

Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 2-14-19, at 125 Amory Street

Family Public Hsg: *Members* Val Shelley, Arlene Carr, Meena Carr, Phyllis Corbitt, Aracelis Tejeda, Betty Rae Wade, Concetta Paul. *Alternates* Janis McQuarrie (Alt 3), Cheryl Semnack (Alt 9), Nicole Beckles (Alt 10): 10

Elderly/Disabled Public Hsg: *Members* Michele McNickles, Rick Gurney, Marlana Nania, David Turney. *Arthur Alexander, Eddie Hartfield:* 6

Section 8: *Members* Edna Willrich, Jung Wing Lee, Stephen Tracey, Arlette Coleman, Karen Stram. *Alternates:* Robin Williams (Alt 3), Georgia McEaddy (Alt 4): 7

Absences excused: Eugenia Smith, Modesta Ballester, and Jeanne Burke Patterson, Elderly/Disabled Public Housing; Leron Diggs, Judith Frey, Minnie Jackson, Lennox Tillet, Section 8; and Ron Johnson, Family.

Others: John Kane. Rachel Goodman, Claudia Perez, BHA; Mac McCreight, GBLS; Steve Meacham, Judy Barnette, Gabrielle Rene, CLVU; Ethel Hall, Section 8; ***, West Broadway; Jeannie Archibald, Commonwealth; Charina Francisco (interpreter),

The meeting was chaired by Edna Willrich (with assistance from Robin Williams); Val Shelley was Timekeeper; Phyllis Corbitt was Sergeant at Arms.

1/Section 8 Zip Code Meeting: Steve Meacham reported that the first recent Section 8 zip code meeting had happened this past weekend for Mattapan BHA and Metro Housing Boston participants. BHA had sent out notices to over 1000 households, and MHB to 400 households; About 80 people attended. City Life/Vida Urbana intends to work with BHA and MHB on setting up further zip code meetings soon.

2/ Ad Hoc Committee on RAB Training Conference: John summarized the notes from the Ad Hoc Committee Meeting on February 7. We're moving closer to the Saturday, March 16th date for the city-wide conference on the Future of Public Housing and Section 8 in Boston (Redevelopment. The committee members stuffed envelopes to about 326 elected resident leaders to let them know about the date, and next week there will be calls to get commitments about who will attend and any transportation needed (resident leaders are each invited to bring a friend to spread the information). The flyer endorsed by the RAB is available in case people need to bring copies to any community meetings they are attending. The next meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee will be on Thursday, March 7th at 1 p.m. at the Amory Street Annex.

3/ Future Meeting Locations for the RAB: Board members were reminded that tonight is the last time we have the meeting space at Amory Street given the changeover in ownership and rehabilitation work to be carried out. Val said that she had spoken with Urban Edge about the space that was used for the Mel King trainings (very close to the Jackson Square T stop), but the problem is that it isn't available from 6 to 8; they could accommodate the RAB from 4-6 or 5-7. A number of people didn't think it was realistic to have meetings that early given that some people are coming from work. There was a discussion about other meeting space options—West Ninth Street, St. Botolph, Mission Main. Steve Meacham was asked if the City Life space in Jamaica Plain might be available; he said he could look into it, but couldn't make a commitment tonight. It was clarified that the Anna Mae Cole Center space at Hailey Apartments (the same space that we're having the March 16th conference in) would be available for the RAB for the March meeting. It was moved and seconded, and approved (with one abstention) to use the Anna Mae Cole space for March for the RAB meeting, but in the meantime people should continue to look into options and that will be discussed at the March 12 RAB meeting.

4/ Committee Reports:

Policy & Procedures Committee: There was a written report from the Committee and Rick began the presentation. He noted that there were two bylaw changes that were presented to the Committee which they were recommending to the Board, and there was a 3rd idea which was approved at the meeting but where Mac drafted language after the Committee meeting.

First Bylaw Amendment: This would authorize the RAB, which currently has a 3-year term in its bylaws, to allow an extension to a 4th year in its 3rd year for “good cause”. If the Board approves this bylaw change, the bylaw change itself would NOT add a 4th year—instead, there would have to be a separate vote to authorize that, but that could be done tonight or at a future meeting. In response to a question from Mr. Lee, it was clarified that: (a) the RAB originally had a 2-year term, and decided a few years ago to go for a 3-year term; and (b) in 2015, the RAB had voted to extend its term to a 4th year because of unexpected problems that developed in getting elections done (they were then completed in 2016). It was also clarified that there’s nothing in HUD guidelines about that the RAB term should be—this is something the RAB itself has developed over time—and that DHCD’s regulation about a 5-year period for recognition does NOT apply to the RAB (and is a regulation for state public housing tenant organizations). **It was moved, seconded, and adopted, with two nays, to make this amendment. There was no vote taken tonight to actually extend the current RAB’s term, but that could be done at a future meeting if that’s what the RAB wants to do.**

Second Bylaw Amendment: This would add language that RAB members/alternates would be expected to bring information from the RAB back to their developments/communities, and to bring issues/concerns from the developments/communities back to the RAB. In addition, the Committee asked that if this was adopted, BHA also notify its management staff, and staff at privately managed/mixed finance developments, that this was a role for the RAB, so that people would not give RAB members flak for doing such reporting, etc. at resident meetings. While a number of people thought this was a good idea, there was concern that the language could be misused—i.e., someone might accuse someone of not relaying the information, and therefore not carrying out their RAB duties. A question was raised if there would be a grievance opportunity if someone thought they were being singled out but had been doing what they were supposed to do. It was acknowledged that as within any other time where someone thought they were being falsely accused, there would be recourse to a committee (the RAB has used this process twice in the past year). **It was moved, seconded, and adopted, with two nays, to make this amendment.**

A third bylaw amendment was tabled for the time being so that the RAB could do the time-critical business of selecting representatives for the National Low Income Housing Coalition meeting in DC (see further notes below.) The Committee also didn’t complete the rest of its report, but that can be taken up in the future.

5/Selecting Attendees for National Low Income Housing Coalition Conference in DC (end of March, 2019): It was noted that NLIHC was having its national meeting toward the end of March, and the Board needed to decide how many people could go and who would attend. It was pointed out that this was critical business as people visit with congressional staff to talk about what the national housing bills and priorities should be for 2019. There was sufficient funding to send 9 people, and people agreed to expand the pool to this number. Members/alternates who are on the “no fly” list (didn’t straighten out past funding issues with the RAB) would not be eligible to go; Eddie Hartfield straightened out his issue, and Karen Stram was the only one who wished to go who remained on that list. It was also pointed out that: (1) RAB members have a preference over alternates; and (2) those who’ve not attended any national events during the current RAB term would have preference over those who’ve attended previously; (3) we should pick 3 from each constituency, and (4) you couldn’t be selected if you weren’t in attendance at the meeting. For Family Public Housing, Concetta Paul, Betty Rae Wade, and Arlene Carr asked to go. For Elderly/Disabled Public Housing, four individuals (Eddie Hartfield, Michele McNickles, Dave Turney, and Rick Gurney) all asked to go; Rick was willing to take the position instead of “back-up” traveler in case one of the others did not attend. For Section 8, Jung Wing Lee, Robin Williams, and Edna Willrich asked to go.

6/ Third Bylaw Amendment: Mac reported that the third bylaw amendment was to address two issues: (a) was it OK to remove alternates who hadn't been attending meetings and who didn't respond to letters if they were still interested; and (b) to avoid the issue where a member really wasn't attending but wasn't being removed either because of repeated excused absences, the Board would be permitted to remove members who didn't attend at least six meetings in a 12-month period (except for Board-approved leaves of absence). The Policy & Procedures Committee recommended this but said that members removed for this reason could be kept on at the end of the alternate list, rather than removed outright. **This was moved, seconded, and adopted.**

7/ Budget Committee: There were written notes from the RAB Budget Committee, as well as recommendations about withdrawals, use of the sign in sheet, and reimbursements. Since the meeting was running late, **it was moved, seconded, and adopted to table the recommendations for tonight and they can be voted upon at a future meeting. A summary of expenses by vendor was also provided.**

6/ Old/Unfinished Business, New Business/Announcements, etc.: John reported that BHA had approved the \$46,000 budget proposed for the RAB starting April 1, 2019. He also noted that the Department of Housing & Community Development (DCHD) had approved the changes to the grievance procedure that BHA and the RAB had developed. BHA is waiting to hear from HUD on the FY 2019 PHA Plan submission (usually will hear by April 1st, and HUD was shut down when the submission was made in January).

It was noted that no one responded to the letters which went out to remove various members for non-attendance and/or to ask non-attending alternates if they were interested in still getting notice, etc. of meetings. The letter left the burden on the individuals to respond and if they did not they would be removed. This will mean that in addition to the changes made at last month's meeting (moving up a Family and an Elderly/Disabled Alternate to full member status, and adding a new Family Alternate), two of the existing Family Alternates will be moved up to full member status. John will prepare a revised/updated list.

Phyllis noted that the Mass. Union spring convention will be April 13-14.

In the evaluation, while some noted it was a good meeting, others said that there should be more time to discuss recommendations from Policy & Procedures and bylaw revisions. It was also suggested that there should be salad next time.