

May 21 2014

Spencer Village

Attending: Chairman Josh Howroyd  
Vice Chairman Robert Shanbaum  
Paul Rubin  
Carol Shanley  
Joseph D'Ascoli Executive Director

- I. **Chairman Howroyd opened the meeting at 6:40 PM.**
- II. **Public Comments – *These minutes are intended to be an overview of the comments made and are not necessarily verbatim.***

Mr. Forest Booker 50 Pascal Lane addressed the Board. Mr. Booker asked what is going on with the community garden as he is very interested in participating. Ms. MaryAnn Murray reported MHA has finished the paperwork for a grant from CHFA. Once this has been approved a master Gardner will start working on the yard planning out the community garden space. A fence will be put up around it. Ms. Bertrand added that a meeting will be scheduled to explain the plans and tenants will have an opportunity to ask questions and share what they want to see in their garden.

Mr. Alan Carpenter 66 G Pascal Lane addressed the Board. Mr. Carpenter asked if any more trees will be cut down around the complex. Chairman Howroyd reported that trees were removed due to storm damage. The only plans we have are to keep the existing ones adequately pruned and maintained.

Ms. Nicole Seymour 50 B Pascal Lane addressed the Board. Ms. Seymour shared tenants keep tripping on a section of sidewalk and it was marked with blue paint so people could see it. Now the paint is fading and she asked if it could be repainted.

Ms. Diane Hoff 22C Pascal Lane addressed the Board. Ms. Hoff stated the dumpster is falling apart, it is rotted out at the bottom and it smells bad. Chairman Howroyd said the dumpster is owned by the trash hauler and MHA will speak to them about replacing it.

Ms. Linda Hall 40E Pascal Lane addressed the Board. Ms. Hall asked what is being done about the dogs from the hotel complex that keep coming into our complex and leaving their messes. Mr. D'Ascoli remarked that we are getting signs printed up and they will be posted. Should there continue to be a problem the local police will be contacted.

Mr. Wayne Madden 28G Pascal Lane addressed the Board. Mr. Madden welcomed the new Executive Director. Mr. Madden also brought up the issue of the trash under the trees and would it be possible to have maintenance clean it up. Most of the trash comes from the hotel next door.

Ms. Karen May 62C Pascal Lane addressed the Board. Ms. May asked if animal control will be involved with the dogs from the hotel leaving their messes in our yard. Chairman Howroyd shared police would be involved rather than animal control. Ms. May also asked if the sign that used to be out front saying Pascal Lane is it going to be replaced. Chairman Howroyd explained that sign was the original construction sign and it was all rotted and had to be removed. MHA would like to replace it with a new one but that will have to wait until money becomes available.

Ms. Kathy Carter 36A Pascal Lane addressed the Board. Ms. Carter shared she has lived here for several years she asked when the residents that have been here longer are going to get their units upgraded. New residents get the upgraded units and existing residents have the old stuff. Chairman Howroyd reported that the Board is aware that many of the units need to be upgraded

and unfortunately the best time to do that work is when the unit is vacant. While MHA would like to upgrade all the units we do not have available funds. Many things around this complex need attention, the building exteriors, roofs, windows and the parking lot just to name a few. This is a State of Connecticut complex and they are responsible to make improvements. MHA is in discussions with the State and the Connecticut Housing Fund unit to take a comprehensive look and make significant improvements. This is a priority project for the State. Mr. D'Ascoli added he did a walk through at this complex and got a good picture as to the things that needed to be repaired. He attended a meeting with the Connecticut Finance Housing Authority that discussed the financial opportunities available for housing authorities in the State. He hopes to be able to get some financial assistance from the State to make these repairs and improvements in the not to distant future. Residents asked how long something like this would take. Chairman Howroyd responded by saying we don't know what the scope of a project of this nature would be. It would be very comprehensive overhaul and that construction would be done in phases and we would try to be minimally disruptive to residents.

Mr. Wayne Madden asked if the washing machines in the laundry room could be replaced with stacked front loaders to give us more washers. He also asked about getting a card system for doing laundry rather than using coins. Chairman Howroyd indicated that Mac Gray owns the machines and they make the ultimate decision as to what goes where.

Ms. Katherine Pittsley 66B Pascal Lane addressed the Board. Ms. Pittsley asked about the cost of getting these laundry cards. Chairman Howroyd explained the card system is not intended to be more expensive. This system would allow residents to be able to put money onto the card and use the card to do their laundry rather than using coins. A machine would be installed in the laundry or community room that would allow residents to add money to their laundry card in \$5, \$10 or \$20 increments.

The public hearing closed at 7:00 p.m.

**A. Discussion of Public Comments - None**

**III. Presentation by Insurance Provider**

**A. Tzedakah LLC**

Mr. Jason Weeks from Tzedakah address the Board. Mr. Weeks is an insurance broker and has worked with MHA for several years. He would like to share with the Board some changes to the medical/dental, flexible spending accounts and life insurance programs. He explained the dental contract is up for renewal in June. MHA has 12 employees enrolled in the dental program. Humana is the carrier and they are willing to lock in a rate for the next 18 months. Administratively it would serve MHA have all benefit programs renew at the same time. Human is offering two options; one would renew the plan for 6 months with a 4.2% increase in cost, the other would extend the plan for 18 months with a 6.2% increase in cost. The Board asked if there the changes to the Affordable Care Act includes dental as well. Mr. Weeks explained the Affordable Care Act for 2014 would include preventative dental for children. Mr. D'Ascoli shared it makes sense to have MHA have one renewal date for all benefit coverage for employees.

Mr. Weeks discussed the employee life insurance program covered by Mutual of Omaha. The current program provides \$15,000 life and \$15,000 accidental death and dismemberment at a cost of \$92 per month. Mutual of Omaha is willing hold the existing rates to December of 2015. MHA is not locked in it is a month to month contract.

The Flexible Spending Program gives employees the ability to put aside pre-tax money to pay for medical/dental expenses. The maximum amount they can set aside is \$1,500 per

year. There is \$100 renewal fee and monthly cost is approximately \$75 per month. Unfortunately if the employee does not use all the money they put aside they will lose it. Under new federal guidelines employees would be able to roll over \$500 of that unused money to the next plan year. MHA pays \$6 a month per employees on the plan. If an employee does not renew the plan for the next calendar year but rolls over unused money, MHA will still have to pay that monthly fee. MHA also has an option for Health Spending Account plan as well. Mr. Weeks added MHA is very generous with both medical plans by picking up the cost of the deductibles for those two plans. MHA has the option of offering a limited FSA program. The FSA program would cover non-medical expenses like vision and day care costs.

Mr. D'Ascoli asked for consensus from the Board and a motion to choose the 6 or 18 month. He recommends the 18 month option from June 1 to November 30 and we would be on the same renewal cycle.

Chairman Howroyd asked for a motion. Mr. Shanbaum moved to renew our voluntary dental insurance, life and accidental death insurance and flexible spending account program with the notation that the dental program would be for an 18 month term. Ms. Shanley seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

#### **IV. Adoption of Minutes**

##### **A. Meeting of March 19, 2014**

Mr. Shanbaum moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of March 19, 2014. Ms. Shanley seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

##### **B. Meeting of April 16, 2014**

Mr. Shanbaum moved to table approval of the minutes of April 16, 2014 meeting. Ms. Shanley seconded. Motion to table passed 3-0.

#### **V. Correspondence**

Mr. D'Ascoli shared a letter from a participant Michele Solano who is in the DSS Section 8 program. She praised three staff members Ann Walsh, Marshareen Harris and Karen Richards. She wanted to show her appreciation of the staff.

#### **VI. Accounts Payable**

The Board reviewed the AP report. Mr. D'Ascoli explained two large item expenses. One is for the fence at Mayfair Gardens and the other is the cost of the meal program at the Congregate. Chairman Howroyd added that the contract for the meal program at the Congregate was renewed last year and MHA chose to stay with the same company Hummingbird Catering.

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

##### **A. Financial Report**

April Financial reports will be distributed to Board members.

##### **B. Vacancy Report**

Mr. D'Ascoli reviewed the report as of January 1 through May 21 there are 13 units not rented. The breakdown is two units in down time, seven ready to be repaired and four are ready to be leased up. He said the average down time is 51 days and the goal is to reduce that number further. For the period October 2013 to April 2014 we were at 98% occupied. The same period October 2012 to April 2013 the occupancy rate was 96%. This is a key component for the HUD FASS score. The Vacancy Loss for October 2012 to April 2013 is \$49,000 and \$29,000 for October 2013 to April 2014.

**C. General Information**

Mr. D'Ascoli thanked the Board for the opportunity to be the Executive Director and that he appreciates the tremendous staff he has to work with.

Mr. D'Ascoli reported he has visited several MHA sites and had a meet and greet with residents at the Congregate and a tour of that facility. He plans to visit all the facilities and meet with residents. He wanted to invite the Board to a picnic on Friday, May 23 at the Congregate.

Mr. D'Ascoli reported there was a fire inspection at the Congregate and the existing fire panels are outdated and need to be replaced.. He is waiting for a quote as to the cost of replacing them.

Mr. D'Ascoli had a conversation with Mr. Jeff Sousman from the Boston Field office regarding some outstanding Fair Housing issues at MHA that date back to 2012. Mr. Sousman would like to wrap up these outstanding items. The Board asked what these items are. Mr. D'Ascoli noted one was a Reasonable Accommodation request that was denied. The past executive director and Mr. Sousman reached a voluntary agreement. The agreement was to create an excel spread sheet that outlines the name of the resident, the request and an explanation of the decision reached. The second issue is to have staff go through Fair Housing training for reasonable accommodation. In April half of the staff went through training and the rest of the staff will be scheduled once it becomes available. Mr. D'Ascoli and Mr. Sousman did come to one agreement covering these issues.

Mr. D'Ascoli reported that last year there was work done at Mayfair Gardens to build new patios. There was no formal request for proposal or contract for that that work. Currently 8 patios are being completed by the same contractor. There are another 20 to be done. HUD regulations state that an RFP needs to go out for bid for the 20 remaining patios to be completed. We will create an RFP for that work to be completed.

HUD came out to do a Quality Assurance Audit for Section 8 on May 20. The audit came about when MHA did not provide information requested by the Quality Assurance Division by the previous executive director. MHA's numbers did not coincide with HUD numbers. The audit wrapped up today and they did site a couple of items. According to HUD regulations one of our bank accounts needs to be an interest bearing account and currently it is not. We will work with the bank to make that happen. Another item, we erroneously reported a participant in the wrong type of account. We have a participant in the witness protection program and have put them in Tenant Protection Program. We will move that participant out. The last item is MHA was designated as a short fall Housing Authority. MHA did not have enough funds to cover the participants in the Section 8 program. We were given money by HUD to cover that expense and any funds that were not used needs to be returned. MHA will receive a formal report in 45 days and we will have 30 days in which to respond as to the steps that will be taken to rectify the findings.

Back in the beginning of 2012 MHA opened enrollment for people looking for Section 8 assistance and participants would be selected by a lottery. Applications were coded by ethnic origin and in late April MHA was informed by HUD that we could not have that designation on the requests. That designate has since been removed. Any Manchester resident that applied for assistance has been input into the system. There are still a great many non-resident applications that have not been input. To accomplish this task will require overtime will be required. The original notice of the open enrollment did not explain to applicants that names would be drawn by a lottery. If applicants did not receive a notice within a certain time period it would mean that their name was not part of the lottery. MHA

will need to post notices in the newspapers about the lottery and explain the lottery. Mr. D'Ascoli said he will discuss this with HUD further as to what the next steps need to be. He wanted to keep the Board abreast of the situation.

Mr. D'Ascoli remarked that going forward he will be sure to have all appropriate Request for Proposals paperwork and contracts for any work to be done at MHA.

Mr. D'Ascoli informed the Board he changed the locks at the MHA office building. He is looking into getting an alarm system and possibly security cameras for each of these buildings to help keep things secure. The Town of Manchester is requesting use of the MHA Community room for trainings on the weekends but if the community room is used after hours MHA has to be sure that a staff person is on the premises. The office is not secure from the Community room. We will be looking for a way to accomplishing that.

#### **VIII. Chairman's Report**

##### **A. Tenant Commissioner Update**

Chairman Howroyd committed to drafting a notice for a Tenant Commissioner and getting it posted this week.

The NERC NARO conference is scheduled for June 15 through 18 and he asked Board members if they are interested in attending to let him or Mr. D'Ascoli know.

#### **IX. Old Business**

##### **A. Parking/Towing Issues**

Chairman Howroyd reported the contract with Jay's Towing Service has a 30 day notice provision but it will automatically renew on July 1. He recommends that we give notice that we do not intend to renew the contract. There has been some good that has come from having the parking policy but it has been predatory for the towing company. We need to have a contract that is more responsive to MHA needs. Mr. D'Ascoli reported we do have new parking stickers and they will be adhered to the rear passenger window. He will check with other housing authorities to see what their practices are about towing. If decided we will put out an RFP to towing companies based on MHA criteria.

Mr. Rubin moved give Jay's Towing notice that we are not renewing the existing towing contract and at the same time request and extension of that contract for a period of 90 days contract through October 1, 2014. In the meantime we direct the Executive Director to investigate policies of other local housing authorities and to develop a plan that may consist of an RFP for towing services to commence after the current contract expires. Mr. Shanbaum seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

#### **X. New Business**

##### **A. Resolution 2014-5 – Utility Allowance for HCV Program**

Mr. D'Ascoli reported that HUD directs housing authorities to look at the utility allowance schedule and revise it once a year according to the local utility rates. The State of Connecticut uses the Department of Housing utility schedule. He recommends MHA keep in par with these rules and regulations for the period of May 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015. Motion was made by Mr. Rubin to approve Resolution 2014-5 which adopts US Department of Housing and Urban Development utility allowance schedule for the period of May 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015. Ms. Shanley seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

##### **B. Resolution 2014-6 - New Dates for June and July Board Meetings**

Motion was made by Mr. Shanbaum to approve Resolution 2014-6 to cancel the Wednesday, June 18 meeting and to reschedule the Wednesday, July 16 meeting to Tuesday, July 1; and

also moved to change the Wednesday, October 15 meeting to Wednesday, October 8. Mr. Rubin seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

**XI. Items for Future Agenda**

Please send items to Mr. D'Ascoli.

**XII. Executive Session**

Chairman Howroyd asked for a motion to move into Executive Session. Ms. Rubin moved to go to Executive Session at 9:12 pm. Mr. Shanbaum seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

**A. Personnel Matters**

Mr. Rubin moved to close the Executive Session at 9:43 pm. Mr. Shanbaum seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

**XIII. Adjournment**

Chairman Howroyd asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Shanley moved to adjourn the Board of Commissioners meeting at 9:43 pm. Mr. Shanbaum seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

**CHAIRMAN**

**ATTEST:**

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