

Boston Housing Authority Resident Advisory Board (BHA RAB) meeting 5/11/23--External notes—first in-person RAB meeting since 2/20 (with Zoom option)

The minutes from prior meeting were approved (with addition that a RAB Leased Housing member had been at April meeting, but had joined late by Zoom)

1/ Race Equity & Social Justice Initiative Taylor Cain of the BHA presented on this, and noted that the statement was in the RAB packet and BHA intended to include it in job descriptions, requests for contracts, trainings, etc. If RAB members have questions or comments, feel free to contact her. Mac McCreight from GBLs noted that Kathy Brown from Boston Tenants Coalition had also been in touch about a related but separate piece, which was BHA's and the City's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Goals & Objectives. The RAB had reviewed that piece last fall and Bob Terrell was to present on it, but had left the BHA before it could happen. BTC has gotten funding to try to solicit resident involvement in how AFFH goals and objectives are implemented. Simone noted this was a topic to get on a future RAB agenda. Meena said this was very important—people may think this is divisive, but it is not, and it is important to educate the community.

2/ Hailey Disposition Proposal Joe Bamberg from BHA presented on this, and had a handout which on one side had a site plan, and on the other side had certain principles/commitments for how work would be done. 1/3 of the Hailey site is being redeveloped by Centre Street Partners (a combination of The Community Builders, Urban Edge, and Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corp.), and all of the public housing units there will be torn down and replaced with Section 8 Project-Based Voucher (PBV) units, as well as additional “affordable” units (below market but not with deep subsidy). Last year, Mayor Wu and the City had committed \$52 million for BHA to do improvements to the rest of the site, and so BHA is now pulling together a disposition plan for the rest of the site. BHA will modernize, but not tear down, the remaining buildings and some level of relocation will be required, but people will have the right to return to right-sized units at the site. All of the units will be converted to Section 8 because the level of subsidy that Section 8 allows will be much higher than with public housing (public housing would be an average of \$1200/month, where Section 8 can range from \$2000 to \$4000/month. BHA would preserve key public housing protections (such as grievance rights and recognition and financial support for the tenants' organization). BHA would also continue to operate the units through a fully-controlled entity (rather than it going to other owners/developers).

Questions were raised about whether tenants needed to be in good standing and could be denied the right to return—Joe said BHA generally will allow tenants a right to return (Mac noted that it might be necessary to enter into a Section 8 repayment plan or other terms on the Section 8 if the tenant owed money to BHA at the time of subsidy conversion or there were conduct/behavior issues that needed to be addressed). Others expressed some concern about abandoning public housing for Section 8, and whether there might be future threats to the Section 8 program. Joe said that this was a good discussion to have, but that by and large the PBV program would be more protected and there was a larger lobbying group supportive of Section 8. Some said they had concern if tenant-based Section 8 took a bigger hit since they were already at risk. Joe noted that BHA intended to get its proposal to HUD by June 1st but would take any comments or

questions until then and would seek to address them as part of its submission. Joe provided his number in case people wanted to reach him.

3/ Budget Committee Report Someone noticed that while the materials mailed out included the bank statements for March and April, they did not include the Budget Committee report for April (Mac had circulated these notes to the Budget Committee after its meeting on 5/4). These can be sent out (along with the ones for next month). The Treasurer reported on the bank balance at the beginning and end of April.

4/ Mass. Union Spring Convention Oral statements were provided by 5 RAB members for what they got out of the recent Mass. Union of Public Housing spring convention in Marlborough last weekend. A Family Public Housing RAB member was elected to the Mass. Union policy Board. Mass. Union is pushing to increase tenant participation funding for state public housing to \$25/unit to match what HUD does, and DHCD is discussing a public housing mediation program. There were workshops on leadership and building your tenant organization, as well as on legislation. There was a gala to recognize Jack Cooper's long service as the director of Mass. Union (which Jack used to also recognize other Mass. Union leaders), and Sarah Byrnes was introduced as the new director of Mass. Union and thanked the Mass. Union resident leaders for all their support. (Sarah called on a RAB Family Public Housing member, who had worked with her as a peer leader when they were both at the Mel King Institute, to talk about how organizing is like spaghetti. (These notes can't do justice to all that was said, and hopefully can be supplemented by others.)

5/ Unfinished/New Business, etc. It was noted that the Leased Housing Chair had informed Fred that she is taking a leave of absence, starting with this month. Mac noted that under the bylaws, initial leaves of absence are for 3 months (unless someone says they want something shorter), and toward the end of the leave, the RAB checks back to see if the person is returning or needs a further 3-month extension. In the meantime, the Leased Housing vice-chair will be in the rotation for chairing, and will chair the June meeting, and would also be serving on the Budget Committee as acting Leased Housing chair. She asked if there were ways she could get information to contact BHA Leased Housing members. It was noted that while this was private information (outside of the Leased Housing members on the RAB), BHA has allowed information to go to people for the CLVU "zip code" meeting, for which there is one in June, and so maybe something could go in that notice. In addition, as the RAB gears up for RAB elections, there will be general mailings to Leased Housing participants for the elections and so things could go out with that. The Leased Housing Vice-Chair said that she would like to set up a special meeting with the RAB Leased Housing members prior to the next RAB meeting, but she will need to coordinate with Fred Gomes & Simone Layne, the BHA RAB liaisons, to figure out the best time & place for that.

There was some information about grants for neighborhood security that could be pursued. There were other topics on the agenda that several members wanted to cover, but by this point it was 8 p.m. and several cabs had arrived and so those other items were tabled and the RAB adjourned without doing a post-meeting evaluation.

