

**LOWELL HOUSING AUTHORITY  
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2020 AT 5:00 P.M. (VIRTUAL)  
MERCIER CENTER, 21 SALEM STREET, LOWELL, MA**

The meeting was called to order at **5:00 p.m.** by Chairperson Shea. Upon direction of the Chairperson, the Secretary called the roll of membership which resulted as follows:

Present: Chairperson Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard, Commissioner Marr, Vice Chairperson McMahon

Chairperson Shea provided the following direction following the roll of membership:

This Lowell Housing Authority meeting is being held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 10, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law G.L. c.30A, Section 18 and Section 20

There will be no public participation in the meeting; however, the public may view and listen to the meeting via our website at [www.lhma.org](http://www.lhma.org) under "Board meeting minutes and agendas"

A transcript of this meeting will be made available at [www.lhma.org](http://www.lhma.org) when available.

The Chairperson then recognized Attorney Kevin Murphy to expound upon the nature of public meeting law, and the Authority's compliance with state directives.

**MINUTES FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON MARCH 4, 2020**

A motion was made by Commissioner Marr and seconded by Commissioner Bernes

A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

Yeas: Chairperson Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard, Commissioner Marr, Vice Chairperson McMahon

**RESIDENT CORRESPONDENCE**

None

**RESIDENT ORGANIZATION**

None

**SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None

**FINANCE REPORT**

Sherry Giblin, Chief Financial Officer provided a finance report for the Board. Ms. Giblin reported that Operating Statements as of 2/29/2020 have been shared with the Board. All programs are operating at a gain and continue to exceed budget expectations. While these gains are a positive sign, Ms. Giblin cautioned the Board that these are not indicative of actual year-end results. In this unprecedented time of the COVID19 pandemic, the agency is realizing increasing maintenance expenses, specifically in janitorial supplies and contracts. The Authority has contracted with ACM, a third-party vendor to perform emergency deep cleaning and disinfection services agency-wide in addition to measures taken by our maintenance staff to clean and disinfect high touch areas. We anticipate these expenses will have a significant impact on the operating gains going forward. Last week our Chief Operating Officer took part in a conference call with NAHRO, who indicated that HUD may be providing PHA's with additional operating subsidy and administrative fees to help defray some of the costs associated with this pandemic. In addition, the Authority will remain diligent in seeking and applying for any emergency related grants and FEMA aid to assist further in defraying some of these costs.

Ms. Giblin reported that the agency's Highland Parkway development experienced an electrical outage on February 16, 2020. The LHA applied for an emergency waiver from the State Dept. of Capital Asset Management to proceed with an immediate repair. Nine commercial generators were brought in to supply temporary power, while the underground failure point was identified and repaired. The cost of the generator rental and required repairs was \$400,000, with generator and fuel costs making up \$270,000 or 68% of the total cost. Due to the COVID19 emergency which led to National Grid scheduling delays, the generators were in use for an extended period of time, which drove up the total rental and fuel costs for the generators. National Grid was on site yesterday and completed the final connection back to our transformers. The LHA is seeking alternative sources of funds to cover the cost of this repair including a HUD emergency grant, Capital Funds, central office reserves and FEMA aid.

Ms. Giblin accepted questions from the Board of Directors. Vice Chairperson McMahon asked about the total expenses for Highland Parkway. Ms. Giblin explained that the \$400K referenced by Vice Chairperson McMahon is the full cost of the project. Vice Chairperson Shea commended the staff on their efforts at Highland Parkway.

Chairperson Shea referenced page 3 of the finance reports, which highlights the agency's expenses to fund a third-party deep clean to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Ms. Giblin explained that, to date, the agency has not spent any money, but the LHA has a proposal for \$35K for work that was previously performed, and \$25K for upcoming work.

Chairperson Shea asked for clarification on the schedule for the work. Ms. Giblin explained that the third-party vendor cleans two days per week. Chairperson Shea asked if it was possible to have the cleaning company come in 3-4 days per week. Ms. Giblin explained that the agency would certainly try to increase the frequency of cleaning, however given the current epidemic, the availability of the company is limited. Mr. Garvey, Assistant Executive Director, explained that when this service was procured by Brian Moriarty, Superintendent of Maintenance, ACM was the only company that the agency could find that had the staff, supplies and expertise to perform the work. ACM indicated to the agency that they do not have any additional resources to extend the agency's schedule beyond the work that is currently taking place. Mr. Garvey also reported that during days which cleaning is not being done by ACM, the agency's maintenance staff is also cleaning high traffic areas, including common rooms, doors, stairwells, and elevators. Chairperson Shea thanked Ms. Giblin and Mr. Garvey for their clarification and efforts.

## **REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON**

None

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Mr. Wallace reported that in March 2019, the Authority established a contract for legal services with Attorney Kevin Murphy. This contract provided the agency with two 1-year extensions at the discretion of the LHA. Mr. Wallace explained that the agency is happy with the performance of Attorney Murphy and is authorizing a 1-year extension.

Mr. Wallace explained that the Authority has been collaborating daily with our partners and our staff, communicating daily with our residents, and showing compassion to our residents and staff. The agency is monitoring the CDC website and other resources. The LHA is participating weekly in DHCD and HUD webinars to keep apprised of the latest developments, and the agency's actions are in line with current recommendations and those actions of other housing authorities. LHA residents have been very cooperative and are following LHA safety precautions that are in place. The dedication of the staff has been impressive. The agency is focused on cleaning, vacant unit preparation, and outdoor work. The agency is responding to emergency maintenance requests only during this time, using strict social distancing protocol.

Chairperson Shea asked if the extension for Attorney Murphy had to go to the Board for a vote. Mr. Wallace explained that the extension does not have to go to the Board for approval, but that the Executive Director was required to inform the Board in the event of a contract extension.

Chairperson Shea thanked Mr. Wallace for his staff comments, and he is confident the agency is doing their best to keep up with a very difficult situation.

## **EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT**

### **7.1.1 MOTION TO ACCEPT CONTRACT RECOMMENDATION, IFB 2019-11A, FOR AN ELEVATOR REPLACEMENT AT CENTRALVILLE GARDENS, AND AWARD CONTRACT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$368,000.00 TO, ENTERPRISE EQUIPMENT CO., INC., 276 LIBBEY PARKWAY, WEYMOUTH, MA 02189**

Commissioner Howard referenced page 4 of the finance report with respect to the designers estimate for beginning construction in June for the elevator replacement.

Commissioner Howard asked if there will be any delays to starting in June, given the current crisis. Laura Watts, Capital Asset Manager, explained that the start date will be July 1<sup>st</sup> and it is an 8-week schedule. Once the agency awards the contract, there is lead time for building the elevator car. Commissioner Howard asked if the deadline change will conflict with any other ongoing project schedules, including the handicap ramp installation at the Mercier Center. Mr. Wallace explained that the work is at two different AMPs and there will not be any conflicts.

Chairperson Shea asked if the 8-10-week lead time is typical for these types of projects. Ms. Watts explained that this is the first Board meeting the agency has had for the Board to review and approve the contract. Upon approval, the agency will be able to move forward with the process. Mr. Wallace explained

that this was a sole source procurement. The Housing Authority had to receive approval from HUD to award a sole source procurement, which the agency received on March 17<sup>th</sup>. Enterprise will be contacted after the Board approves the contract, and then the elevator car must be built. Chairperson Shea thanked Laura for her report.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Bernes and seconded by Commissioner McMahon

A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

Yeas: Chairperson Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard, Commissioner Marr, Vice Chairperson McMahon

Nays: None

The Chairperson declared the motion carried and the vote adopted.

**7.1.2 MOTION TO ACCEPT CONTRACT RECOMMENDATION, RFS 2020-1, FOR PROFESSIONAL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT OF BUILDING & ACCESSIBILITY UPGRADES AT 572-610 LAKEVIEW AVE, AND AWARD CONTRACT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$140,000.00 TO, NEXT PHASE STUDIOS INC., 344 BOYLSTON STREET, BOSTON MA 02116**

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Bernes and seconded by Commissioner Howard

A roll call was taken with the following results:

Yeas: Chairperson Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard, Commissioner Marr, Vice Chairperson McMahon

Nays: None

The Chairperson declared the motion carried and the vote adopted.

**7.1.3 MOTION TO APPROVE A TEMPORARY SICK LEAVE DONATION POLICY TO EXPIRE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE NATIONALLY DECLARED COVID-19 EMERGENCY, OR ON JUNE 30, 2020, WHICHEVER OCCURS SOONER**

Chairperson Shea asked that General Counsel, Attorney Kevin Murphy, provide an explanation for the Board. Attorney Murphy explained that he reviewed the policy and he believes that the policy is reasonable, and it will be beneficial to employees who do not have adequate sick leave to cover leaves due to the coronavirus emergency. The policy has been determined to be legal and he recommends that the Board approve. Chairperson Shea asked the Executive Director to share his thoughts on the temporary policy. Mr. Wallace explained that the coronavirus relief act does not cover all employees, and there was one employee that the act did not cover. Mr. Wallace was approached by other employees wishing to donate sick time to aid this employee. Mr. Wallace thought it was a good idea. Vice Chairperson McMahon expressed that he is also in favor of the temporary policy.

A motion to approve was made by Vice Chairperson McMahon and seconded by Commissioner Bernes

A roll call was taken with the following results:

Yeas: Chairperson Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard, Commissioner Marr, Vice Chairperson McMahon

Nays: None

The Chairperson declared the motion carried and the vote adopted.

#### **7.1.4 MOTION TO APPROVE AN INCREASE TO THE FEDERAL PUBLIC HOUSING AND SECTION 8 INCOME LIMITS EFFECTIVE, APRIL 1, 2020**

Chairperson Shea asked that Tha Chhan, Director of Leased Housing Programs provide an explanation for the Board. Mr. Chhan reported that under normal circumstances, HUD publishes the new income limits a few days after April 1<sup>st</sup>. This year, HUD published on March 31<sup>st</sup> and made the limits effective April 1<sup>st</sup>. The overall income limits are increased by 2%. The limit thresholds are for extremely low (30%), very low (50%), and low income (80%) of median income. For the Section 8 program, applicants will not be admitted to the program if their income exceed 50% of the median income. For the Federal Public Housing Program, the 80% of median income threshold is used to determine eligibility. The Housing Authority under Section 8 and Public Housing is required to place a family with incomes at least 75% of people below 30%, and 25% below 50% of the median income. Chairperson Shea thanked Mr. Chhan for his report.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Howard and seconded by Commissioner Marr

A roll call was taken with the following results:

Yeas: Chairperson Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard, Commissioner Marr, Vice Chairperson McMahon

Nays: None

The Chairperson declared the motion carried and the vote adopted.

#### **8. OLD BUSINESS**

None

#### **9. NEW BUSINESS**

None

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner McMahon thanked the staff for their efforts to address the coronavirus, and Chairperson Shea for a productive meeting. Chairperson Shea also thanked Vice Chairperson McMahon for his kind words, and the staff for their efforts in setting up the phone meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Marr and seconded by Commissioner Bernes

A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

Yeas: Chairperson Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard, Commissioner Marr, Vice Chairperson McMahon

Nays: None

The Chairperson declared the motion carried and the vote adopted

**Meeting adjourned: 5:45pm**

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**Secretary**