

MINUTES
MADISON HOUSING AUTHORITY
June 15, 2021 REGULAR MEETING

Chairperson Lois Bhatt called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM via Zoom video meeting. The following Commissioners answered as present:

Lois Bhatt, Mark Chiarolanza, Diane Driscoll, Melissa Elias, Mark McBride, Caridad Reyes and Jeffrey Smith.

Also present were Tanya Van Order, Executive Director, Jacqueline Gray, Housing Manager, Astri Baillie, Council Liaison and Terrence Corrison, MHA Attorney.

Ms. Van Order read the NJ Open Public Meetings Act Notice: Both adequate and electronic notice of this meeting has been provided by the Secretary of the Housing Authority of the Borough of Madison by preparing an Annual Notice dated January 12, 2021, setting forth the date, time and place of this meeting. Said notice was filed with the Clerk of the Borough of Madison, forwarded to newspapers of local circulation and to the persons requesting it and posted to the Madison Housing Authority website. This meeting is being conducted remotely in accordance with the Authority's Emergency Remote Meeting Procedures and N.J.A.C. 5:39-1(h).

Approval of the Minutes

Commissioners Driscoll and Elias moved and seconded approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 18, 2021. The minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote.

Council Liaison Report

Ms. Baillie reported that the Borough received a conditional judgement of repose at its most recent hearing with Judge Gaus on May 27th. Giralda Farms is seeking alternative uses of its property including a potential residential and affordable housing development. The Land Use Subcommittee of the Planning Board is involved in evaluating this development and its potential impacts on Borough services, Department of Ed., etc. Ms. Baillie also reported that Drew University is divesting from various land holding to raise cash. They are interested in selling the Drew Forest and are selling the units they own in the Copper Beach condo complex on Loantaka Way, which will involve rezoning this property to residential use.

Report of Chairperson

Ms. Bhatt reported that Mark McBride was instrumental in assisting the Borough during the selection phase of choosing the developer for the Walnut St./Community Pl. LIHTC development and was highly effective in bringing his expertise to the discussion. Mark's idea to use eight MHA vouchers saved the Borough almost \$1M. Additionally, the contact with the developer has been written to include a right of first refusal to MHA in 15 years.

Ms. Bhatt further reported that in the design phase, Tanya Van Order was included on the committee at Mark McBride's request. Ms. Bhatt also offered for MHA to be a focus group for the design committee. However, the Mayor does not see a need to expand the group beyond the current members at this point.

Report of Executive Director

Ms. Van Order reported the progress of the John Avenue conversion. The contractor, Hotz Development Group, Inc., confirmed that the siding, exterior trim, drywall and spackle work has been completed. The sanding/painting is nearly finished. Bathroom fixtures have been installed and kitchen cabinets should arrive in early July. Interior trim work is scheduled for next week. The second-floor units require a special topping, which is part of a floor-to-floor isolation fire separation assembly and includes a sound deadening mat, which Hotz hopes to have installed within the next few days. After completion of this installation, the tile and vinyl plank flooring will be installed shortly thereafter. Hotz is coordinating with PSE&G for installation of the new gas meters, which will complete the underground utility work and permit scheduling sidewalk concrete work, patio fencing and landscaping. The anticipated lease-up date for the new families is August 1st.

Ms. Van Order explained the deficit on the enclosed budget to actual. This occurs annually due to the timing of the annual employer appropriations for pension, which is paid in full April 1st. This accounts for the (\$46,814) in the category of General Expenses/Employee Benefits. Also, under General Expenses, the annual insurance assessment, which is billed after the budget gets approved, came in approximately \$12,000 higher than budgeted. Lastly, \$11,000 was written off in former tenant debt. This line, while slightly over budget, will not increase again this budget year. Due to the substantial administrative fees, we earn for both MHA and SHA RAD PBV programs, which are paid at the end of each quarter, by the end of the first quarter 6/30/21, we will show a surplus.

Ms. Van Order provided an update on the HUD request to allow the use of excess land to build new affordable homes. She continues to work with Cheryl Fox, Director of Coordination & Compliance, to satisfy documentation HUD needs to approve the request to release 4 excess, undeveloped parcels of property within MHA's RAD Use Agreements. Each of MHA's seven properties has a separate RAD Use Agreement and HUD has requested an updated Title Report for Belmont Ave, Loantaka Way, John Ave & Chateau Thierry Avenue. She is also working with Scott King who handled this matter previously to gather the information and complete the other items, including Lakeland Bank's agreement to release the vacant land from the mortgage lien and a few other HUD forms related to Use Restriction Covenants and Partial Release of the RAD Use Agreement.

Ms. Van Order discussed the resolution amending the Shared Services Agreement with Summit Housing Authority due to Summit HA's request for changes to the agreement.

Ms. Van Order explained the resolution to adopt a Policy Addressing the Protection and Safe Treatment of Minors. This policy outlines the responsibilities of MHA to appropriately screen and train all staff, volunteers and partners (such as the FSS case manager) to promote the safety and well-being of minors. The policy states that the Board of Commissioners is responsible for understanding and complying with this policy. An online course for Employment Practices and Protecting Children is available and will be forwarded to all Board members for enrollment.

Ms. Van Order addressed the two resolutions amending the Section 8 Administrative Plan. The first provides an additional option to assist eligible individuals living in shared apartment or home rentals with housing choice voucher assistance. The second is an update to MHA's existing plan that expands the ability to project-base housing choice vouchers for use in existing affordable developments, such as the 24 units of housing at the Firehouse Apartments and the Robert T. Burroughs Apartments, as well as the planned 8 units of homeless designated housing in the Borough sponsored LIHTC project.

Lastly, Ms. Van Order noted that New Jersey is working on a “Ban the Box” bill which would provide a more nuanced approach to reviewing applicants with criminal records, including felonies. This is part of an effort to remove the significant barriers to housing to individuals with criminal records, who are disproportionately people of color. Our admissions policies will need to be reviewed and updated when this law is passed. There have also been a lot of proposed changes to New Jersey’s Eviction court in preparation for an eventual end to the eviction moratorium, which could be extended through January 2022. The changes proposed will put more emphasis on pre-trial settlements conducted virtually.

Report of Housing Manager

Ms. Gray reported on RAD PBV rent collection, and RAD/Section 8 HCV recertification, units under lease and administrative fees are attached and made a part of these Minutes.

Ms. Gray informed the Board that the attorney will be drafting legal notices for two tenants regarding non-rental related lease violations. Both tenants are exhibiting behaviors that are affecting other tenants’ right to peaceful enjoyment and that violate the terms of their lease.

Ms. Gray announced that Zufall has scheduled upcoming events for the seniors for June and July.

NewBridge Services will be offering a workshop for the seniors titled: Tools to Thrive: Navigating the “New Normal”. The focus of this workshop will be on stressors and post-pandemic worries, as well as how to manage as limitations are eased.

Committee Reports

Ms. Bhatt explained the revised committee structure of three committees and their purpose. The three committees will be: 1) Finance Committee chaired by Mark McBride; 2) Personnel Committee, comprised of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson; 3) Strategic Planning Committee chaired by Mark Chiarolanza, with the goal of creating a 5-year strategic plan for the Housing Authority. This committee will also function in the capacity of the former Buildings and Grounds Committee. Additionally, Ms. Bhatt reported that the Public Relations functions will now be handled by Office Administrator Jessica Kirchenbauer.

Development Committee: Mr. McBride provided a recap of the opportunities and challenges of the Walnut Street/Community Place Borough sponsored LIHTC development. He stated that he is pleased that the Borough is implementing important controls over the project through Madison HA right of first refusal offer 15-year compliance period ends, putting the Borough in the “driver’s seat” which is appropriate given the assets they are bringing to the project. Mr. McBride expressed disappointment in the current design plan for Walnut St. and acknowledged that he was offered an opportunity to present an alternative layout for the site. He urged MHA Board members to engage in the process since the authority will likely assume ownership of the property in 15 years.

Ms. Baillie stated that Borough elected officials have the utmost confidence in the developer, RPM, and that the design reflects the Borough’s learning and understanding from their experience in 2015 when they encountered passionate objections from Walnut Street residents. Ms. Baillie emphasized that the Borough needs the support and cooperation of the Housing Authority for this project to succeed, which is a major component of the Borough’s Round 3 affordable housing settlement.

Public Comment

None.

Old Business

None

New Business

None.

Correspondence

Thank You Letter for Financial Gift Made to Offset Utility Expenses for Low-Income Madison Residents

Rutgers Certificate of Completion for Municipal Finance Administration for Public Purchasing Personnel for Jacqueline Gray

Resolutions

21-15-6-1 Resolution Approving Payment of Invoices

Commissioners Smith and Bhatt moved and seconded approval of the resolution; The roll call was unanimous, and the Resolution was approved.

21-15-6-3 Resolution pulled; to be considered in July meeting

Consent Agenda for Resolutions 21-15-6-2, 21-15-6-4 and 21-15-6-5:

21-15-6-2 Resolution Approving an Amended Shared Service Agreement with the Summit HA

21-15-6-4 Resolution Approving an Amendment to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher & RAD Project-Based Voucher Administrative Plan to Allow for Shared Housing

21-15-6-5 Resolution Approving an Amendment to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher & RAD Project-Based Voucher Administrative Plan to Project Base Housing Choice Vouchers.

Commissioners Driscoll and Chiarolanza moved and seconded consent agenda; The roll call was unanimous, and the Consent Agenda was approved.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board, Commissioner Bhatt moved for adjournment at 5:40 P.M.

Next meeting: July 20, 2021, at 4:30 PM via Zoom meeting video conference.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline Gray
Housing Manager