

**MEETING OF BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE TOWN OF MANCHESTER
October 17, 2012
6:00 PM**

Attending: Chairman Josh Howroyd
Vice Chairman Timothy Becker
Robert Shanbaum
Flora Jimenez
Patrick Barder, Executive Director

Absent: Paul Rubin

I. Chairman Howroyd opened the meeting at 6:05 pm and welcomed the residents of West Hill Gardens.

II. Public Comments –

Chairman Howroyd invited residents to make comments.

These minutes are intended to be an overview of the comments made and are not necessarily verbatim.

Mr. Jean Paulin 39G Bluefield Drive addressed the Board.

Mrs. Paulin reported the street light in front of her unit is still burnt out and this has been mentioned several times. She also indicated the security light at the back of her unit goes on and off.

Mr. Richard Brown 64 Pace Drive addressed the Board.

Mr. Brown reported the dumpster in his parking spot has been removed and replaced by a dump truck. He indicated he was assigned this spot and he wants to be able to park his vehicle. Mr. Brown requested that MHA get somebody to go through the new lease line by line to decipher the lease draft. He would like to have an open meeting with a representative from HUD to answer questions from residents. This would give residents an opportunity to ask questions and voice their concerns. Mr. Brown said there is still a problem with water in the basements and he asked about the spraying of chemicals that was done around the units.

Chairman Howroyd responded that after everyone has had an opportunity to make comments the Board will try to respond to some of the questions raised during public comments.

Mrs. Evelyn Babella 12 Bluefield Drive addressed the Board.

Mrs. Babella commented she enjoys walking around the complex and there are no benches for her or other residents to stop and sit for a while. She also commented that this complex used to be for seniors and seniors that are disabled persons and she saw a couple with a young child and she wants to know why the Board is allowing these things to happen; this is not right. She also brought up the issue of this complex going under Section 8 and she does not want Section 8 housing here. Mrs. Babella commented about the no smoking rule and she stated she believes in freedom and you can't dictate to people all the time.

Ms. Lori Donfelder daughter of Ms. Karen Mitchell 33B case Drive addressed the Board.

Ms. Donfelder commented that her mother smokes and if this is now a non-smoking complex what is going to happen if her mother falls when she goes out to smoke. Her mother is elderly and she does not want her to fall. Her mother has been smoking a long time and it should not be dictated that she cannot smoke in her unit.

Ms. Priscilla Dorsey 64 D Case Drive addressed the Board.

Ms. Dorsey asked Chairman Howroyd if the petition was brought to his attention.

Chairman Howroyd stated he did see the petition and the Board will discuss it further this evening.

Mr. Will Paulin 39G Bluefield Drive addressed the Board.

Mr. Paulin said he is pleased to see the landscaping that has been done and but while doing this there are huge ruts in the lawn. The lawns have gone to seed and they look bad and he hopes that the lawns will be redone because they are in bad shape. He announced that he and his wife are planning a gathering of the residents of Bluefield Gardens to commemorate the planting of the trees. Residents can bring a dish to share. Mr. Paulin stated he is still looking for copies of signed contracts for projects gone out to bid. He asked about this some time ago and he put his request in writing and has not heard anything about his request nor received the copies.

The public hearing closed at 6:18 pm.

Mr. Becker moved to suspend the rules for the purpose of adding item 2A discussion regarding public comments. Mr. Shanbaum seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Chairman Howroyd indicated there were several questions/comments raised this evening.

Chairman Howroyd wanted to give Ms. Jimenez an opportunity to respond to a comment made by Mrs. Babella.

Ms. Jimenez wanted to address all the residents of West Hill Gardens. There have been several comments made by Chairman Howroyd with respect to Section 8 housing. He has answered why we see and will be seeing more young families in the area; it is not his doing. If you have any questions, doubts, grievances with him or myself please pick up the phone and direct your calls to HUD. They will be more than happy to accommodate your questions and give you an answer. If HUD feels there is anything wrong going on here they will send someone out. Residents have to do their part.

Mr. Paulin stated he has called HUD and nobody at HUD was able to answer his question. He wants to know why this is going Section 8.

Chairman Howroyd reiterated that this is NOT going Section 8. This was a topic of discussion at a recent seminar of Housing Commissioners that several of the Board members attended. There is a potential new HUD program; it is not anything that MHA is contemplating at this time. It is not anything the Board is pursuing at this time. Regarding non-elderly residing here at West Hill, that is Federal Policy. We cannot prohibit and make senior only. We have done everything we can to encourage senior only but we cannot prohibit mixed residents if they qualify for public housing. Chairman Howroyd stressed this Board has done everything within their power to encourage that West Hill and Mayfair to the greatest extent possible be given a priority for elderly residents. The scatters sites houses within MHA jurisdiction were where we encourage family housing here. Beyond that we cannot do anything to prohibit based on the tenants that go through the same procedures to get on the waiting list.

Mr. Barder added that regarding the issue of senior only housing that law was amended in 1995 by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and that status ceased. Previously housing authorities were allowed to have designated portions of what was previously considered elderly

only projects, but that designation had to be reapplied for every two years and is subject to review by FH&EO Division of HUD which has not allowed Manchester Housing Authority to maintain that designation because it does not adequately reflect our waiting list. Anybody that qualifies for a studio, one or two bedroom unit based on the selection process in the ACOP gets the unit whether they are elderly or not.

A question was asked if HUD had reviewed the new lease. Chairman Howroyd indicated that all residents received copies of the draft of the lease and solicited public feedback and comments from residents. We had the revised lease as an action item on last month's agenda and we deferred action to this month. We have heard several people express concerns and have received a petition regarding the no smoking policy and it will be discussed by the Board later this evening.

Mr. Shanbaum shared this was discussed at last month's meeting and we could not figure out who this could be. The contractor we have hired to handle our pest control show up in marked trucks. The contractor is TruGreen. A question was raised about the MHA maintenance vehicles being allowed on the public streets. The State law does allow vehicles of this nature to use public right of way to cross from one side of the street to the other.

There was a question regarding water in several basements. Mr. Barder explained that MHA is aware some of the basements have ground water come up through them. The fix is to blow out the cast iron pipes and to revamp the landscaping around it. We are doing this as funding permits and we are presently working on Building 11 and the second most serious building is #43. Mr. Barder went on further to explain the landscaping is continuing to be done around the complex and several 12 ft. slow growing spruce trees have been planted as recommended by the arborist. The ruts caused by the trucks bringing the trees in will be smoothed out. The area that was used as a dump has been cleared and will have top soil brought in and it will be hydro-seeded in hopes that it will catch before the snow falls. It will be re-seeded in the spring if needed. There will be more trees planted, approximately 35, where we are developing a park like setting.

Chairman Howroyd mentioned there have been many discussions among the board members about smoking.

Mr. Barder indicated we are asking residents to try to quit smoking. We have planned several smoking cessation programs to help residents. This will be a non-smoking Housing Authority. For those that still smoke we make everything that we can possibly make available to them in terms of social services to help residents quit. Some residents won't be able to quit and there will not be anyone going around checking.

Chairman Howroyd added we understand the practical concerns of implementing this and there is one outstanding issue we need to address prior to adoption of this policy. We have received comments in support of banning smoking because of concerns expressed by neighbors of smokers. It is very costly to renovate units of smokers because we have to remove all the sheetrock and even the electrical outlets to rid a unit of the smell of smoke. We want to go very gently and want to do this in the best interest of all the residents here in looking out for their health and wellbeing.

Mr. Becker commented that Commissioners several times a year go for continuing education at regional and state wide conferences and this topic is always at these seminars. We have heard from many different housing authorities throughout New England and it is our understanding this is a nationwide trend. It started with public buildings, then restaurants, bars, now hotel rooms and it is done to protect people's health especially those that don't smoke. We are trying to look into the future and as a new resident of MHA they will be made aware of this provision in the lease. We don't expect it to happen

over night, we know that some won't be able to quit and we may have to look the other way for a period of time. Over the next five to ten years our goal is to have a smoke free housing authority and everybody who has moved in will be made aware of it and will honor it so we won't have horrendous renovation costs for units that have housed smokers. In many units we have had to take all the walls down, because the smoke permeated the walls and ceilings. It is costly not just for the renovation but the amount of time it takes this unit is unavailable for rental. This will be discussed later in the meeting. We did give all residents copies of the new lease and we did receive comments that we took to heart at the last meeting and we tabled it. The Board changed the draft with regard to a fee for parking and that has been removed from the lease. We are trying to revise the lease so it works in everybody's best interest but changes have been made to bring it up to HUD standards.

A resident commented that 35 years ago they had a law in Hartford that if one person in a whole building complained about smoking then smoking was gone in that building. She asked if that is the same case now.

Mr. Barder responded that is not the law in Connecticut and it has not been brought up to us in Conferences. We have to think of this in terms of five to ten years from now. We are well aware of the difficulties residents will have with quitting and we are asking them to try. This will be a smoke free facility and it will be a long term process. This may not be what some residents want but it is the direction the Board and management are going in.

The situation of a dumpster in an assigned parking spot has been taken care of. Currently there is a landscaping dump truck in that spot and it will be moved once the landscape work has been completed. It will definitely be moved before the parking ban takes effect on the first of December.

The audience raised a question about smoking and what can be done if their neighbor smokes, what can be done for the non-smoker.

Mr. Shanbaum explained that what is being done for the non-smoking residents that we are putting in the lease that this will be a non-smoking facility. It will not solve the problem of a neighbor smoking. We are struggling with the fact that we want to be a non-smoking facility housing authority and there is general agreement amongst the residents the majority of which do not smoke want this to be a smoke free facility. We know that some residents won't be able to get 25 ft. away from the building to smoke. There are no obvious answers to this and we are trying to deal with it.

Mr. Becker noted that the Board did not enter this decision lightly. We discussed this for several years. We had our attorney do some research on whether an individual could be evicted from their unit for violating the provision of the lease. The research came back that yes we could evict someone, not that we want to evict a resident that smokes in their unit or anywhere on the grounds. IT would have to be repeated offences; it would have to be documented and if we could demonstrate that a neighboring tenant has complained about the smoke the offender could be evicted. This is not something we want to do but it is a provision in the lease that can be enforced.

Chairman Howroyd closed this segment.

III. Adoption of Minutes – Meeting of September 19, 2012

Chairman Howroyd asked for a motion to approve the minutes of meeting of September 19, 2012. Mr. Becker moved to accept the minutes of September 19, 2012. Mrs. Jimenez seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

IV. Correspondence

Mrs. Marie Parmaleau 32 McGuire Lane asked a question of the Board. She read in the lease that she would have to shovel her porch. The Board responded that residents are not expecting residents to do that. She wanted to know why she cannot have a washing machine in her unit She had a washer and it was taken out.

Mr. Barder explained that it is against the building code and MHA can be cited and fined for it. The pipes in the units are inadequate to handle washers. It is very costly to install the proper pipes to accommodate a washer. She also asked why she has not received a new door. The weather strip needs to be replaced because she is getting a draft.

Mr. Barder reported there have been some positive results at the Congregate. A food committee has been formed and they meet once a month to discuss the menu and talk about some changes they would like to see. The Resident Service Coordinators are explaining to perspective tenants that this is a community living environment and this may be difficult for some individuals to get used. We are making progress. We have a post card that we will hand out to perspective residents and will hand it out at the upcoming Social Services event that the Town is putting on and we will have a table there and the post card will be handed out as a marketing tool.

Mr. Shanbaum asked about the petition that was submitted by residents about smoking. Mr. Barder shared that we will push the no smoking gently.

Mr. Barder shared a list of residents that are "overhoused". A letter will be sent to residents regarding moving them to a smaller unit. The move would be at MHA's expense. We have to address this because we can be sited for not adhering to state and federal regulations. We will give tenants 120 days to move and we can evict them if they refuse to move.

A question was asked about the length of time for the eviction process and Mr. Barder indicated a minimum of 90 days but usually it takes 120 days.

Question was asked about the resident Police Officer and his being in a 3 bedroom unit.

Mr. Barder explained that at one time the housing authority applied to have a resident police officer. We are required to reapply every two years for that and we have to document why we have a police officer. We have to assemble client statistics and show how his presence reduces crime in the area. We don't have problems in our complexes.

V. Accounts Payable

Mr. Barder reviewed the financial reports with the Board. He also reviewed the unit rehab report for the full fiscal year 2012.

VI. Executive Directors Report - Financial Statements & Management Reports

Mr. Barder discussed the need for more staff in maintenance in order to keep up with renovating units. He also reviewed the Vacancy Loss report which outlines the loss of revenue because units were off line being renovated.

VII. Chairman's Report - None

VIII. Old Business – None

1. Ethics Policy Revisions

Ms. Jimenez moved to table this item. Mr. Shanbaum seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

2. Disaster Plan

Mr. Barder has not meet with the town on this item. Mr. Becker moved to table this item. Mr. Shanbaum seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

3. North Elm Management Agreement

Mr. Barder reported he has not received a letter from Mr. O'Neill and he will call his office again requesting it. Mr. Shanbaum moved to table this item. Mr. Becker seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

4. Waiting List

Chairman Howroyd shared he went online and got some information from the Town of Norwich and how they waiting lists for handle public housing. He suggested Manchester have a policy similar to this where we would open up for new requests for public housing. Selection would be done by lottery based on need and kept on the list two or three years. After that people would have to reapply for housing. Mr. Shanbaum moved to table. Ms. Jimenez seconded. Motion passed 4-0

IX. New Business

A. Corrected Resolution 2012-12

Mr. Barder explained that Chairman Howroyd should not have signed this resolution. It needs to be signed by the Executive Director and witnessed by Chairman Howroyd. Mr. Shanbaum moved to amend Resolution 2012-12 to have the correct signature. Mr. Becker seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

B. Revised Dwelling Lease Resolution 2012-14

Mr. Barder indicated that the North Elm Street residents, Hillstown Road do not have leases. Mr. Shanbaum suggested amending item on page 3. Mr. Becker moved to approve this document as amended. Mr. Shanbaum seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

C. Operating Budgets Resolution 2012-13

Mr. Shanbaum moved to approve the operating budget for all of the projects presented this night. Mr. Becker seconded. Motion passed 4-0

X. Items for Future Agenda

- Executive Directors evaluation be discussed in Executive Session
- Add to the agenda item 2A discussion of public comments

XI. Executive Session - None

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Becker moved to adjourn at 9:23 pm. Mr. Shanbaum seconded. Motion was passed 4-0.

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST: _____