevelopment is underway and there were updates about what BHA/HUD had done or would be doing through the HUD demolition/disposition process.

a. *RAD*: Caitlin noted that earlier in the year, BHA had indicated that it was exploring use of the RAD program as a different means of funding/financing its elderly/disabled public housing sites. BHA was now going to be getting applications in for 7 elderly/disabled sites—4 before the end of October, and 3 more by next year (there were limitations on how many they could do at once). BHA didn’t want to publicly float the names of the sites since it hadn’t yet met with the residents at the sites and it is required to hold 2 meeting with residents and get them RAD Information Notices (RINs). Caitlin explained that the rent structure would remain 30% of income and BHA would retain ownership and management of these sites, but the funding platform would be more stable than with public housing and would also allow BHA to borrow, build up replacement reserves, have regular cost of living increases, etc. RAB members asked if resident “buy in” was necessary—Joe and Caitlin said that BHA had decided that RAD made the most sense, but of course resident input would be factored in, and there were a number of other steps to the process. Mac pointed out that when BHA (and Brookline HA) had done short “letters of intent” to HUD earlier in the year, they were just “getting in line” and all the RAD funding was then signed up; since then, Congress expanded the program, and HUD had told PHAs like Boston and Brookline that they needed to get in full applications by 10/23 to be eligible (or others could then get their place in line). BHA will continue to report on this to the RAB.

*b*. *Updates on Redevelopment:* Joe gave updates on redevelopment at 5 BHA sites—Whittier, Charlestown, Amory St., West Newton Street, and Old Colony Phase 3.

* At Whittier Street, BHA is in the midst of relocation for Phase I. There is no new construction yet, and so 68 households need to relocate so existing building can be demolished. Many have requested to relocate to other sites near Whittier, and BHA has been successful with much of that. BHA does need to do a formal demolition/disposition application to HUD, but it should be expedited since HUD already approved all this as part of Choice Neighborhoods approval. Ron raised concerns about Whittier St. tenants who wanted to relocate to Alice Taylor, but the needed work for move-in hasn’t been completed; BHA agreed to look into that. Phyllis raised concerns about reports of Whittier Street relocate that may have family member involved in gang activity, and whether that activity may follow to Old Colony and then be difficult to extricate.
* At Charlestown, unlike Whittier Street, this is a brand new model, and not with HUD funding, and so HUD approval not a given (had to demonstrate need and a viable path for redevelopment)—but HUD has now given a demolition/disposition approval.
* At West Newton Street, RAD could work with a public/private partnership, IBA is the private partner. Historic district, and use of historic tax credits. HUD has said RAD looks good and now asking BHA to secure financing, and BHA will be doing a demo-dispo application. This is about 158 units, a little scattered, and at least one building (34 E. Springfield), BHA has assessed as not being one that can be restored, and current thinking is to assess it, sell it, and plow the proceeds back into repair costs, etc. overall. There are a number of other units at West Newton which are currently off line (12 due to other fires, etc.), but BHA intends to restore those. E. Springfield has 3 residential units and 4 total. John M. expressed concern about unit loss and whether the proceeds could be used to purchase other units. Joe said didn’t think this was likely but could be used to support the rest of the portfolio. John K. noted that at Amory Street, there will be additional units added to the portfolio.
* At Amory Street, it’s been a 2-year process with Urban Edge, The Community Builders, and JPNDC. The idea is to preserve the building that the RAB meets in, and to use excess property on the site. This would be done through RAD. Opportunity to take office space and convert it to dwellings. Roughly 10 “public housing” units would be added, and other affordable housing, through the new development. Here too there will be a demo/dispo application, with a distinction between the building & the surplus property.
* At Old Colony, BHA had been able to redevelop Phase I and II with Beacon through major HUD grants (ARRA and HOPE VI). City of Boston has committed $25 million so a Phase III can go forward, even though no other major grant, and BHA thinks likely Phase IV and V in future (458 units left). A resident meeting is planned to go through the latest plans and there would be another demo/dispo application for Phase III.

3/ **Daily Table**: \*\*\* did a presentation about this program, which provides low-cost food for purchase at a Codman Square location, and is going to be expanded soon to Roxbury. This was a non-profit spin-off by the founder of Trader Joes. It is open 7 days a week during the same hours as a store; it is not free, but is substantially reduced in cost, and utilizes food donated or provided at discount by 65 providers as well as groups like Boston Area Gleaners, etc. Uses food that is still healthy but perhaps not as fresh; also has prepared foods, and is teaming up with free cooking classes so that people know how to prepare more healthy meals. Accepts food stamps or cash. Will ask for phone number and/or zip code so can document for its non-profit status that it is primarily benefiting low-income community, but you can come from any zip code. Betty C. said she had utilized Daily Table and encouraged getting the word out. There are also volunteer opportunities to work at the store, and people can contact Josh \*\*\*. Flyer handed out.

4/**Committee Reports.:**

a. *Travel Policy*: Mac noted that there had been a Joint Committee meeting of the Policy & Procedures and the Budget Committee last week which had some recommendations for revising the Travel Policy. The Travel Policy was adopted by the RAB in April 2017, but there were then issues that came up about reimbursements for the Mass. Union conference, Policy & Procedures met and made some recommendations for revisions, those were tabled, and the Board asked that the issues be taken up by the two committees meeting together. As shown in the meeting notes, there were several recommendations: (a) that the RAB go back to a system where people have to account for how per diems are spent, and return unused per diems; (b) that there would normally be per diems of $60/day/person for local/in-state conferences/events, and $75/day/person for national conferences, but the Board could revise these if costs appeared to be different; (c) that for the local/in-state events, there would not be a separate travel reimbursement, and the per diem would be intended to cover those expenses; (d) that if per diems were not sufficient to cover actual expenses, a conference attendee could take this up with Budget or the RAB, but there was no guarantee on this—examples might be if a RAB member had a restricted diet, and the conference provider couldn’t accommodate that and costs were higher, or where a disabled member had higher expenses (renting a cart, etc.); and (e) while there was still guidance on not using per diems for personal, unnecessary items (cigarettes, alcohol, etc.), “candy” was removed from the list, since it might be hard to draw the line between a snack and candy—people should be reasonable. It was moved, seconded, and approved to make these revisions to the Travel Policy.

b. *Use of RAB Office, Computers, Picking Up Mail, etc*.: A second item included in the notes of the Joint Committee meeting had to do with the discussion about the use of the RAB office, the computers in that office and changing of passwords, picking up mail, etc. Concetta said she could do a Treasurer’s report on fund balance, etc., but Val said at this point the focus would be on the 2nd item in the Committee notes, and did Concetta want to speak on that; Concetta said she did. She recounted what she had heard from a person in the mailroom about David Turney picking up the RAB mail (which is in a mailbox for the RAB in the BHA mailroom); David gave a different account, and said he had not been picking up RAB mail. Concetta asked if the RAB Board could clarify who is authorized to pick up RAB mail. It was moved and seconded that this be the RAB secretary; John Kane noted that the secretary works full time and might not be able to get to the BHA during working hours, and asked if those doing the motion would accept a friendly amendment to include the assistant secretary (who agreed to do it, and would be available during working hours)—the friendly amendment was included, and the motion was adopted.

A further discussion ensued about the computers in the RAB office, and the changing of passwords and other actions taken without RAB authorization by David Turney (as summarized in the Joint Committee notes). It was asked if any RAB members wanted to take specific action on this, and a number of people indicated that they did—there wasn’t discussion about what specific action. It was pointed out that it was nearly 8 p.m. A poll was taken and 10 individuals indicated they didn’t want to table the discussion, and 9 did. Mac pointed out that the Board would have to authorize additional time to continue the discussion, and that it appeared that the cabs were present to take RAB members home (this was confirmed). The chair made a decision to adjourn the meeting and table the discussion until the next meeting given the issue with the cabs.