

RUTLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY
Board of Commissioners
MINUTES
Regular Meeting
June 8, 2020

Chairman Kevin Markowski called the meeting to order at 8:11 AM on Monday, June 8, 2020 in a Zoom meeting room to which the public had been invited via the RHA website and through notices posted at RHA properties.

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

Board of Commissioners Present:

Chairman Kevin Markowski, Vice-Chairman Karl Anderson, Commissioner Tina Johnson and Commissioner Andrew Carlson.

Rutland Housing Authority Staff Present:

Kevin Loso, Executive Director; Julie Sanderson, Property Manager; Becky Ladabouche, Section 8 Program Manager; Carol Keefe, Resident Services Program Manager & SASH Implementation Manager; and Barbara Richardson, Administrative Assistant.

Tenants and Members of the Public Present:

Ron Hemenway.

TENANT CONCERNS

Commissioner Johnson expressed thanks to the staff on behalf of all tenants for keeping them safe.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (pages 1.3 – 1.8)

A motion was made by Commissioner Carlson and seconded by Commissioner Johnson to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 11, 2020. There was unanimous approval.

CONSENT AGENDA (pages 1.9- 1.19):

A motion was made by Commissioner Johnson seconded by Commissioner Carlson to approve the Consent Agenda items for June 2020, including:

Manifests: Section 8 Checks #2441 through #2450 and Direct Deposit #63931 through #64401

Post-RAD Breakdown of HAP and Subsidy Flow

Report on Capital Fund Close Out (see attached)

Manifests Public Housing #16945 through #17007

Credit Card Report 04/27/2020 – 05/20/2020

Manifests: Payroll: 05/06/2020 and 05/20/2020

Mr. Loso pointed out page 1.12, showing the breakdown of Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) fund transfers to both private landlords and to RHA. As we expected and planned for the HAP payments for Sheldon Towers and Templewood Court will be short by about \$2K per month until we switch to full Section 8 funding in January 2021. Until then the balance is being made up out of operating reserves. With a recent allocation of an additional 15 Mainstream vouchers, our inventory now totals 378 vouchers.

Pages 1.13-1.14 are HUD's response to the Actual Modernization Cost Certificates which the Board approved in May. The grants will be audited and fully closed out at FYE 03/31/2020.

The motion was unanimously approved.

MEDIA

Page 1.20 – 1.22 – “Housing Authority Works through Pandemic Difficulties”, Rutland Herald, May 11, 2020.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

RHA Response to COVID-19

Tenant Welfare/Safety Measures – SASH Coordinators and Resident Services staff continue to call all tenants to check on their health and wellbeing, and through the use of posters, SASH Flash and RHA Update we provide education urging compliance with safety measures such as social distancing and managing traffic in buildings. Gratefully we still have had no reported cases of COVID-19 in our properties. Resident Services will be surveying all tenants to determine if there are unmet needs related to access to health care, medications, food, and at Hickory Street, summer programming, meals for students, internet access and employment concerns. HUD allows us to use COVID-19 relief funds to support tenants in Hickory Street Phase 1 and 2 Public Housing units and our RAD units. The timing of our conversion is auspicious: Working off the Public Housing operating funds made us eligible for the additional COVID-19 operating funds from HUD. PHAs that converted prior to 2019 were not eligible for these funds.

Staffing – Work Transition Plan – Transition back to office is going well, and most are back at their usual posts full time. Employees are logging their temperatures and answers to coronavirus screening questions upon arrival at work. The shared offices (front office and SASH coordinators) continue to alternate coverage.

Tenant Account Receivables – Our TARS remain low through May. We will continue to monitor this and work closely with delinquent tenants to assist them with repayment agreements.

Common Application – Ms. Richardson and Ms. Sanderson are working on a streamlined, common application for all of our programs. We hope to roll this out in June.

HUD COVID-19 Funding – Ms. Hathaway is tracking our COVID-19 expenses from the date RHA started preparations (mid-March). The effective date for use of the funding is the date of the HUD notice (March 27) but industry groups continue to lobby to have it moved to the date of the presidentially declared State of Emergency.

Section 8 Administrative Fees – HUD allows us to charge these fees to the COVID grant before we have to use regular admin fees. At end of the year, we will roll the remaining regular fees into our reserves.

RAD Update

Unit Inspections - Mr. Loso reminded the board that the Templewood Court initial unit inspections for the conversion had been postponed from March, and will be performed as soon as it is determined safe for all involved, both tenants and inspectors.

Post-RAD Conversion Modernization – Our RAD Finance application earmarked \$500K to complete the unit modernization at Sheldon Towers and to replace common area flooring. We will be putting the jobs out to bid with work starting sometime after September 1, 2020.

Forest Park/Hickory Street Land Disposition – The HUD attorney wants more detail on the Declaration of Trust, which transferred ownership from HUD to the RHA. We are working with our attorney to modify the language in the document.

Tenant COVID-19 Video Conference and Virtual Pizza Party

After last month's Board meeting we held the remaining ZOOM pizza party meetings at Templewood Court and Hickory Street. There weren't a large number of participants, but those who did participate had questions for the Public Health Nurse (who made a COVID-19 presentation) and for RHA staff. Ms. Sanderson and Ms. Keefe received feedback on social media, via phone and email from tenants who enjoyed and appreciated the pizza and the outreach. There is a virtual town meeting for tenants scheduled for late June.

Annual Public Hearing

The hearing will primarily be held to act on the proposal to permanently adopt the HUD COVID-19 waiver to move from annual to biannual unit inspections, reserving the right to have more frequent inspections if requested by tenants or RHA. There may be some other minor updates to the Public Housing Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy and RAD/Section 8 Administrative plans.

We are exploring the conversion of the 20 Public Housing units at Hickory Street to some sort of Section 8 subsidy, and will pursue the option that will work best for RHA. We will review the pros and cons to various approaches and present recommendations to the board at a later date.

Lincoln Place Permanently Supportive Housing Update

The Housing Trust of Rutland County's (HTRC) project at the former Immaculate Heart of Mary property is moving forward. RHA is actively involved in the planning stages of the project as our Section 8 vouchers make it a viable project. We're working with the Lincoln Place management staff to find ways to streamline the admissions process.

COVID-19 Vermont Economic Recovery Package (pages 1.23 – 1.41)

This provides an overview of the Governor's recommendations for CRF housing assistance funding. Of special interest is the \$42M for Rental Housing Stabilization for renters and landlords (page 1.36). This is intended to assist in bridging 3 months' worth of for rent arrearage and current unpaid rents for eligible tenants. The original plan calls for limiting eligibility to landlords with 20 or fewer units, but there are affordable housing providers with inventories of Tax Credit housing which depend on rental income for solvency. The state has issued a RFP looking for a statewide organization to administer the funds. It's expected that the Vermont State Housing Authority will be awarded the contract as they have a statewide presence and capacity to process the applications and payments.

Loans are also for landlords to open new units to rehouse some of the 200 families receiving General Assistance who had been moved out of shelters and into motels via the state-funded emergency voucher program. There may be some opportunity for RHA and Mr. Loso will address the funding stream an opportunities in Executive Session.

SASH Tele-Medicine Initiative

We are considering options for offering telehealth and telemedicine at SASH sites. The community has seen a spike in use and interest in the technology during the pandemic. This would enable us to purchase hardware and software and to train SASH Coordinators and Wellness Nurses.

REPORTS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Finance/Administration Report (Pages 2.2 – 2.9)

Consolidated Budget Comparison and Variance Reports for April 2020: Revenues and Expenses,

Variance and Cash Flow – Aside from journal entries and transfers, there is no activity to report on this

opening month of the fiscal year. The June report will include complete consolidated financial reports. The cash balance stands at \$1,185,315.67.

HERO Pay Payments through 05/15/2020 (pages 2.3 - 2.5)

This report shows a breakdown of the Hero Bonus Pay hours that the Board approved in April, showing a total expenditure \$3526.50 – about \$2K less than projected. Mr. Loso suggested that, if there is Board consensus, we would like to extend the payments beyond May 18th (the date that Maintenance staff came back to work full- time) and through the end of May.

Proposed Resolution 2020-14 to approve extension of Hero Bonus Pay to Maintenance Staff through May 31, 2020.

Commissioner Johnson made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Carlson and passed unanimously.

Mr. Loso requested that during Executive Session the Board discuss a similar bonus plan for non-maintenance staff.

Drafts of audited financial statements for Hickory Street Phases 1 & 2 are under review. Once they're finalized we may be eligible for an incentive management fee which gets split between RHA, Housing Vermont and the limited partner.

Property Management Report (Page 2.10)

Sites Update – Ms. Sanderson reported that there are two vacant units at Templewood Court, one of which will be leased for July 1. Sheldon Towers now has 3 vacancies, all unexpected. There is one vacancy at Hickory Street Phase 1 and another at Phase 3.

Sheldon Towers Unit Upgrades – We need a minimum of five empty units to make it viable for contractors. In particular, one of the recently vacated units needs total renovation because of the length of the tenancy. Our plan is to transfer tenants from units requiring upgrades to two of the recently vacant units, and to find other tenants who are willing to transfer to three available units at Templewood Court (there was an unexpected death at Templewood Court late last week). Some tenants in the outdated Sheldon Towers units don't want to move, but we'll try to persuade them with additional incentives beyond the moving expense, such as picking up the cable and telephone transfer fees. As for common area improvements, we will likely replace the first floor carpeting with carpet squares because we can replace single tiles when they wear out or stain. Hallways on the 2nd through 10th floors will be high-quality commercial grade vinyl plank.

In the past month RHA lost two long-time tenants: a Sheldon Towers resident who had lived in RHA housing for 48 years, and an animated and charismatic elder at Templewood Court. Mr. Loso reminded all in attendance that it's a measure of success that RHA tenants have the opportunity to live out their full lives in their own homes. Both of these tenants benefited greatly from our services.

Section 8 Program Report (Pages 2.11-2.14)

Ms. Ladabouche reported that one family was at zero HAP on their Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) and has moved out. RHA's HAP increased significantly due to tenants losing their employment, but now that unemployment payments are coming in, tenants' share of rent will increase. Two Mainstream Voucher holders leased up. We now have a total of 19 Mainstream Vouchers leased. We now have a total of 64 Mainstream Vouchers and 219 HCV, including 15 more Mainstream Vouchers (see page 2.13) through COVID-19 emergency funding, though we can't start leasing those up until August 1. We

had the option of declining these extra vouchers, but Ms. Ladabouche is confident we can use them within the extended deadline that HUD has provided.

Resident Services Report (pages 2.14– 2.31)

As of June 1 SASH staff began on-site work again. Each panel/site received a tracking log like the one used by the rest of RHA staff, and staggered office hours are in effect to maintain social distancing.

Ms. Keefe participated in webinars that were offered in lieu of the New England Resident Service Coordinators, including a session on competence with cultural humility to inform programming with an awareness of existing racial health inequities. Meetings of the Rutland County Referral and Care Coordination Team are resuming via ZOOM.

Greg Cox of Boardman Hill Farm, who supplies our garden box flowers every summer, planted the boxes for us because the coronavirus interfered with our usual gathering of Rutland High School volunteers. At Home Senior Care homemakers are once again able to perform their regular duties. They had been allowed only to shop for clients during the early stages of the Stay Home, Stay Safe order. Homemaker services provided to SASH participants are funded by HASS and are being expanded as a result of excess funds in the account due to the lack of visits during the pandemic.

As of July SASH Coordinators will resume the role of composing the SASH Flash for their panels. SASH Team Meetings will also resume in July and we are working through how to maintain HIPPA compliance.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS: (pages 3.2 – 3.11)

The following informational items were sent out prior to the meeting:

- A. Aged Delinquency Reports 5/2019
- B. Collections Report 5/2019
- C. Lease Violations/Evictions 5/2019
- D. Housing Occupancy Charts 5/2019

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion by Commissioner Carlson and seconded by Commissioner Johnson, the Board entered Executive Session at 8:58 a.m. to discuss contractual or human resource issues, the premature disclosure of which could put the RHA at a significant disadvantage. There was unanimous approval.

On a motion by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Vice-Chairman Anderson, the Board came out of Executive Session at 9:42 a.m. There was unanimous approval.

ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING:

There being no other business, Vice-Chairman Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:14 a.m. Commissioner Carlson seconded the motion, and there was unanimous approval.

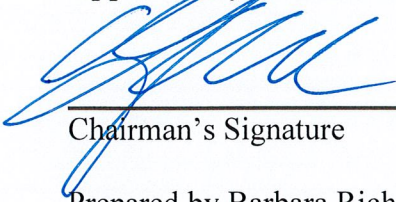
Date of next BOC Regular meeting: Monday, July 12th at 8 a.m. via Zoom Conference (public posting of meeting announcement to follow).

Respectfully submitted,

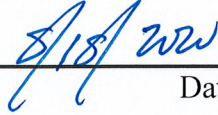


Kevin L. Loso
Executive Director/Secretary

Approved by the RHA Board of Commissioners



Chairman's Signature



Date

Prepared by Barbara Richardson, Executive Administrative Assistant