

Boston Housing Authority Resident Advisory Board Meeting April 13, 2023 (external notes)

Minutes from both the February and March meetings were approved (February minutes weren't available for review at March meeting).

1/ BHA & Sustainability: Kathleen Magee from BHA reported that BHA is developing a Sustainability Plan which discusses how people and the environment interact for the long-term health & resiliency of the community. The plan covers Buildings, Communities & Operations, and establishes a number of goals in each area, including the reduction of greenhouse gases, reducing and ultimately eliminating reliance on fossil fuels, efforts to improve public health, having trees & natural areas nearby, promoting public safety & connection of public housing to the broader community, increasing families' economic self-sufficiency through programs such as FSS and AMP-UP, etc. She shared a number of slides on this and BHA will be looking for feedback on the plan, which will be posted soon on BHA's website. A RAB member raised the question about how all of this is doable in existing buildings where there isn't enough money to do the needed work (such as venting to reduce asthma risks); Kathleen acknowledged that there were challenges with this, and with meeting Mayor Wu's goal of eliminating reliance on fossil fuels in public housing by 2030—but she also noted that on the national, state, and local level, funds were being made available for sustainability initiatives and this was why it was important to pull this together. Mac McCreight from GBLS asked if there were any goals for the BHA's Leased Housing program or for any of the redevelopment partnerships. Kathleen said that the City & BHA, along with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, were working on an incentive for private owners to install energy-saving, resiliency improvements which will reduce costs (this hasn't been finalized yet). Redevelopment provides an opportunity to work with partners to put in improvements that will make the site sustainable. Kathleen provided her email to the RAB and welcomed further feedback.

2/ NLIHC Convention: Two of the 5 RAB members who attended the conference submitted written reports, and 3 elected to give oral reports.

One member described some of the sessions and the dinner she attended, where discussions focused on homelessness and evictions. Several RAB members and Eric Shupin from CHAPA met with Representative Lori Trahan, who pledged support for public housing and encouraged them to continue telling their stories.

Another RAB member spoke in detail about her experience at the conference. She shared information on several initiatives led by federal agencies which were presented at the conference. These included establishing a Renters' Bill of Rights (Treasury Department/Federal Housing Finance Agency), enhancing consumer protections during landlord background screenings (Consumer Protection Bureau), combatting discrimination based on source of income (Department of Justice), and implementing uniform inspection standards for public housing (HUD). She also spoke about awards that were presented to tenant organizers from Miami and Illinois, and about her visits with several legislators on Capitol Hill.

A third RAB member gave a brief report, noting that most material had been covered by the other reports. She emphasized the need for visibility and unity, and encouraged RAB members to go out and talk about these issues with residents in their communities.

3/ Budget Committee: The Acting Treasurer reported on the March bank statement, with an initial balance over \$24,000, and an ending balance of over \$19,500; details were included in the bank statement provided at the meeting (with a number of the payments made related to the NLIHC conference.) Report was approved. One RAB member abstained from the approval because she had not received a hard copy of materials prior to the meeting (from the Budget Committee).

Mac noted that one recommendation from the Committee was to authorize approval of expense reports if a chair is not available—first, the person would go to the vice-chair, and if that person was also not available, then it could go to any other chair. It was moved, seconded, and approved to make this change.

A RAB member asked whether anyone had heard from the former Treasurer since it had been months since he had appeared at a RAB meeting. A RAB member also on the Budget Committee said that the Committee had tried a variety of ways to reach him without any response. It was moved, seconded, and approved that a letter be sent by the Acting Secretary informing the former Treasurer of his removal from the RAB for repeated non-attendance without excused absence (Mac agreed to assist the Acting Secretary with that letter).

4/ Mass. Union Spring Convention: This will be on May 5-7 in Marlborough. The Acting Treasurer noted that the Budget Committee had discussed people staying over Saturday night, and gave prices for what it would cost for single occupancy rooms, as well as registration fee; she also priced what it would cost for a 15-person van to go there and back. Mac noted that another option could be for people to go for one day and not stay over, but then they'd likely need to arrange their own transportation (drive there). No one expressed interest in that, but 5 RAB members expressed interest in staying over and using the van. One of those five said that in the past the RAB had voted to go on Friday night as well and she was arranging for a resident from her site to do that (not on RAB funds). Mac noted that the Budget Committee recommendation had just been for the one overnight. A RAB member noted that if there was only interest for 5 to attend (as opposed to say 9), there should be sufficient funds, and it was moved, seconded, and approved to have all 5 stay over for two nights. The Acting Treasurer will follow up with Mass. Union. A RAB member noted that the materials that Mass. Union put out didn't say what would be happening at workshops; Simone Layne from BHA noted that according to Mass. Union's website, there will be a presentation on 4/20 saying what will be occurring at the convention.

5/ Other Old/Unfinished Business:

- (a) *Whether to Go Back to In Person Meetings*: The RAB, with one abstention, voted that it wanted to return to in-person meetings. A RAB alternate made a motion that there

should be a hybrid option offered, and it was seconded and approved. Fred Gomes of BHA & Simone said they were looking into different sites and could report back on this; logistics about food & taxi vouchers will need to be figured out.

- (b) *Taxi Vouchers*: More taxi vouchers need to be ordered, but ITOA had made arrangements to send vouchers to the former Treasurer's home. It was noted that RAB-related materials should go to the RAB office at 52 Chauncy Street, and not individual addresses. It was moved, seconded, and approved that ITOA should be notified that all future materials should be sent to the RAB office and to discontinue any prior *arrangements*.
- (c) *Annual Plan Update*: Neither GBLS nor BHA staff present knew what the Annual Plan update was (i.e., did HUD approve the PHA Plan submitted in January). The Elderly/Disabled Public Housing Chair asked that this information be shared with the RAB as soon as it's available.
- (d) *RAB Memorandum of Agreement*: It was confirmed that this has been signed by the chairs and by the acting Treasurer. This covers the 3-year period from April 1, 2023 through March 31, 2026.
- (e) *City Life and Zip Code Meetings*: Steve Meacham from City Life Vida Urbana (CLVU) thanked the RAB again for its resolution last month in support of rent control, and he had forwarded to those leading the campaign who were glad to have it. He noted that for about 15 years, the BHA and CLVU had, with the RAB's involvement, provided for a series of zip code mailings and meetings where Section 8 tenants in a zip code would be informed of a meeting open to them to answer questions, etc. CLVU would do the flyer and BHA would stuff the envelopes to protect privacy. About 40-60 people would attend these. No meetings had happened since the pandemic, but CLVU had asked to restart them, starting with Zip Code 02119 (Roxbury), with a date of either June 3 or June 10 (the earlier proposed date of May 13th won't work out), at the First Church near Nubian Square.

6/ New Business: Simone noted that there will be a Virtual College Admissions Workshop that BHA is sponsoring on April 27 on Zoom, geared toward high school students, their parents and guardians and scholarship opportunities. Mac asked if this would be for public housing & Leased Housing alike. (He asked because in the past, for example, the Northeastern scholarship is just for public housing, although the RAB had asked if it could be for both groups.) Simone said she thought it was for everyone but she'll check.

Mac noted that at the last Budget Committee, one idea that was thrown out was whether there should be officer elections, and whether they should possibly be early. However, this wasn't something for the Budget Committee to act on, so it was being passed on to the Board. A RAB Budget Committee member had raised an objection because the RAB is supposed to have new elections, and any officers elected might only serve a short period and then there would be new officer elections with the newly elected RAB Board. Another RAB member objected to the idea for the same reason. However, people did think that the Board should ratify the Acting

Treasurer and Secretary being respectively Treasurer and Secretary until the next election.
This was moved, seconded, and approved.

Evaluation: Meeting went well, was productive, no drama or arguments, good work by all involved.