

Fitchburg Housing Authority Minutes – Regular Meeting

Canton Valley Community Room, Fitchburg, MA

June 17, 2015

PRESENT:

Paul Fontaine, Chair

Mary Giannetti, Vice Chair

Linda Byrne, Treasurer

David Rousseau, Assistant Treasurer

Mark Jackson, member

ALSO PRESENT:

Peter Proulx, Secretary

Benjamin Gold, Asst. Exec. Director

Denise Ivaldi, Recording Secretary

There were tenants present with the following comments:

- a. A resident asked if there would be a fence on the Blossom St. side of the building as there is on Day St. side. She added that people are walking by and looking in windows. *The E.D. stated it was not planned to have anything there, but we will take a look, perhaps some type of hedge.*
- b. When there is a complaint against a resident, how long before Cathy takes action. *The E.D. replied that he couldn't discuss any specifics. He added that Cathy, Anna and Cindy are very diligent. They could still be working on an issue, but residents can talk about these issues with Cathy.*
- c. Are dogs allowed in the Community Room? Some tenants with dogs stay in the Community Room for ½ hour or 45 minutes. *The E.D. replied it was possible a resident was bitten by a dog. We will review the pet policy.*
- d. A neighbor of 95 Clinton St. was also at the meeting. Wanted to know what was going on with that house. *The E.D. replied that the board has not voted on that yet. He explained the process of selling housing authority property. In order to keep the house affordable, it can be sold for \$1 as long as new owner keeps it affordable for 30 years.*

The neighbor added that people go through the property, there is a high wall with no fence which is dangerous. *The E.D. replied he was not aware of this, will look at the property again. The Chair added that he is an advocate of selling property, unfortunately we have to go through local laws and it takes time.*

1. The Chair asked for a roll call and declared a quorum present; the meeting was called to order at 8:40 a.m.
2. Linda Byrne made a motion to accept the minutes of the May 20, 2015 meeting, as well as the minutes of the April 15th Executive Session. David Rousseau seconded the motion; all in favor; the motion passed unanimously.
3. The Executive Director Report:
 - a. Smoking policies – The board approved the new policy at the July meeting (different for each elderly complex). We have one last resident meeting to schedule.
 - b. No added notes for Leominster, Lunenburg and Sterling.
4. Financial Report:
 - a. Page F3 – Line 2806: Reserves are at 14%, last year they climbed to 20%. DHCD finally approved the 2015 budget; reserves will now go back to 20%.
 - b. Page F4 – Very good in a number of areas. Rents were budgeted at \$242.71 per unit/per month; actual was \$253.75.
Utilities – Still in negative from winter, but improving.
Maintenance - \$11,000 overspending (overtime).
Materials/subcontractors – Being monitored by the Assistant E.D. and Director of Facilities.
Everything else looking better.
Motion made by Linda Byrne to accept the financials. Seconded by Mary Giannetti, all were in favor.
5. Facilities Report:
 - a. Section 5 – Total work orders for May were mainly for Green Acres due to the annual inspections; the numbers should go down.
 - b. The Daniels Heights roof replacement is almost complete.
 - c. Locks/cameras project - We are awaiting DHCD final review before going out for bids.

The Chair asked if the board was able to go up on the roof to take a look, once the Daniels Heights roof project is completed. The E.D. said yes. The Chair also asked if the number of work orders at Green Acres was due to some units being worse off than others. The A.E.D. replied yes, definitely.

6. State Housing Report:

- a. We have 894 active applications (of which 19 are for elderly).
- b. We had ten (10) new lease-ups for May.
- c. Occupancy – April was at 92.13%; slipped a little to 90.82% for May.
Units that had waivers for modernization are now coming back on-line.
- d. Third floor of Wallace – we are currently working with Summit (10 apartments with one being an office for Summit).

Mark Jackson asked if the 894 applicants were Fitchburg residents. The E.D. noted that applicants can be from everywhere. The State is working on a centralized waiting list; hopefully up and running by fall. The number of applicants will go into the thousands.

Linda Byrne asked when someone gets notice that they will be getting housing and they have to give a 30 day notice where they are currently living, do we give them time to meet the requirements. The E.D. replied that we try to work with them the best we can.

Mary Giannetti asked what the percentage of fines to residents (for each complex) was for damages. The E.D. replied that the highest % would be at Green Acres.

The Chair asked about rent revisions. The E.D. stated that an annual recertification was done for each complex. However, addendums were done during the year for changes in income, etc.

7. Section 8 Report:

The E.D. stated that a number of vouchers had been rescinded (clients moved on) or we took back (non-payment, etc). We will be having a briefing (pull names) to re-issue those vouchers.

8. New Business:

The following resolutions were presented by the Chair:

The E.D. noted that the first resolution is approval of the Section 8 Administrative Plan, which reflects HUD changes. The last approval was one and a half years ago.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE FITCHBURG
HOUSING ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN

RESOLUTION 2015-06-01

WHEREAS: The Fitchburg Housing Authority is required by HUD to submit an updated administrative plan. The purpose of the administrative plan is to establish policies for carrying out the programs in a manner consistent with HUD requirements and local goals and objectives contained in the PHA's agency plan. This administrative plan is a supporting document to the PHA agency plan, and is available for public review as required by CFR 24 Part 903.

WHEREAS: The Fitchburg Housing Authority must submit a completed Administration Plan to HUD in June 2015.

WHEREAS: The Authority is currently administering the Section 8 HCV Program Tenant Protected Vouchers and Project Based and

WHEREAS: The Director of Leased Housing and the Executive Director reviewed and approved the administrative plan.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

That the Fitchburg Housing Authority adopt the 2015 Administration Plan for the HUD Section 8 HCV Program.

FURTHER RESOLVED,

This vote shall further authorize the Executive Director to forward the Administrative Plan to the HUD office and offer for public view.

RESOLVED, Motion made by Linda Byrne to adopt the 2015 Administration Plan for the HUD Section 8 HCV Program.

SECONDED, David Rousseau seconded the motion and the motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

There was some discussion on the following resolution. The E.D. noted that this was for uncollectables/doubtfuls; residents doing a midnight move, court charges. Cindy did an incredible job with uncollectables for previous residents for a total of \$90,000. The most recent write-off to remove as liability was done in 2013.

The Chair asked how it affected the housing authority with DHCD. The E.D. stated not much; we have to do it and most housing authorities do. He added that DHCD has to be shown we did everything possible to get the money back; then they adjust our subsidy.

Mark Jackson asked if it affects future services for these individuals. The E.D. replied yes, as it is reported to the Credit Bureau. They cannot get housed through any housing authority; possibly, if they paid the money owed previously they may. Linda Byrne asked if these individuals should have been evicted. The E.D. replied some may have been in the process of eviction.

RESOLUTION TO WRITE-OFF UNRECOVERABLE DEBTS

Resolution 2015-06-02

Whereas: A number of tenants of the Fitchburg Housing Authority have vacated while owing rent and,

Whereas: Those persons vacating owed \$90,174.00 as of March 31, 2015 (*see attached list*) and,

Whereas: The Fitchburg Housing Authority staff has made every reasonable effort to collect said vacated amounts without success,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

That the Fitchburg Housing Authority officially write-off \$90,174.00 as uncollectible debts.

RESOLVED, Motion made by Linda Byrne to write off \$90,174.00 as uncollectible debts.

SECONDED, Mary Giannetti seconded the motion, and the motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

Discussion on the following resolution. The E.D. noted that last year's contract had expired July 1st but money was exhausted. Bids are due at 2:00 p.m. this afternoon.

Mary Giannetti said her only concern with the lower bidder was if they weren't familiar with the units. Mark Jackson asked if we use local contractors. The E.D. replied yes, we encourage local, but get bids from outside as well. The Chair added that DHCD says we must use the low bid; so we have to go with that. There was further discussion on local versus out of area contractors. The E.D. added that if the low bidder does not meet the criteria, the contract is not signed; it would go out to bid again.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE
OF THE LOWEST BID FOR INTERIOR PAINTING OF
VACANT STATE FUNDED APARTMENTS

Contract FHAVUP2015

Resolution 2015-06-03

WHEREAS: The Fitchburg Housing Authority has advertised for bids for interior painting of vacant state funded apartments, and

WHEREAS: The bids will be received until 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, June 17, 2014 (*the afternoon of the board meeting*).

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

That the Fitchburg Housing Authority Board of Directors approve the lowest qualified bidder, with an estimated cost of \$80,000.00, subject to a reference check, and authorizes the Chair or the Executive Director to sign said contract and/or any other documents necessary to complete the work.

This approval is pending the favorable recommendation by DHCD.

RESOLVED, Motion made by David Rousseau to award the bid for interior painting of vacant state funded apartments to the lowest qualified bidder, not to exceed \$80,000.00, and to authorize the signing of the contract, and/or any other documents necessary to complete the work, by the Chair or Executive Director.

SECONDED, Linda Byrne seconded the motion, and the motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

David Rousseau asked about a resolution from last month for HQS Inspections and what the difference in costs were. The E.D. stated that it was previously \$60.00 per inspection; now it is down to \$40.00. David was unclear; HQS is for Section 8 only; LHA does the state units. He wondered if we could do the same for painting. The E.D. replied no.

There was some discussion on the following resolution, the Air Conditioning policy. Linda Byrne asked what the update was. The E.D. stated that the current policy was 15 years old. The A.E.D. streamlined it; making it safer for residents. State residents do not pay electric or a fee. FHA determines when air conditioners can go in and when they should be removed.

The key changes are that previously the housing authority gave names of contractors who were able to install the air conditioners. We will now only provide the name of an insured/qualified contractor if a resident asks. At Green Acres, we ask the residents to use brackets.

It was pointed out that the policy states "Allencrest" and should be "Green Acres. The Chair asked for a motion to approve the resolution as amended.

RESOLUTION TO UPDATE THE AIR CONDITIONING POLICY

Resolution 2015-06-04

Whereas: The Fitchburg Housing Authority has the need to update the existing air conditioning policy.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

That the Fitchburg Housing Authority Board of Commissioners approve the revised air conditioning policy to be effective immediately (*see attached proposed changes*).

RESOLVED, Motion made by Linda Byrne to approve the revised air conditioning policy effective immediately.

SECONDED, Mark Jackson seconded the motion, and the motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

Linda Byrne asked if there was a funding mechanism for some that cannot afford; adding that some units are tiny, very hot. The E.D. replied no, we would then be responsible to install all the units. Linda also asked if residents could use funds they raised. The E.D. replied yes, through charitable organizations. He added that the community room is always available; it has air conditioning. Residents with medical issues could apply for a Reasonable Accommodation.

The Chair asked if we could post the new policy. The E.D. replied that we plan on sending a copy of the policy to all residents.

DHCD requires a yearly review of the Reasonable Accommodation policy; Anna revised it and the following resolution was presented to the board.

Mary Giannetti asked if there were any major changes. The E.D. replied that previously residents had to fill out a form. Now, if a resident talks to an employee, we can follow through on that verbal discussion (starting the process). Linda Byrne asked who our Reasonable Accommodation person was. The E.D. replied Anna, with himself giving the final approval.

RESOLUTION TO UPDATE THE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION POLICY

Resolution 2015-06-05

Whereas: The Fitchburg Housing Authority has the need to update the existing reasonable accommodation policy.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

That the Fitchburg Housing Authority Board of Commissioners approve the revised reasonable accommodation policy to be effective immediately (*see attached proposed changes*).

RESOLVED, Motion made by Mary Giannetti to approve the revised motor vehicle policy effective immediately.

SECONDED, Linda Byrne seconded the motion, and the motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

David Rousseau asked if more information on on-going issues could be included in the Executive Director's Report. The E.D. replied sure (on E.D. report or old business); will make new business, old business the following month.

David Rousseau asked if the E.D. had met with the police chief. The E.D. said he, Cindy, Anna, Janel and Cathy met with him; he is willing to work with us. The police chief will also invite the housing authority to community meetings. David Rousseau asked if we would have more police presence at Day St. with Sgt Jackson on-board. He also asked if the different shifts know to come through the complex and sit for a time. Sgt Jackson replied that the 2nd shift (3-11 p.m.) is the busiest shift with calls, etc.

David Rousseau asked if the police had keys to the different buildings. The E.D. replied that the boxes are for the fire department only. We are working with the police chief for all police officers to have access to our buildings.

The Chair asked the E.D. if he could come up with a list of FHA property that needs a board vote. The E.D. replied he will bring a list to the next meeting. He added that he received an okay Monday from DHCD to sell the Prospect St. property and vacant 701's.

Mark Jackson informed the board that he is either on vacation or personal time when he attends a board meeting; he is not on duty.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 a.m. was made by Linda Byrne. David Rousseau seconded; all were in favor.

