

Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 5-11-17, at 125 Amory Street

Family Public Housing: *Members* Kassandra Ledesma, Concetta Paul, Phyllis Corbitt, Betty Rae Wade, Meena Carr, Arlene Carr. *Alternates* Janis McQuarrie (Alt 4), Pamela Hoyt (Alt 9): 8

Elderly/Disabled Public Housing: *Members* Michele McNickles, John Maloni, Bettie Cutler, Modesta Ballester; *Alternates* David Turney (Alt 1): 5

Section 8: *Members* Edna Willrich, Lennox Tillet, Judith Frey, Stephen Tracey; *Alternates*: Arlette Coleman (Alt 1), Therese Browne (Alt 5): 6

Absences excused: Aracelis Tejada, Valerie Shelley, Ron Johnson, Betty Carrington (Family Public Housing); Norman Younger, Jeanne Burke Patterson, Richard Gurney, Marlena Nania (Elderly/Disabled Public Housing); Lerona Diggs, Jung Wing Lee, Marilyn Lopez, Yvette Moore, Tara Ruttle, (Section 8)

Others: John Kane, Vivian Lee, Barbara Sheerin, Amy Tran, Joe Bamberg, Bill McGonagle, Kathlin Curran, BHA; Mac McCreight, GBLs; Nancy Figueroa, CBPH; Jonathan Tarleton (grad student); Arthur Alexander (Franklin Field), Ethel Hall (Section 8), Georgia McEaddy (Section 8).

The meeting was chaired by Michele McNickles; Lennox Tillet was Timekeeper and Phyllis Corbitt was Sergeant at Arms. Minutes of prior meeting were approved.

1/BHA Real Estate & Development—Considering Further RAD Proposals: Amy Tran, along with Kaitlyn Curran and Joe Bamberg, indicated that BHA is evaluating whether it would make sense to use the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program to redevelop its federal elderly/disabled public housing portfolio, and BHA has asked to get on the waiting list for these sites. (BHA already has some proposals to use RAD in some family public housing sites, as well as at Amory St.) BHA doesn't know yet if this will make sense until it examines it more, but since Congress just recently authorized expanding the number of total RAD units, BHA wanted to have a "placeholder" to reserve units in case it did make sense (before other housing authorities claim all the additional units). BHA's proposal would be to keep control of these units through BHA, rather than get into a public/private partnership. Some members of the RAB expressed skepticism about RAD given what they've heard from other PHAs. BHA said that there was no set timetable yet, and before any concrete proposal was made, both residents at the site and the RAB would be involved. There were questions about whether the RAD proposal at Lenox/Camden might involve development of mixed income/market housing; BHA said while this had been considered for Camden at one point, at present, it was thought this wouldn't work. Several questions were asked why the family sites wouldn't also be kept by BHA; Kaitlyn said more was needed for capital costs at the family sites which would require more private investment.

2/ Administrator's Report, Questions and Answers: Bill McGonagle addressed a number of the questions/concerns residents had on the RAD piece (above). He also noted that while there had been reports of some housing authorities elsewhere running short on Section 8 vouchers and possibly having to rescind vouchers (in Houston), causing HUD to issue a memo about shortfall funding, that wasn't BHA's current situation. BHA monitors its monthly voucher expenses closely, so that all existing families can be served. In addition, many owners have sought

increases in rent to match what's going on in the market; BHA has been honoring those requests where legitimate. Bill said he was hopeful that in the fall, BHA might be able to issue a limited number of new vouchers again. Right now, though, about 50 families leave the program every month, and BHA is not turning over those vouchers—BHA counts on the attrition in order to balance the budget. BHA is given a set dollar amount, and isn't funded by vouchers. BHA has tightened up the procedures on rent increases. Some asked how BHA would make the decision to take vouchers from families; Bill said the criteria for this were actually added to the BHA Plan in 2013, but fortunately BHA never had to take that action. There were questions about vouchers for public housing tenants being relocated during redevelopment; Bill noted that when this happens, BHA submits a demolition/disposition (demo/dispo) application to HUD, as happened recently for Charlestown, and then if HUD approves it, replacement vouchers are issued by HUD (with an initial pool of 218); the overall plan there would take 12-14- years.

Mac asked if BHA had any data about, of the 50 families leaving the program each month, how many were because they had “timed out” on housing search. For example, many Section 8 tenants might be evicted for “other good cause” no fault reasons (sale of property, rent increases, renovations, family moving in), and could get some time to move from a court, but ultimately if they move out, BHA has them on a 120-day search period. If the period runs out, the tenant loses the Section 8. Barbara Sheerin said that this does happen, although BHA does grant extensions for a number of reasons (such as inability to do housing search due to hospitalization, or a reasonable accommodation need for a person with a disability). BHA agreed to get data on this, although it was not clear what the solution would be.

Bill also addressed some questions about recent security problems at West Broadway, and said BHA was expanding use of security cameras, as they found it has helped in identifying wrongdoers (particularly if victims are unwilling to cooperate. A question was raised whether vouchers could be given to those who were victims/witnesses to crime; BHA acknowledged that this has been done in the past, but at present, there just weren't vouchers to give out.

3/ Section 8 Administrative Plan Proposed Changes and Public Hearing: Barbara noted that BHA is making some amendments to its Section 8 Administrative Plan, and will take public comments on this for 45 days and will have a public hearing on Wed. June 7th at 6 p.m. A handout showed a couple of changes to priorities for the Project-Based Voucher (PBV) program (so that if a unit was to be lost for reasons not the resident's control, the resident would have priority for another unit, and so that tenants at redeveloped sites would have priority for a right to return to a new PBV unit. BHA is also implementing more flexibility in the PBV program as permitted by legislation passed by Congress last year, HOTMA, which will allow more PBV units and more exceptions to siting of PBV units as replacement housing. A redlined version of a revised Chapter on the PBV program was distributed. Barbara agreed to also get out a chart which shows where BHA would be expanding PBV unit placement in conjunction with redevelopment of public housing sites.

4/ Reports from Mass. Union of Public Housing Tenants Conference and Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Workshop: A number of RAB members who attended the recent Mass. Union spring conference gave written reports (Michele), or agreed that they would do so shortly (Kassandra and Betty), or gave oral reports (Therese, Arlene, David, and John) on disability workshop, translation, utilities, ROSS grants, and rent calculation. Arlene said it

would be helpful for the RAB to sponsor a workshop on rent calculation, and Mac noted that GBLS/Homestart had done them in the past and would be happy to do them again.

John M. provided a written and oral report about a session that was convened at the Hibernian Hall in Roxbury last month which followed up on BHA's earlier presentation on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH). A focus of the discussion was on the public health impacts of problems in the housing market. Please refer to John's written report.

5/ Committee Reports

Budget: Concetta reported that the RAB received a check from BHA for \$15,000, and it currently has about \$14,000 balance after paying for food, taxis, etc. She also said that there needed to be consistency in how the RAB provides flowers in the event of the death of RAB members/alternates or immediate family members, and the Committee was asking John Kane to find minutes about what the past practices have been.

The report prompted a discussion about the June RAB meeting, and the timing and agenda for that meeting: (1) John Kane will be away June 8th (the normal date); **it was moved, seconded, and approved by the Board to change the June meeting date to June 15th, when John will be available.** (2) Mac noted that under the bylaws, officer elections normally are done in June, but since the RAB only began to serve in August, this would be less than a 12-month term. **It was moved, seconded, and approved by the Board to change election time to July, and Mac will prepare a formal bylaw amendment to this effect which can be on the agenda for the June meeting.**

Policy & Procedures: The next meeting will be on Wednesday, May 17th at 6 p.m., but because there is a conflict for the space at Amory St., it will be held at St. Botolph.

6/ Unfinished/New Business, Announcements, etc.: Steve Meacham asked if the RAB were willing to help sponsor a press conference, calling on larger owners (like Advanced Property Mgt.) to keep their rents as the level where they can be paid with Section 8. It was moved, seconded, and adopted that the officers were empowered to work with the APM tenants to come up with a plan.

Rick Gurney asked for a 3-month leave of absence for medical reasons, as has Jeanne Burke-Patterson. Carol Sullivan has resigned as a family public housing alternate. Marlina Nania and Norman Younger were both noted to have excused absences.

Phyllis said that it would be good for people to think NOW about who would be going to the NARSAAH conference, since we'd need to decide this by June, and wouldn't want to lose out on going due to timing (as happened with the NLIHC conference in DC).

The Board adjourned by a majority vote without an evaluation.