

**LOWELL HOUSING AUTHORITY**  
**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON**  
**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 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 Chairman Shea. Upon direction of the Chairperson, the Secretary called the roll of membership which resulted as follows:

Present: Commissioner Marr, Chairman Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard  
Absent: Vice Chairman 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.

**MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON MAY 13, 2020**

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

A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

Yea: Commissioner Marr, Chairman Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard

**RESIDENT CORRESPONDENCE**

None

**RESIDENT ORGANIZATION**

None

**SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None

**FINANCE REPORT**

Sherry Giblin, Chief Financial Officer reported Operating Statements as of 4/30/2020 were provided to the Board. Three out of the agency's four AMPs are operating at a gain. As anticipated, the Housing Authority is seeing these gains decrease as the year progresses. AMP 2 has realized an operating loss due to the electrical outage that occurred back in February. The LHA continues to seek grant funding to offset the cost of this project. The LHA does have available equity from the Central Office that can be

made available once all grant opportunities have been exhausted. As discussed at last month's meeting, the LHA received CARES Act funding. The LHA has been actively working with property managers and directors to identify and ensure that residents and staff have all the necessary services, supplies, and equipment needed to effectively respond to the ongoing COVID19 pandemic.

The agency is also moving forward with community room renovations agencywide. Community room renovations were originally budgeted at Concord River Mill and South Common Village in FY2020. The Authority had also budgeted for a trash compactor truck in FY2020. The truck was ordered and is in the process of being built. It was originally anticipated to be completed in late August, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this has been delayed to early October. As such, the agency will use these funds to increase the budget for community room renovations at South Common Village and to fund the community room renovations at AMP 4, which were not previously budgeted. The trash compactor truck budget will be deferred to FY 2021.

Chairman Shea thanked Ms. Giblin for her report.

#### **REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON**

None

#### **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Mr. Wallace reported that the agency continues to operate using CDC protocols, which includes social distancing and wearing masks. As the agency is moving into Phase II of the prescribed reopening plan, the agency has moved to full staffing of maintenance and property managers. The offices will continue to remain closed to the public, but office staff are conducting resident interactions via email, or drop boxes. Annual reexaminations, rent collection, and lease-ups are continuing as usual. The agency's maintenance is operating in a limited capacity performing exterior work, working in vacant units, and responding to emergency maintenance requests only. The Division of Leased Housing office and the administrative staff continue to perform work remotely. The agency has extended the outside cleaning contract to 4 days per week, through June 19<sup>th</sup>. The agency has a disinfecting services bid with a closing on Friday to extend the contract beyond June 19<sup>th</sup>. The agency continues to make masks available to residents. Mr. Wallace acknowledged the cooperation the agency has received from residents and outside vendors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chairman Shea commended Laura Watts, Capital Asset Manager for her efforts in redesigning the community rooms. Commissioner Bernes, thanked the LHA and Board for keeping her informed of the progress being made in the community rooms, and offered special thanks to Chairman Shea and Gary Wallace for their support of the community room project.

Mr. Garvey highlighted the work that is being performed in the community rooms. Mr. Garvey explained that the first steps in renovating the community rooms is to begin to clean them out. The community rooms that have been prioritized initially are City View Towers, South Common Village, and Centralville Gardens. Considerations have included new carpets and flooring, ceilings, window treatments, painting, furniture, and improved lighting. In phase II of this project, specifically at City View Towers, courtyards will be renovated to connect to the newly designed spaces. The agency is also considering bringing programming into our community rooms. With the guidance of Commissioner Joanie Bernes, the agency will explore ways to utilize the space, including arts and crafts, gardening, and entertainment. Significant

progress should be made in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Garvey thanked the Board and the residents for their input and expressed that he looks forward to seeing this project come to fruition.

Chairman Shea, thanked Mr. Garvey for his report. Chairman Shea expressed that the community room project is one that must be done for the residents, and that he has confidence in Laura Watts to lead this project.

#### ***REPORT OF THE SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR FOR UPDATE ON 5-YEAR PLAN***

Mary Ann Maciejewski, Special Projects Coordinator thanked Chairman Shea for asking her to attend the meeting. Ms. Maciejewski reported that the agency is in the process of putting together the annual plan for fiscal year 2021 and it will be available for public comment on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. The plan will then be presented to the Board for review and approval on September 9<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Maciejewski explained that she will be presenting on the progress in year 1 of the 5-year plan and believes that the Board will be pleased with agency progress. Ms. Maciejewski began with the agency's strategy to address housing needs. She reported that according to the consolidated plan for the City of Lowell, some residents are rent burdened due to the lack of affordable housing in the City and some at risk of homelessness. The Authority has worked to address this in the past year. The agency's Housing Opportunities for Persons with Aids (HOPWA) program began with 8 individuals served and there are now 13 individuals are now receiving services. The LHA collaborates with the Lowell Community Health Center for referrals. In 2019, the Lowell Housing Authority administered 103 Mainstream vouchers designed to help disabled families. The agency recently received 21 more vouchers through a competitive bid process and 15 vouchers through the CARES Act. The LHA was also awarded 5 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers to support veterans. These vouchers were administered in the past year to provide stable housing and supportive services to veterans in the Lowell area. This program is supported by the Office of Veterans Affairs in Bedford, MA.

Ms. Maciejewski reported on the agency goals of the past year. The first goal was the disposition of 87 units of scattered site housing. Ms. Maciejewski explained that the LHA has closed on 3 buildings, a total of 16 units. The net proceeds from the sale of these properties was \$1.35M. The properties were located on Oak Street, Roosevelt Place, and 863 Bridge Street. Negotiations are in progress for the sale of 3 additional buildings located at 17 Bassett Street, 67 W 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 591 Bridge Street for a total of 7 units. Fourteen additional buildings have signed purchase and sale agreements for a total of 64 units. With the sale, the agency is involved in relocating scattered site residents. To date, 14 families have been issued housing choice vouchers. Eleven families have decided to remain in place, and 1 family has relocated with family in Lowell. Twelve families have transferred to other public housing units. Thirty-five families intend to accept a housing choice voucher. Our residents and staff have worked well with the agency's Resident Advisory Agent. Residents whose buildings have been sold had a smooth transition to their new homes.

The second goal was to establish a comprehensive plan to address aging roofs, elevators, and other building systems. The 2020-2024 Capital Fund Plan is allocated for elevator upgrades and replacements at 6 locations at South Common Village, roof replacements at the Highland Parkway tri-plex, South Common Village, and Centralville Gardens, and an elevator replacement at Belvidere Heights, City View Towers, Francis Gatehouse and Centralville Gardens.

A third goal was the revitalization of the Hadley House. The Residents First Development Corporation has acquired the building and is working with the State to get land control at the site. The LHA is obtaining appraisals at LHA-owned land at Faulkner Street, Stackpole Street, and Broadway Street to be offered as a land swap for the property.

The fourth goal is to continue the rebranding efforts of the agency. This will include installation of digital signage across our developments. Increased communication has been a goal of the administration, and digital signage is one important tool to bring information to residents. The LHA has mapped out locations for digital signage and a formal bid package is being developed to begin this process.

The fifth goal is to update maintenance processes for a more efficient operation. After conducting an operational analysis in 2019, the LHA created a dedicated unit turnover team, which is comprised of four maintenance staff members. This resulted in a 150% reduction in turnover time, and in some instances, the ability to offer units to applicants three weeks sooner than before the team was established. This was accomplished through the dedication of team members and an improved inventory management system to ensure that staff members do not have to leave the apartment for tools or supplies to complete their work. A team-oriented approach is also being considered for landscaping and routine maintenance work. A one-bedroom unit turnover went from 25 days to 7 days, a 2 bedroom went from 37 days to 12 days, and a 3 bedroom went from 35 days to 17 days to turnover.

The sixth goal was to update the agency organizational chart, job descriptions, and the LHA's personnel policy. The organizational chart has been updated and shared with the Board of Commissioners. Job descriptions have been updated to remove language and job functions that were obsolete. New job duties were added to meet the current operational needs of the agency. The personnel policy has been updated and will be sent to the Personnel Subcommittee for review.

The seventh goal was to improve staff training and development. In fiscal year 2019, the LHA staff at all levels participated in online training, in-person, and other venues across the state. Maintenance and management staff participated in REAC inspection training. Administrative staff participated in procurement training and our resident coordinators attended a senior needs assessment as well as fair housing training. A full report of all staff training for the last year will be included in the annual plan.

The eight goal was to create a set aside of Housing Choice Vouchers for public housing participants of the Family Self-Sufficiency program who have graduated and ready for homeownership. This was approved in the 5-year plan by the LHA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). A voucher will provide a 15-year period of mortgage assistance, adjusted for family income. This will ensure the financial stability and reduce the risk of foreclosure.

The ninth goal was to expand grant writing efforts at the Authority for the sustainability of the LHA. From 2019 and into early 2020, the LHA was awarded \$5.3M in grant funding. The largest grant award was the Jobs Plus Grant. The Authority had pursued the Jobs Plus grant for a 3-year period and in 2019 the LHA was successful and awarded \$2.3M. This grant will allow the LHA to partner with MassHire Lowell Career Center to provide 200 families at the North Common Village

with employment counseling, training, and employment referrals. Services will be provided on site at the Mercier Center to those that are unemployed, underemployed, or seeking a different career path. This grant was awarded to less than 20 housing authorities across the country annually.

The agency was awarded \$116, 816 for an Emergency Safety and Security grant to address crime issues at North Common Village, and the agency has used the funds for new cameras across the property.

The Resident Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency, or ROSS grant, provided the LHA with \$239,250 for resident services at 4 of the agency's elderly developments.

The LHA was awarded the Modernization to Independence grant of \$162,916 for the Modernization of the state Dublin Street property to facilitate federalization of the site.

Ms. Maciejewski reported on the Family Self-Sufficiency program, which had a successful year. 1 participant will complete the program and purchase a home at the end of June. In the next 12 months, it is projected that 8 additional FSS participants will qualify for homeownership given their status in the program. Participants must work to improve credit scores and increase ESCROW balances by maintaining employment. The FSS program will be recruiting additional participants from the Public Housing developments to increase program participation.

The state now requires the housing authority to develop an annual plan, which is out for public comment. A public hearing will be held on July 8<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 and the State does require all commissioners to attend.

Commissioner Howard thanked Ms. Maciejewski for her report.

Chairman Shea thanked Ms. Maciejewski for her report. Chairman Shea asked if there were any disappointments in the past 12 months. Ms. Maciejewski explained that there was a lot accomplished in year one, all while maintaining the day-to-day operations, and she was not disappointed. Chairman Shea asked about the scheduling of resident meetings. Ms. Maciejewski explained that the agency is required to hold a Resident Advisory Board meeting to discuss the 5-year plan, but the agency typically holds two meetings. The first Resident Advisory Board meeting was held on February 20<sup>th</sup> and the meeting was well attended by about 40 residents. The second meeting will be held before presenting the Plan to the Board for final approval. Chairman Shea asked if the LHA is paying the prevailing wage for work to be performed. Mr. Wallace notes that for any LHA Capital Planning job, the LHA must pay prevailing wages.

#### ***REPORT OF ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON CAPITAL PLANNING UPDATES***

Mr. Garvey reported that at North Common Village there has been a lot of work at the development, including roof repairs, snow guards and trim painting. The project is substantially complete to date, but the agency is waiting on a gutter replacement to finish the job. The vendor is Aulson Construction. The site improvement project at the Mercier Center is underway and rear steps have been demolished. There will be a new handicap ramp to be installed, which is anticipated to be installed this week. The landscaping contractor, Belko Landscaping will work on the front of the building to reconfigure the front ramps. There is a site improvement project ongoing at North Common with contractor, Family Paving. The project is ahead of schedule for

new walkways to assist with pedestrian traffic. This project also includes fencing. Mr. Garvey thanked Laura Watts for leading these projects.

South Common Village is also receiving a lot of work with the primary goal to improve safety and security for our residents. Work is underway to do landscaping to remove problematic trees and bushes to lay the groundwork for additional site improvement being presented to the Board tonight. The site improvements are based on physical safety with an eye toward CPTED or Crime Prevention through Environmental Design. The project includes walkways, lighting, fencing, seating areas and a complete redesign of the central courtyard. The agency is seeking to create an inviting space for the residents of South Common Village.

There is a ventilation project ongoing at Highland Parkway. Ambient is the contractor who is conducting the work, which should be completed in the next two weeks. The agency is also approaching the second phase of kitchen and bath renovations. The agency is working on addressing soft costs of the project including moving and relocation services for LHA residents impacted by construction. The projects at Highland Parkway are being led by Jonathan Goldfield.

The elevator for Centralville Gardens has been ordered and will be delivered in mid-July. The agency will hire Resident Assistants to help residents during the installation. Mr. Garvey thanked the Residents for their cooperation during the last outage. He pointed out that this outage will be much shorter at 6-8 weeks, and he is confident that the residents and staff will work well together during the installation.

Chairman Shea thanked Mr. Garvey for his report. Chairman Shea asked that the finance subcommittee meetings resume. Chairman Shea thought that board motion 7.1.1 should have been brought to the finance subcommittee for discussion before bringing to the full Board. Mr. Wallace apologized and explained that moving forward any item above \$50k will be brought to the finance subcommittee to discuss. Ms. Giblin explained that the original bid for 7.1.1 was over budget and was rejected. This is the second time the job has gone out to bid, and Laura Watts is available for questions regarding this project. Mr. Wallace urged the Board to embrace the project.

Laura Watts, Capital Asset Manager, was called upon to discuss the project. Ms. Watts explained that she is a Master of Science candidate for Design and Human Health. Ms. Watts explained that the focus on the South Common project is on the resident population to strengthen neighborhoods and place identity. This requires careful attention to CPTED. Ms. Watts explained that she applied a great deal of science behind the project. Ms. Watts reported that this project began as a school project and has transitioned to an LHA project. She has been considering this work for over a year to address the health and social development at South Common Village.

Commissioner Howard asked for clarification on which phase of the project the Authority is currently addressing. Ms. Watts reported that this motion before the Board is for phase II and phase III. The first bid was one complete project, but the bid was rejected because it was over budget. This time around, the agency scoped out the work into four phases. Phase I was the landscaping work that has been completed. Masonry work will occur as part of Phase II and a garden construction will be in the final phase in a later year. The work is all about trying to build a sense of community and ownership of the project. Phase one was completed for landscape demolition on Gorham Street and tree removal in the interior of the property. With CPTED, the

design was created based on opening site lines to prevent drug use, and residents will ultimately feel safer. Chairman Shea asked about the projected start date for the project. Ms. Watts explained that the project would begin by the end of the month and completed in early fall. Chairman Shea asked if the job would be paying prevailing wages. Ms. Watts explained that prevailing wage would be paid. Chairperson Shea asked if the Authority would have a Clerk of Works to oversee the project. Ms. Watts reported that she will be supervising the project along with John Tsoumas, the agency's Construction Project Supervisor.

Chairman Shea asked about the references for Sunshine Paving. Rita Brousseau, Chief Procurement Office, explained that as part of the bid, bidders had to submit a list of references for consideration. Those references are vetted by the designer, and Jonathan Goldfield and Laura Watts if necessary. Laura Watts worked with Allen and Major with respect to references. Chairman Shea asked to see the references. The agency will provide Chairman Shea a full list of all references. Chairman Shea is confident in the judgement of the Authority with respect to the bid.

Attorney Murphy recommended an amendment to the motion language. The motion will be amended to read "accept the bid" of Sunshine Paving replacing "accept the contract"

## **EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT**

### **7.1.1 MOTION TO ACCEPT BID RECOMMENDATION, IFB 2020-5A, FOR SOUTH COMMON VILLAGE SITE IMPROVEMENTS, AND AWARD CONTRACT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$920,000.00 TO, SUNSHINE PAVING CORPORATION, 89 MEADOWBROOK RD., NORTH CHELMSFORD, MA 01863**

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

A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

Yea: Commissioner Marr, Chairman Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard

Nay: None

The Chairperson declared the motion carried and the vote adopted.

### **7.1.2 MOTION TO APPROVE A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE THE LOWELL HOUSING AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR THE 2020 DHCD SELF SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM (SSP) FOR STATE-AIDED PUBLIC HOUSING AND MASSACHUSETTS RENTAL VOUCHER PROGRAM (MRVP) GRANT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Wallace explained that there has always been a disparity between state and federal housing residents, with respect to resident services. The State has announced that they have a grant for a Resident Service Coordinator for the agency's state properties. Eunice Zeigler has been working on submitting the grant to the State.

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

A roll call was taken with the following results:

Yea: Commissioner Marr, Chairperson Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard

Nays: None

The Chairperson declared the motion carried and the vote adopted.

**7.1.3 MOTION TO ACCEPT PROJECT DOCUMENTS, IFB 2019-1, FOR FRANCIS GATEHOUSE KITCHEN AND BATH MODERNIZATIONS, PHASE 4, AND APPROVE FINAL PAYMENT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$24,700.00 TO, MARINO CONSTRUCTION INC., 121 PARKER STREET, CHELMSFORD, MA 01824**

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

A roll call was taken with the following results:

Yea: Commissioner Marr, Chairman Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard

Nays: None

The Chairperson declared the motion carried and the vote adopted.

**7.1.4 MOTION TO ACCEPT PROJECT DOCUMENTS, IFB 2018-10, DHCD/FISH 160096, FOR REAR STEP REPLACEMENT AT 189 WALKER STREET (705-3), AND APPROVE FINAL PAYMENT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$3,145.34 TO, MJS CONSTRUCTION, 25 POPES LANE, DANVERS, MA 01923**

Chairman Shea asked for Jonathan Goldfield, Capital Asset Manager to explain the project. Chairman Shea asked about the delay with respect to completing the job. Mr. Goldfield explained that the agency was not happy with the work of the contractor. The agency had to be vigilant to ensure that the contractor was complying with specifications. The project was supposed to be a simple repair, but with additional work the job became a structural issue. Winter also delayed the progress. Mr. Goldfield worked with engineers, received legal advice, and worked with the State to intervene to ensure the job was completed. He is personally unhappy with the delays but is glad that the project is now complete.

Chairman Shea asked about any penalties for late work. Mr. Goldfield explained that the agency has little recourse. The only option would be for the agency to have another contractor complete the work, and then sue the General Contractor for the difference in price for job. The agency will file an evaluation with the State and this contractor will not receive a good reference.

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

A roll call was taken with the following results:

Yea: Commissioner Marr, Chairman Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard

Nays: None

The Chairperson declared the motion carried and the vote adopted.

**8. OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **9. NEW BUSINESS**

Chairman Shea indicated for the benefit of the full Board of Commissioners that the next meeting will be July 8<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 pm for the State Annual Plan.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner Marr and seconded by Commissioner Howard.

A roll call was taken with the following results:

Yea: Commissioner Marr, Chairman Shea, Commissioner Bernes, Commissioner Howard

Nays: None

The Chairperson declared the motion carried and the vote adopted.

**Meeting adjourned: 6:15pm**

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**Secretary**