

**RUTLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY**  
**Board of Commissioners**  
**MINUTES**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**August 12, 2019**

Vice-Chairman Karl Anderson called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM on Monday, August 12, 2019 in the Sheldon Towers Community Room, 14 Sheldon Place, Rutland, VT.

**ROLL CALL/INTRODUCTIONS:** Let the record show the following:

**Board of Commissioners Present:**

Vice-Chairman Karl Anderson, Commissioner Tina Johnson, Commissioner Jim Richards and Commissioner Rev. Andrew Carlson.

**Rutland Housing Authority Staff Present:**

Kevin Loso, Executive Director; Julie Sanderson, Property Manager; Carol Keefe, Resident Services Program Manager & SASH Supervisor; Staci Buysse, Director of Finance & Human Resources; Becky Ladabouche, Section 8 Program Manager; and Barbara Richardson, Administrative Services & Occupancy Specialist.

**Tenants and Members of the Public Present:**

Ron Hemenway, Susan Mattison, Ann Brzoza.

**TENANT CONCERNS**

Ron Hemenway expressed appreciation for the work of the maintenance crew to get his new air conditioner installed before the record heat of the weekend set in.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** (pages 1.3 – 1.7)

A motion was made by Commissioner Carlson and seconded by Commissioner Johnson to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 8, 2019. There was unanimous approval.

**CONSENT AGENDA:** (pages 1.17 - 1.26):

A motion was made by Commissioner Richards and seconded by Commissioner Johnson to approve the Consent Agenda items for August 2019, including:

- Manifests: Section 8 Checks #2398 through #2401 and Direct Deposit #62861 through #62966**
- Manifests Public Housing #16027 through #16115**
- Credit Card Report 06/20/2019 – 07/20/2019**
- Manifests: Payroll: 7/3/2019, 7/17/2019 and 7/31/2019**

The motion was unanimously approved.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

**Hickory Street Update**

- **Forest Park Drive Discontinuance/Transfer** – The consolidated site map has been forwarded to the City, and by the next meeting we hope to be able to report that the transfer is complete.
- **VHCB Staff Retreat** – Thirty staff members of the Vermont Housing Conservation Board (VHCB) visited the Hickory Street property. Many of them had a role in the project but had not had an

opportunity to see the finished product. Those on the tour were impressed that our small maintenance staff keeps up the site so well

- **Single-Family Home Update** (Pages 1.17 – 1.21)

VHCB approved request for funds, and will continue to support the project. However, the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) did not approve the Tax Credits. Their decision was influenced by a Rutland Herald article quoting appraiser Sean Sargent stating that Rutland area housing prices are depressed and that there is currently an abundance of inventory, much of which requires rehabilitation. VHFA believes rehab of substandard stock in the city is a better use of VHFA funds. An advance copy of the Rutland Redevelopment Authority's Housing Needs Assessment speaks to the need for continued reinvestment in housing stock and/or the demolition of abandoned properties that are representing a drain on services and home values. Local realtors have indicated that the market has started to pick up, but VHFA maintained their position that investment in new single-family housing in Rutland is not prudent. VHFA has decided to use their funds to support mobile home park expansion in the state. We will continue to pursue other options, including the possibility of working with Habitat for Humanity.

**Recovery Residences** – As we've discussed in previous Board meetings, there is a lot of interest on the local level in pursuing establishment of recovery residences for people in recovery from substance use disorder. The RHA is currently serving as a catalyst to bring the service providers together to determine feasibility and sustainability. Rutland Regional Medical Center (RRMC) Rutland Mental Health Services/Evergreen Center, Turning Point, and Grace House are just a few of the potential service providers that are at the table. Three potential sites have been identified, which will be considered once the service commitments are in place. This will take some time to complete.

**RAD Update**

**Disposition/Retention Action: Hickory Street** – Mr. Loso asked HUD's Boston Field Office for assistance in seeking a response from HUD's Special Applications Center (SAC) for a status report on this request, but still have had no word. Typically these requests are handled within 60 – 90 days; they've had ours since December, but the deluge of RAD conversions the SAC is processing is, no doubt, slowing everything down. Our main concern is to know if there's more work to do on the application. If we don't hear anything within another month we will ask our Congressional delegation for assistance.

**Sheldon Towers Project** – As reported in the July meeting, the initial word from our RAD transaction manager was that moving forward with the remaining 14 unit upgrades at Sheldon Towers would not interfere with the RAD conversion process, which later turned out not to be the case. The delay gave us an opportunity to seek an additional independent cost estimate for comparing the bids we received, which seemed on the high side, but ultimately confirmed that they are reasonable.

Mr. Hemenway asked if it makes more sense to let the units stay empty until we can do the renovations, rather than fill them and then have to relocate the new tenants. Mr. Loso explained that the RAD conversion may take 6 months or more, and we have to fill them to ensure income from those units. More importantly, there is a waiting list of people who need affordable, decent housing and our mission is to house them.

**RAD Finance Plan** – The RAD Financing Plan was submitted to HUD last week. Mr. Loso thanked the many staff members who participated in this laborious process and noted that many PHAs bring in consultants to manage this process. During the financial review of our submission, two items were addressed that will have significant positive impact: DDTF funds that we earned as a result of the demolition of Forest Park will be added to the RAD base rents, thereby increasing rental income initially and into the future, as this number will be subject to a 2-3% annual multiplier. Additionally, a combination of current Capital Fund grants and operating funds have been placed in reserve for the completion of the Sheldon Towers unit upgrades.

**Staffing Issues** – One of our staff is on extended medical leave, and we have a very capable and skilled temp from Leddy handling reception duties. Mr. Loso thanked and praised the staff members who pulled together to cover the front office in the interim.

**Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) FYE 03/31/2019** (Pages 1.21 – 1.23) – We are pleased to share HUD’s High Performer score of 100% for our Section 8 Program. We recognize Ms. Ladabouche’s outstanding work.

**2019 Mainstream Voucher NOFA** – HUD issued a Notice of Funding Availability for Mainstream Vouchers targeted to serve non-elderly disabled individuals. We are applying for 35 with the hope of receiving a significant portion. A requirement is to sign an MOU with a number of service providers who will agree to support the voucher holders. Ms. Ladabouche said that the Section 8 waiting list currently shows 35 eligible applicants: They are homeless or at risk of homelessness in addition to being disabled. While we can’t mandate that applicants accept supportive services in order to receive a Mainstream voucher, it’s very helpful if they do. RMHS, the Homeless Prevention Center (HPC), the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) and the Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging (SVCOA) have all supported the program and our voucher holders in the past.

**Tenant Protection Vouchers for Foster Youth to Independence Initiative** - HUD issued a notice this month regarding the availability of Tenant Protection Vouchers (TPV). We used TPV to ensure that Forest Park residents received affordable housing in the community when we redeveloped the site. HUD has decided to use a portion of the funding to serve youth who are aging out of the Foster Care system. Many youth struggle with the transition and this program requires that supports are in place for successful transitions. Unlike the Mainstream Voucher program where we have a deadline by which to lease up, there is no cap or penalty based on duration of turnaround. The vouchers are good for 36 months, by which time participants should be equipped for independence. These youth may be given a preference for a regular voucher, which would provide for an ongoing subsidy.

It’s a complex landscape and we are assessing if there's sufficient need in the system to justify our application, since there are already Family Unification Vouchers available through the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) that serve a similar population. The application requires that we secure certification from the state as to who could benefit, and then apply for vouchers on an as-needed basis. It can take 90 - 120 days for HUD to process our application, and it’s a lot of extra work. Commissioner Richards asked if the need justifies the work when Family Unification vouchers can be used for the same population. Mr. Loso will be meeting with state officials and youth service agencies to get a sense of the need and more importantly, their willingness to commit to the required services.

**Housing Trust of Rutland County IHM Permanently Supportive Housing Project** (Pages 1.24 – 1.25) The attached Rutland Herald article, “Housing Trust Unveils IHM plans”, reports that HTRC is pursuing development of a permanently supportive housing facility of 9 one-bedroom units and 10 micro-units. The HTRC approached us for 19 Project-Based Vouchers. We aren’t sure yet if we can use them for that purpose. There are benefits to converting some of our Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) to PBV: It's easier to administer (with one property, all inspections and recertifications would be streamlined; we’re assured of a quality landlord), but it takes those HCV out of general circulation. Mr. Loso will continue to meet with their Executive Director to see how this might work.

**Howard Gordon Retirement** (Page 1.26) – Our long-time fee accountant, Howard Gordon, is retiring. He has been a great asset for PHAs all over New England. His partner, James Griffin, has been working closely with him for 3+ years, and will be taking over the firm.

**HASS Grant Award 2019-2020** – We have received this important funding of \$34,615 to, among other things, fund staffing and to support SASH homemaker services to SASH participants to help them maintain their independence.

**DREAM Program Return** – DREAM is a youth mentoring program that once had a site at Forest Park. During the transition to Hickory Street, the change in population (fewer youth) made it difficult to maintain. Now that Hickory Street is complete, there's new opportunity to reestablish the program on a more neighborhood-wide basis.

**2020 Five-Year Plan Update** – We have been in limbo around the Five-Year Plan process, which is required under Public Housing but will cease after the RAD conversion. We're moving forward with a draft schedule and plan. The deadline for submission to HUD is Jan 1, 2021. It will include changes to our Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP), though once RAD is in place our guidance will come from our Section 8 Program Administrative Plan, which is also scheduled to be revised under the Five-Year Plan.

## **REPORTS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

### **Finance/Administration Report** (pages 2.1-2.14)

**Consolidated Budget Comparison and Variance Reports for June 2019** – See full report for details. Highlights: Revenues from rents continued to be down due to vacancies related to the Templewood Court unit modernizations and planned Sheldon Towers upgrades.

**Cash Flow** – Cash flow is generally consistent, with the notable exceptions of income from the 2018 HSH Incentive Management Fee and the outstanding \$50K note that was paid by Housing Initiatives, Inc. for 9 Tremont Street. We considered the note a good investment with the interest we were generating, but after nearly a decade it was time to clear it from the books. The year-to-date bottom line surplus is \$103,665, and the ending bank balance for June was \$1,284,268.52.

**Anti-Harassment Policy** - We based this policy on a reliable template known to be fully vetted by legal counsel. Mr. Loso and Ms. Buysse recommend implementation of this policy to replace the current version, which is very similar, but the proposed version consolidates all resources in one place.

### **Proposed Resolution 2019-18 to approve the Anti-Harassment Policy effective August 12, 2019**

Commissioner Johnson made a motion to approve the resolution which was seconded by Commissioner Carlson. There was unanimous approval.

### **Property Management** (page 2.15)

**Site Updates** – Ms. Sanderson reported that offers have been made on 2 Templewood Court vacancies, and 1-year warranty inspections are scheduled for the bathroom floors that were replaced in a number of units. No Parking signs were installed in front of Building 3. At Sheldon Towers we performed biannual and bed bug inspections. AT&T made upgrades to some equipment. We have three lease-ups scheduled for Hickory Street units. Smart water meters were installed at Hickory Street phases 2 & 3.

**Projects** – The patching/sealing/line painting of parking and drives at all sites will begin in October. The RAD Capital Needs Assessment red-flag punch list for Public Housing is nearly complete.

Mr. Loso recognized the work of the Maintenance staff, which completed 11 unit turnovers, including 2 2-bedroom units. They declined the offer for contract painting, saying they could get it done, and they have. This is impressive considering it's in addition to preparation for inspections!

**Section 8 Program** (pages 2.16 – 2.17)

Ms. Ladabouche reported that during July, 3 families leased up, one moved and one ported to Florida, where we will continue to make the Housing Assistance Payment. We have 3 more families looking for housing. One- and 3-bedroom units are hard to find, and landlords are now charging \$850- \$950 for one-bedroom units, putting them out of reach for those with a HCV. Mainstream vouchers are leased at 100%. Mr. Loso noted that some PHAs are going to the extent of purchasing properties to house their voucher holders because rents are so high. In the future, perhaps we can work through Housing Initiatives, Inc. to do the same. Ms. Ladabouche is skilled at working with landlords to make the rent affordable. Commissioner Carlson asked if the city might be eager to have some of the previously mentioned properties rehabbed for this purpose. Ms. Ladabouche said that fully accessible units are very rare and much needed. One of the proposed HTRC recovery residences has one. Homeless Prevention Center is also promoting more accessibility.

**Resident Services Report** (pages 2.19 – 2.41)

Ms. Keefe shared the findings of a federal evaluation of the impact of SASH that shows significantly slower growth in the cost of long-term institutional care for very-low-income SASH participants living in most areas of Vermont. In her first two month on the job, SASH Coordinator Stephanie Bertrand has completed all required training as well as the 4-day training for facilitating the Healthier Living Workshops.

The recent barbecue and resource fair was a great success. Other SASH panels were invited, yielding 50 attendees and great feedback. Vermont Food Bank staff had surveyed residents prior to the event to learn food preferences, and all attendees received groceries. Other features: a \$50 gift-card giveaway; one-on-one meetings for 3 Squares enrollment; free-choice options of fresh produce; and a visit by the RCPD Chief of Police Brian Kilcullen and Detective LaChance.

Mr. Loso shared “How Social Supports and Care Coordination May Lower Medical Costs for Seniors Living at Home” a Forbes.com article about successes of the SASH program (see attached).

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:** (pages 3.2 – 3.11)

The following informational items were sent out prior to the meeting, and they indicate that trends are good:

- A. Aged Delinquency Reports 7/2019
- B. Collections Report 7/2019
- C. Lease Violations/Evictions 7/2019
- D. Housing Occupancy Charts 7/2019

**NEW/OLD BUSINESS** - None.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION** - None.

**ACTION ITEMS** – Vice-Chairman Anderson collected Executive Director performance appraisal forms from Board members. He and Chairman Markowski will compile the responses.

**ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING:**

There being no other business to bring before the Board, Commissioner Richards moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 a.m. Commissioner Carlson seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

**Date of next BOC Regular meeting: Monday, September 23 @ the Rutland Housing Authority Board Room, 5 Tremont Street, Rutland, VT at 8 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin L. Loso  
Executive Director/Secretary

**Approved by the RHA Board of Commissioners**

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Chairman's Signature

Date

Prepared by Barbara Richardson, Administrative Services & Occupancy Specialist