

Boston Housing Authority RAB Meeting 1-9-20, at 10 Lamartine St. Ext. (Anna Mae Cole Center, Hailey Apartments, Jamaica Plain)

Family Public Hsg: *Members* Betty Rae Wade, Ron Johnson, Aracelis Tejada, Concetta Paul, Phyllis Corbitt, Arlene Carr, Janis McQuarrie, Cheryl Semnack. *Alternates:* Nicole Beckles (Alt 1), Meriem Arachiche (Alt 2), Jeannie Archibald(Alt 2): 11

Elderly/Disabled Public Hsg: *Members* Michele McNickles, Dave Turney, Arthur Alexander, Jeanne Burke Patterson, Marlena Nania, Eugenia Smith, Dan Horne. *Alternate:* Anita Pleasant (Alt 1): 8

Section 8: *Members* Edna Willrich, Stephen Tracey, Lennox Tillet, Therese Browne, Lerona Diggs Jung Wing Lee, Arlette Coleman, Judith Frey, Karen Stram. *Alternates:* Robin Williams (Alt 1), Georgia McEaddy (Alt 2): 11

Absences excused: Meena Carr, Val Shelley, Minnie Jackson.

Others: John Kane, Kate Bennett, Lueteshia Raymond, BHA; Mac McCreight, GBLS; Steve Meacham, City Life/Vida Urbana; Dacia Morales (Lenox resident); Charita Francisco, interpreter

The meeting was chaired by Michele McNickles with assistance from Robin Williams (who was also sergeant at arms). Edna Willrich was timekeeper. Minutes of the 12/19 meeting were approved, with the deletion of question marks as to whether certain absences were excused (chairs agreed they had been).

1/Remarks from Kate Bennett, BHA Administrator: This was Kate's first formal remarks to the RAB in her new role as Administrator since last summer. She noted that she had started at BHA in 1998 as a senior planner, but for over a decade had been Bill McGonagle's No. 2 person and had frequently met with the RAB in that capacity. She noted that she was quieter and less explosive than Bill (while noting this was not a criticism—Bill's explosions could be quite effective) but no less passionate about public housing and Section 8. She stated she was proud of the relationship BHA had built with resident communities. She introduced Lueteshia Raymond as her special assistant, and said part of Lueteshia's role will be to be the resource to the RAB that John Kane has been. There will be a period of transition for John & Lueteshia (and John is not leaving the BHA and it's likely the RAB will continue to see him). Kate wanted to thank John for all he had done. A key aspect of the BHA's 5-year plan is the preservation of the public housing & Section 8 portfolio, particularly in the face of federal cutbacks, and simplifying and making processes more user friendly for applicants and participants. She said she was open to take any questions. Karen asked why she had to pay 40% of income for rent with Section 8—Kate said she would ask Leased Housing staff to get back with her on that. Concetta said she thought it was important that developments reflect the demographic diversity of the City; it was noted that this data was in the PHA Plan, although it was not clear if this data exists for the Mixed Finance sites, as well as data for employees at the sites. Eugenia (and the RAB as a whole) thanked John for his work. Arlene welcomed Lueteshia but warned her about "what kind

of crowd we can be”. Janis said that last night’s community meeting for Lenox was rough, and Kate agreed to talk with her about how best to follow up on this. Arlene & Lerona talked about the difficulty in getting information from Mixed Finance management, and Kate said that BHA could help with that. Concetta mentioned that there ought to be some sort of simple sheet that can be provided verifying that a person lives in BHA public housing, rather than the Tenant Status Review which has all kinds of personal data, and Kate agreed. Jeanne asked if there had been progress in setting up electronic payments as an option, and Kate said BHA was thinking of a small pilot for this first, and then developing further (need to figure out how to avoid getting residents hit with bank fees if any breach). Jeanne also mentioned the need to get ADA compliant toilets when replacement work done.

Steve Meacham did a brief announcement about: (a) public hearing at State House on 1/14 at 10:30 at Gardner Auditorium about authorizing communities to do rent control; (b) next Section 8 zip code meeting for Hyde Park (02136) on Sat. 1/25 at 10 a.m. at 912 River Street; and (c) Sunrise Initiative would be doing a presentation on the Green New Deal and possibility for public housing investments as part of the next RAB meeting in February.

2/. Comment and Response on FY 2020 PHA Plan: John thanked the RAB members who attended the public hearings. He noted that he had given the RAB the 46-page long set of comments and responses that BHA did as part of the FY 2020 PHA Plan (including the Five-Year Plan). Changes were made based on comments to the Supplement, the Admin Plan, the RAD Attachment, and the 4 Factor Analysis. He asked that if RAB members have anything that they think needs clarification, etc., to let him know by 2 p.m. Friday 1/10 and he’d endeavor to have the final be responsive—final has to get to HUD by 1/15, and BHA will aim to get it out by 1/14. He noted that on certain issues, BHA responded that it was willing to follow up with these as topics at future RAB meetings; BHA also made certain commitments (for example, that it would share demo/dispo documents with the RAB). He noted that obviously if a comment didn’t get in by the deadline, things weren’t etched in stone and BHA could continue discussions with RAB in the future.

3/ RAB 2020 Elections and Ad Hoc Election Committee: John noted that this is the year in which there must be a RAB election and since this process is complicated, it would make sense to get started right away. In the past it’s been very important to have an Ad Hoc election committee (one which helps through the elections) to advise the BHA and help make decisions on the process, guide any vendors that are selected, etc. Prior to 2016, this tended to be done with one vendor, but several elections had been put off because no one organization was able to take it on and meet all of the BHA requirements (such as insurance). In 2016, BHA decided to break the process up into more digestible chunks, and BHA hired several vendors through the easier “Request for Quotes” process that’s available for smaller jobs who would do outreach with different constituencies and then a vendor to actually do the elections. He thought that a similar approach this year should work. After the last election, there was an evaluation and a number of recommendations to improve the process, including some bylaw changes (some of which have already been done, like having a separate elderly/disabled and family public housing election day) and some of which have yet to be done (and can be taken up by Policy & Procedures and the RAB in the meantime). Other things, like how the actual election is done, can be talked through more with the group—it’s complicated as the process for public housing and Section 8 is different because of HUD rules. John asked if there were volunteers willing to work with the

BHA on this—you can be on the Ad Hoc group and still be able to run for election. A large number of RAB members/alternates volunteered: Concetta, David, Eugenia, Robin, Karen, Arlene, Georgia, Betty, Judy, Lenox, Meriem; Mac and John will also be on. John will email possible dates and go with what works for the majority. Mr. Lee said it was important to make sure the vendors did what they promised to do. Jeanne asked that updated LTO lists be provided and that everyone get the revised BHA organizational chart (John promised to get that out).

4/ **Committee Reports:**

Policy & Procedures Committee: Mac reported on this since Rik has been absent and in fact had tendered his resignation as Committee chair and for the RAB due to his medical circumstances. There were three items which the Committee had been asked to report back recommendations: (a) *Officer elections*—in the elections after the first officer election, there should be a preference for candidates who've met the full membership attendance requirement, but if no candidate meets this (for example, the only person(s) willing to run were alternates who had just moved to member positions and hadn't yet attended 6 out of 12 meetings in the prior 12 months, this would be okay. This was moved, seconded, and approved. (b) *Expense reports, etc.*—In addition to the change done last month on conference reports, language would be added to the bylaws that if expense reports or return of funds wasn't done timely, this too was a basis for denial of funding for a future conference or to run for an officer position. If the submission was timely, but there had to be some back-and-forth in resolving expenses, the person wouldn't be considered noncompliant in the meantime. As with other things, Budget Committee could find good cause for delayed submission. In addition, the Budget Committee members themselves would be responsible to respond timely, and their failure to do so could be a basis to deny future funding or ability to run for office. Michele suggested one amendment—that there should be a receipt (to show things had come in). Sometimes an email might work (since it would show when a particular report, etc. was sent; for actual return of funds, though, that wouldn't work. It was agreed that adding the language about the receipt was a friendly amendment to the committee recommendation, and it was moved, seconded, and adopted. (c) *Pooling arrangements for travel/conferences:* It was agreed that there could be advantages to pooling on travel to get discounts (where more than x seats were booked on flights, or at hotels, etc.), but that the RAB did not want to be holding the bag if money did not come through. Per diems would NOT be part of this. The committee recommended: (i) only do it if the money is provided up front to the RAB; (ii) have a clear written agreement about what happens if things fall through (for example, the traveler can't go last minute, and maybe there can't be a full refund or replacement traveler), similar to what we do with the RAB travel policy; and (c) it wouldn't be limited to those affiliated with the RAB (i.e., RAB members/ alternates who weren't getting RAB funding), but could be anyone BHA affiliated. While “pooled” people couldn't be held to the same standards as those traveling with RAB funding, they would of course be encouraged to participate in events that would help everyone (like lobbying at Capitol Hill) and to not do things that might reflect badly on other residents. This was moved, seconded, and adopted. Marlina had indicated she was willing to serve as Committee chair, and this was moved, seconded, and adopted. The meeting time & place (West Ninth Street, 4th Wednesday evening of the month at 6 p.m.) will remain the same (next meeting Jan. 22nd).

Budget Committee: Dave apologized, but that due to a funeral, he hadn't had time to get/bring with him the detailed expense report. As of the last time, there was \$15,000, and \$1400 was

spent, leaving roughly \$14,000. All taxis paid. Initially the Committee had thought they could send 9 to National Low Income Housing Coalition, but looking at what was left, 6 was more realistic—and using this and taxis and food for Feb/March, should be close to zeroing out. Arlene said that Michele's report had been received, as well as Eugenia's. Eddie was approved for mileage, but from 6/19 forward and not prior. Robin originally refunded money when she couldn't find certain receipts, but she later found them and the Committee agreed to reimburse her \$68.00. Minnie had submitted a report but there appeared to be some expenses that couldn't be approved. At present, Minnie and Cheryl are on the no fly list. Dave purchased a new recorder for meetings. While there had been discussion about doing a RAB conference (other than the one done in 3/19), it didn't happen—and so there was the question of doing it in 10/19. There should be a committee to plan it if the Board agrees to this. The Committee changed the time of its meetings on Fridays from 1 to 3. Judith raised concerns about getting itemized reports and having similar standards applied no matter who the Treasurer/Asst. Treasurer is.' Dave was able to answer as to a cash withdrawal (necessary for translator who had lost a check).

Volunteers for NLIHC were Concetta & Arlene for Family (Meriem as backup traveler); Karen and Judith for Section 8 (Robin as backup traveler); and Anita and Dave for Elderly/Disabled (Eugenia as backup traveler).

5/ Other Business: Phyllis mentioned that while it was too late now to sign up for the Tenants' Rights training that MLRI has, it is helpful and RAB should do that for the future. She also recommended getting signed up for the CHAPA and Mass. NAHRO Legislative Days (CHAPA is free, Mass. NAHRO there is some expense). Val couldn't make the meeting, but her Secretary report was available as a handout.

Evaluation: Spend more time listening. No sidebars, show respect. Not everyone will lie down. Wonderful. Need to act professionally. Chair & assistant did well. Stick to agenda. Get past the past. Did well with the Policy & Procedures recommendations.