

  
TOWN CLERK

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*REGULAR MEETING HELD TUESDAY, April 18, 2023, HELD AT 2 SCHOOL STREET, HATFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS, and virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. with Chairperson John Wilkes presiding.

Roll Call: Chair John Wilkes, Alex Malinowski, Judy Schell, Mike Hogan, Christopher Smith (virtually), and Brenna Duquette/Executive Director. Tenants present were Jackie Courchesne and Roland Laurin. Steve McCarthy was also present (virtually).

Citizens Speak:  
Nothing at this time.

Judy Schell made a motion to accept the minutes if the regular meeting held March 21, 2023, seconded by Mike Hogan. All in favor; none opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Wilkes began with "Old Business" and addressed the financial statements at the end of the meeting due to the attendance of Steve McCarthy from New Ecology, Inc. to discuss the air source heat pump project.

#### **Old Business:**

Following the March 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, the Director contacted Steve McCarthy, senior engineer from New Ecology, Inc., a subcontractor for ABCD specializing and efficiency upgrades for the underserved populations. New Ecology, Inc. is assigned to HHA for the air source heat pump installation project. Mr. McCarthy was given a list of questions regarding the logistics of this project prior to Mr. McCarthy's attendance of the April meeting.

The installation of 45 air source heat pumps at Capawonk was discussed at length with Mr. McCarthy. Discussions included: the removal of the living room baseboard heaters and whether that is necessary, the patching and painting of walls in each unit which (will cause HHA to incur supplementary costs), what the equipment will aesthetically add to the property, and the overall process of the project. The process being: a tenant meeting, followed by a mockup installation in one unit, DHCD's approval, then the completion of installation of the remaining ASHPs. Both the breakers in the apartments and the ASHP failing at a certain temperature were points of great concern. Having forty-five (45) outdoor units around the property, particularly on historic Main Street, was also an issue of note for the Board. Finally, Judy Schell raised the question: if there is a twenty-five (25) percent savings with the addition of ASHPs, but many tenants do not have air conditioning window units at this time, would the additional use of air conditioning not negate the savings? Mr. McCarthy thoroughly answered all questions and concerns,

provided pictures of other properties where ASHPs have been installed, and will supply the Director with data on the energy savings to provide to the Board.

When Mr. McCarthy left the meeting, the Director relayed information obtained from other LHAs who have recently installed ASHPs on their properties. Dalton H.A. installed theirs about a year ago and have not had any issues to date. Contrastingly, Granby H.A. installed seventy-three (73) units in 2018 and have not had a good experience. There have been major issues which caused DHCD to get involved in the project. They also report spending \$250 per unit on maintenance annually. Granby had electric baseboard heaters and, in hindsight, wished they had been kept rather than installing ASHP.

All members agreed; further discussion on the installation of air source heat pumps at HHA is necessary.

Project #127056: Due to the delay in approving the low bid for this renovation, the low bidder had to decline the award as their Spring schedule had since been filled. The next lowest bidder was \$59,509 - \$29,509 above what HHA had allocated for this project – and therefore HHA cannot move forward with the next lowest bidder. The Director has informed DHCD of this issue and included apartment 6A in the list of vacancies in the vacant unit funding application.

Remote participation for board meetings has been extended until March 31, 2025. DHCD advised remote participation is no longer mandatory; it is an option for the Board if they wish to continue to meet remotely. Alex Malinowski made a motion to discontinue remote participation unless the Board agrees otherwise prior to a meeting, with at least forty-eight (48) hours' notice, seconded by Judy Schell. Chair Wilks opened the motion for discussion and Mr. Smith began by stating he was berated by Alex Malinowski at the last meeting. Mr. Smith added he was not physically attending the April meeting because he was recovering from COVID-19. The Director interjected; Alex Malinowski was not trying to berate Mr. Smith during the last meeting, he was trying to point out that Mr. Smith sits on two other Boards in Town and attends those meetings in person. In addition to physically attending other Board meetings, Mr. Smith also attends weekly lunches at the Senior Center, which generates a larger gathering than a typical HHA meeting. The Director added Mr. Smith had also met in her office and brought an acquaintance of his, neither of whom were adhering to six (6) feet of social distancing or wearing masks; Mr. Smith agreed that this meeting took place as the Director described, adding he "shouldn't have done that". The point being: it is unknown why Mr. Smith does not wish to be a part of the HHA Board meetings in-person, but it is apparent he is selective in instances he does and does not adhere to pandemic protocols. Mr. Smith requested to move the meetings to the Town Hall's conference room or the Senior Center, as they are larger spaces. The Board did not find this request reasonable; HHA's Community Room has the capacity for social distancing. No further discussion. A vote was taken: Judy Schell, aye. Mike Hogan, aye. Chair Wilkes, aye. Alex Malinowski, aye. Christopher Smith, nay. Motion passed 4-1.

#### **New Business:**

PHN 2023-02: Updated Release of Information

PHN 2023-03: Wage Match for State Housing Program Tenants – DHCD will now be requiring a signed certificate of compliance with wage match guidelines from the Board when the budget is submitted. A submission of the certification of compliance is also due within sixty (60) days of the PHN. The Board received copies of PHN 2022-02 and the Director assured members all applicable laws and regulations relating to confidentiality and privacy are being adhered to by HHA. Judy Schell made a motion to approve and sign the document relating to Wage Match, seconded by Alex Malinowski. All in favor; none opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

#### PHN 2023-04: New Public Housing Redevelopment and Land Disposition Powers

The Director supplied the Board with the bid tabulations for the 2023-2025 electrical and plumbing service contracts. Beginning with the plumbing bid tabulation, Mike Hogan had discussed an invoice for Richard Watling Plumbing & Heating at the previous meeting. Mr. Hogan had obtained the price for a fifty (5) gallon Bradford White hot water heater (what was recently installed and is being questioned). It was discovered Watling Plumbing & Heating marked up the price of the water heater by sixty (60) percent. All members agreed this was unreasonable. Mr. Smith questioned why the Board would not want to continue, being that HHA has a good rapport with the company, and they are based in Hatfield. Mr. Hogan explained, again, the issue of the sixty percent mark-up of material, which was found to be unreasonably high. Judy Schell made a motion to accept AM/PM Plumbing & Heating, Inc.'s bid for the 2023-2025 plumbing service contract, seconded by Mike Hogan. All in favor; none opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

Prior to the discussion of the electrical service contract, Mike Hogan recused himself to avoid a possible conflict of interest with one of the vendors who bid on the contract. After a brief discussion of all bids received, Judy Schell made a motion to accept Orchard Electric, Inc.'s low bid, seconded by Christopher Smith. All in favor; none opposed. Motion passed 4-0 with Mike Hogan abstaining.

#### **Report of the Executive Director:**

Alex Malinowski made a motion to table all agenda items under the 'Report of the Executive Director' until May's Board Meeting, seconded by Judy Schell. All in favor, none opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

There was a brief discussion of the financial reports as of March 31, 2023, which included the Quarterly Financial Reports. The tenant accounts receivables balance continues to grow; this matter is in litigation. The Laundry receipts are continuing to grow (\$4,167 as of March 31<sup>st</sup>), so the Director asked if the Board would like her to draft a laundry policy for May's meeting to dictate the use of the funds. They would. Chair Wilkes discussed using extraordinary maintenance funds. The Director is hesitant to allocate those funds at this time, as there is still much of FYE23 left and unforeseen emergencies could arise. Members agreed. Chair Wilkes commented on the deficit in shelter rent. Mike Hogan questioned whether the vacant units could simply be painted and cleaned for lease up. The Director explained this is not possible. Under the quarterly operating reports, Chair Wilkes questioned a discrepancy in funds approved and grant funds received during MOD project #127048 (the emergency generator for backup power). The discrepancy is from DHCD's original estimation of the project's cost versus what was actually allocated to the project. Alex Malinowski made a motion to accept the financial reports as of March 31, 2023, including the quarterly financial reports, seconded by Judy Schell. All in favor; none opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

Judy Schell made a motion to review, approve and sign payroll, time sheets, accounts payables, and the April 18, 2023 Warrant, seconded by Mike Hogan. All in favor; none opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

**OTHER BUSINESS - Consideration of any matter not known about or which could not have been reasonably foreseen within 48 hours of this meeting.**

Chair Wilkes reported a member of the Hadley Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners contacted both the Director and him regarding issue they are having at the Hadley H.A., specifically to express their unhappiness with the management contract between Hadley H.A. Amherst H.A. Chair Wilkes explained he provided Hadley's Board members with some documentation from HHA, including our By-Laws and other administrative documents.

**Motion to Adjourn**

Motion to Adjourn was made by Mike Hogan, seconded by Judy Schell. All in favor; none opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brenna Duquette, Secretary