

January 13, 2015

West Hill Gardens

Attending: Chairman Josh Howroyd  
Robert Shanbaum  
Paul Rubin  
Joseph D'Ascoli, Executive Director

**I. Meeting Called to Order**

Chairman Howroyd opened the meeting at 6:30 and welcomed residents of West Hill gardens.

**II. Public Comment – These minutes are intended to be an overview of the comments made and are not necessarily verbatim.**

Mr. George Sheffield 11 Bluefield Drive addressed the Board. Mr. Sheffield commented that the insulation in the crawl space is falling down. When the energy audit was done they didn't notice the insulation was falling down and why didn't they just push it back in place. He also asked why it is necessary to call in a work order for outside maintenance, shouldn't that be part of the routine for the maintenance staff. The gutters and window wells are full of leaves and water is backing up and running into the basement. Mr. Shanbaum remarked that he has had that happen at his home, if the window wells are full of leaves the water would back up and seep into the basement. Chairman Howroyd added the Federal Government wants housing authorities to keep utility costs down. MHA is looking into funding to make this possible.

Mr. Sheffield also reported a problem with water backing up in the bathroom.

Chairman Howroyd shared that public comments will no longer be part of the monthly Board of Commissioners meetings. A separate meeting will be scheduled on a monthly basis at the various housing authority locations where tenants can have a round table discussion with one or two of the Board members. A schedule will be posted letting residents know of the time and location of these meetings.

Ms. Evelyn Babella Bluefield Drive addressed the Board. Ms. Babella asked if the water in the basement is sewer water and if it is backing up into the washing machines. Mr. D'Ascoli reported there was a problem with sewer pipes being blocked and a company came in and snaked out 60 feet of pipe. The company had to come back and go out another 40 feet. Sewer water has not been backing up into the washing machines.

Ms. Babella asked why the office building now has locked doors; it is not welcoming. People in the office are rude and why can't section 8 be in a separate building. Mr. Gary Sweet reported it is important for the staff feel safe and secure in their work environment. People have changed and some get angry.

Ms. Babella also commented about the community room is not for the residents, it is for the office staff. She also mentioned the grounds around the complex are not kept up like they used to be.

Chairman Howroyd shared the changes that have been made to the reception and office areas to be able to keep files in the office private and secure. Residents will be able to reserve the community room to use for activities.

Both Chairman Howroyd and Mr. Shanbaum remarked that the lawns around the complex look excellent this past year.

Mr. Wayne Madden 28G Pascal Lane addressed the Board. Mr. Madden thanked MHA for the new washers and dryers and the heat has been fixed. The only negative comment he had is about the lights in the parking lot have not yet been fixed. Mr. D'Ascoli reported the ballast parts for the lights had to be special ordered. He will check into the status of the order.

The public hearing closed at 7:15 pm.

A. Discussion of Public Comments – none.

**III. Adoption of Minutes – Meeting of December 17, 2014.**

Chairman Howroyd asked if there were any comments for the minutes of December 17, 2014' having heard none he asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Shanbaum moved to adopt the minutes of December 17, 2014, Mr. Rubin seconded and motion was passed 3-0.

Chairman Howroyd asked to suspend the rules and move to item 5C1. Mr. Shanbaum moved to suspend the rules and moved to item 5C1. Mr. Rubin seconded and motion passed 3-0.

Gary Sweet – Info pertaining to the EPC Funding – Mr. Gary Sweet presented to the Board an overview of two projects he has been working on for MHA.

**EPC**

Currently MHA spends approximately \$500,000 a year for utilities at our HUD developments. The objective of an Energy Performance Contract (EPC) is to reduce this expense sufficiently to amortize the cost of energy conservation measures with energy savings. All services related to achieving the reductions will be the responsibility of an Energy Service Company (ESCO). The ESCo will provide all services including an investment grade energy audit, design of systems, acquisition of materials, installations, modifications, maintenance, related training and most importantly security of project financing. The financing period will be 15 or 20 years. MHA savings will be guaranteed. The ESCo will be responsible for reimbursing MHA the amount of any shortfall necessary to pay annual financing and all related contract obligations. In addition MHA will derive an additional benefit from HUD. HUD will allow MHA to contribute 25% of the savings to our Operating Subsidy. (The other 75% will be used to retire the debt). The rough estimate of savings is \$150,000; at that level MHA would add \$37,500 to the Operating Subsidy.

**Resiliency**

HUD has adopted incentives for on-site electrical use reduction and on-site production of electricity. This program is similar to the EPC. MHA will sign a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with a (or multiple) for profit entity(ies) that will provide all services require to install and maintain a fuel cell at Westhill Gardens and solar panels at other developments. Replacement of the power grid is included in the fuel cell installation at Westhill Gardens. The PPA will be a 15 or 20 year agreement after which MHA can extend the PPA or purchase the systems for the residual value. HUD will allow MHA to contribute 50% of the savings to our Operating Subsidy.

(The other 50% will be used to purchase power from the for profit entity). His rough estimate of savings is \$60,000 and at that level MHA would add \$30,000 to their Operating Subsidy. The fuel cell energy source will be natural gas. The power grid will continue to be "plugged" into CL&P and will serve as emergency service.

Chairman Howroyd asked what will be required from the Board. Mr. D'Ascoli said next week he will be doing a walk through with the energy contractors that have responded to the invitations that were mailed out to approximately 40 companies. Once they respond back with the RFP's Gary and I will review them. Once a company has been selected we will review the contract with MHA's attorney and request the company meet with the Board and give a short presentation. Mr. D'Ascoli stated he will keep the Board informed every step of the way to be sure they are comfortable with this project before any contracts are signed. Mr. Rubin asked if this automatic money and there is no chance that once this is put together that it would be rejected for some reason. This is a program that any housing authority can apply to. Mr. Sweet explained that the RFP had to be approved by HUD before it was sent out. Mr. D'Ascoli added that not every housing authority can go for this type of project and we have been approved by HUD. Mr. Sweet added that HUD has to approve our final selection.

#### **IV. Correspondence**

Mr. D'Ascoli reported that MHA now has a proposed three year contract with Roy & Associates CPA Company. They will be starting MHA's audit February 4 through 6. He also requested the Board fill out the questionnaire sent by Roy & Associates.

#### **V. Accounts Payable**

Mr. D'Ascoli reported the boiler has been replaced at Spencer Village and it was taken out of Capital Improvements. Mr. Rubin asked about the allocation of this expense went to casualty. Mr. D'Ascoli explained MHA is trying to get some money back because of the fact that the boiler was serviced by the gas company and while it was not officially "red tagged" but there was some problems. So now we have put in a claim has been put it, our casualty insurance adjuster has come out to look at it and we may possibly get some money back from our policy.

Mr. Rubin asked about the payment to Dubaldo Electric for security systems. Mr. D'Ascoli explained this expense was for replacement of the outdated alarm system at the Congregate that was requested by the Town Fire Department after their inspection. The security system for down at the Maintenance shops and then at Mayfair Gardens because the 8<sup>th</sup> Utility District Fire Department would no longer respond to calls and we had to contract with Dubaldo to service all the calls. The monthly cost will be about \$200.

Another question was asked about the expense to Data Core. Mr. D'Ascoli reported this is our IT and they cover the maintenance and repair of the office computers. He is looking to send out and RFP for computer service and repairs as we don't currently have a written contract.

#### **VI. Executive Director's Report**

##### **A. Financial Statements**

Mr. D' Ascoli reported no major concerns. He did note the higher utility costs due to the colder weather so we will be seeing some loss at some of the locations. We are keeping a close look at the Congregate for some of the services as this is a State funded complex.

Mr. Shanbaum asked about the receipt of only half of the HAP money and if that was part of the loss. Mr. D'Ascoli reported we only received \$100k and not the usual \$300k and we had to go into our reserve account for make up that difference.

**B. Vacancy Reports**

Mr. D'Ascoli explained the higher vacancies in some of the units due to recent passing of several residents. There is one unit 42H that shows being down for 121 days. The unit is ready to be occupied but we have had several people refuse to take the unit. We are working to get the unit rented. Another unit 231B North Main has been taken off line as it is being totally rehabbed to be made ready for an individual. HUD is giving us credit because the unit has been taken off line. The maintenance crew and property managers deserve "kudos" for keeping up with making ready units to be leased up.

**C. General Information**

1. Gary Sweet – Covered above
2. RFP for Attorney – Mr. D'Ascoli reported he wants to get an RFP out for attorney services. He would appreciate the input from the Board. Our current contract with Rome McGuigan expires in April 2015. We could extend them if needed but Mr. D'Ascoli noted he wants to be sure we have a contract in place with all the upcoming work planned for Spencer Village and the EPC work that Gary Sweet presented tonight. Both Messrs. Rubin and Shanbaum agreed to take a look at it this week.

Mr. D'Ascoli reported on several other projects that both he and Mr. Sweet have been working on. Another RFP has been extended to Pest Control Companies. There were two top companies and both he and Mr. Sweet have met with them to discuss in more detail what is covered in their proposals. With what MHA has paid in the past both these companies came in at half the cost.

Mr. D'Ascoli reported that he and Gary Sweet have met with TAG Associates who was awarded the contract through Connecticut Housing Finance and Department of Housing for the Spencer Village replacement project. They will be the architect for the replacement of Spencer Village. We did a tour of Spencer Street and they liked our idea of creating two story building with elevators to accommodate handicapped residents. Mr. D'Ascoli shared we need to form a tenant council with Spencer residents so they have an opportunity to voice their concerns and get their input as to what they would like to see in the new development. Residents will not be displaced during the construction. They may have the option of moving into another of our sites or they could possibly be issued a Section 8 voucher. Once the new units are completed the residents will have the option to come back to Spencer Village. We want to get a tenant council together soon to begin discussions because we do want to make the June 2015 deadline for getting all the paperwork in for the financing of this project.

Chairman Howroyd suggested Mr. D'Ascoli schedule a meeting with the Town and Mr. Mark Pellegrini from the Town Planning Department. MHA will probably have to go before the Planning and Zoning Commission.

3. HCV Renewal Awards – Mr. D’Ascoli reported in a follow up letter MHA was informed that our 2015 Housing Choice Vouchers will be funded at 100% for the next 3 months. Our administrative fees will be prorated at 73%.

**VII. Chairman’s Report**

Chairman Howroyd handed out a tentative schedule for the monthly commissioner meetings with tenants. The Board discussed some changes and Chairman Howroyd said he will send out the revised list of times and paced for the meetings. Mr. Rubin shared he would like to see that these tenant sessions don’t turn into a complaint session. Mr. D’Ascoli said he would make himself available for any of the meetings that the Board requests. Suggestion was made to send a flyer to all the residents indicating the purpose of the meeting, the time and date. Invite the residents to bring their ideas, questions and not their complaints. Mr. Shanbaum mentioned that most often residents come with complaints about maintenance. Chairman Howroyd suggested that we renew the Tenant Advisory Boards at all our locations, which would be a place for residents to bring these issues up.

**VIII. Old Business – None**

**IX. New Business**

Mr. D’Ascoli reported that 430 notices went out to residents of the State and Federal sites regarding the Tenant Commissioner opening. We have had 26 cards returned from individuals showing interest. If we do not receive 44 cards back there will not be an election. The Town Board of Directors will have to make the selection of a Tenant Commissioner. The cut off date for the cards to be returned is January 30, 2015.

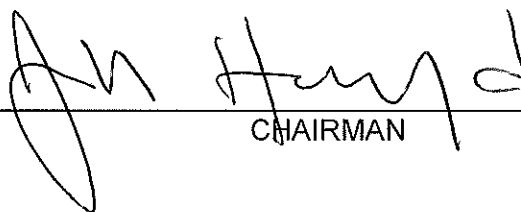
**X. Items for Future Agenda – None**

**A. Tenant Commissioner update**

**XI. Executive Session - None**

**XII. Adjournment**

Mr. Rubin moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 pm. Mr. Shanbaum seconded and the motion passed 3-0.



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CHAIRMAN



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ATTEST: