



**FRANKLIN COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING &  
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

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**MINUTES  
Regular Meeting – April 4, 2022**

The Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority Board of Commissioners conducted the regular meeting of the Authority on **April 4, 2022**, via Zoom.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Executive Director Gina Govoni called the meeting to order at 4:38 p.m.

**Commissioners Present (via roll call):**

L. Brown    M. Slowinski    S. Worgaffik    M. Cucchiara    S. Cottrell    A. Bresciano

**Absent:**            F. Williams

**Staff Present:**    G. Govoni    L. Cornish    N. Sauber    K. Kelley

Introductions were made to the new staff member, Executive Administrative Assistant, Katie Kelley

**2. ACTIONS:**

**Minutes:** Commissioner Brown moved, and Commissioner Slowinski seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2022, regular meeting of the Board as presented.

A. Bresciano noted that his name was not entered as absent on the meeting minutes for March 7, 2020. L. Brown added that there was a typo near the end of the minutes where a word read 'Person' instead of 'Personnel.' All changes will be updated accordingly.

G. Govoni stated that the minutes for the joint meeting with SHA from February 28, 2022, will be provided by the May meeting.

17-4288 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

**March AP Warrant:** Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to approve the accounts payable warrant for March 2022.

S. Worgaftik requested clarification on why HRA is paying DHCD \$20,000. L. Cornish stated that she believed it is for HCEC as HRA is paid in advance and then DHCD is reimbursed for the difference in actual expenses.

S. Worgaftik also asked why HRA is paying themselves \$4,900. L. Cornish explained that HRA has many different cash accounts that go through the business units, funds are then moved to follow the earnings. Things such as admin costs, salaries, management needs, and the like are charged back and forth. Some of that will be becoming less as the databases are combined. At this time two databases have been combined with RDI being the last remaining unmerged budget.

17-4289 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

### **Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Revisions:**

L. Cornish began the discussion by reviewing that HRA was afforded more exemption money from DHCD due to merging with SHA, where one additional maintenance person will be hired between the two entities. HRA is showing an additional subsidy from DHCD as well as an additional expense under HRA for that person. The rest of that FTE will be allocated to other entities.

The budget has been updated since HRA V5, primarily due to DHCD's belated guidance on federal administrative allowances through ERAP. This budget update refers to just the HRA public entity budget. The portion of the budget for DHCD needs to be updated however, all changes must be approved by the board before being sent to DHCD. The major changes are the subsidies and maintenance salaries. Other changes were made on legal, there was an increase because it was known that there were issues in quarter one. Overall, the changes since the last meeting are minor.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Worgaftik seconded a motion to approve the revised Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Revisions as presented.

A. Bresciano requested clarification on what would happen if DHCD did not accept our response. L. Cornish explained that the area in question in the budget will need to be reduced to meet DHCD guidelines, which is doable if necessary.

A. Bresciano continued by asking why the four percent administrative increase allowance matters to DHCD. L. Cornish explained that DHCD views us as only a public housing authority, with DHCD acts as the parent company. However, only 20% of HRA's income comes from DHCD. The way that the administrative salaries are shown is via a formula that is an allocation of units over the entire portfolio. Thus, this can move to other parts of the portfolio if needed. DHCD only wants to see a 4% increase per guidelines they have set up that align with their programs. HRA did not use the cap last year and changes were made to the department, so these facts could be mentioned

in discussions if needed. They did agree to increase HRA's staffing for maintenance, however, not all needs were met. So, HRA will keep requesting changes to administrative allowances.

L. Cornish added that with a remaining point that last month it was noticed in the CDBG area that the administrative costs are down to where it was previously expected to be for two continuous quarters. She attempted to revise the budget for them to figure out the end of the year's status. There has been a drag-out with projects and a low demand from Heath homeowners. HRA is considering reducing the CDBG income accordingly.

17-4290 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

### **2023 Capital Improvement Plan:**

G. Govoni stated that the 2023 Capital Improvement Plan has been brought back up as a few changes have been made. These changes stem from the fact that the regional capital representative noticed changes to be made to balance out the budget in each year. Squackheag Village is being brought in-house instead of outsourcing to save money. The Congress Street roof replacement has been pushed to 2027. In addition, grading, and paving for 705 in Bernardston in 2027. Nothing is being removed, only replanned.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to approve the 2023 Capital Improvement Plan as presented

17-4291 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

### **Community Development Professional Service Contract**

G. Govoni stated that this is a motion to authorize to the execute grant admin contract with HRA and Montague, Orange, and Erving. We do not have the contracts yet.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to execute the grant admin contract with HRA and Montague, Orange, and Erving.

G. Govoni noted that the contracts for the projects are not in yet from DHCD.

M. Cucchiara requested clarification on the project details. G. Govoni noted that Montague includes an extension of the sidewalk project and rehabilitation, Orange is entirely rehabilitation, and Erving is a regional grant for Rehabilitation. L. Cornish added that two of the projects have social services flowing through. G. Govoni continued that those two projects are Montague and Orange. Two projects are being partially funded in part by CDBG through Lifepath that will incentivize homeowners to share their homes with roommates and caregivers.

17-4292 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

### **Division of Banks Contract for Housing Counseling Services**

G. Govoni noted that each year there is a calendar year project with the banks to provide counseling for homebuyers and homeowners. HRA applied for and received the \$25,000 grant.

Commissioner Worgattik moved, and Commissioner Cucchiara seconded a motion to accept the Division of Banks Contract for Housing Counseling Services.

17-4293 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

### **HRA Personnel Handbook Changes for Review**

N. Sauber stated that the initial goal when revising the HRA personnel handbook was to insert more family-friendly policies. This thought process led to the realization that there is currently no telecommuting policy in place. On April 4, 2022, HRA opened back up to the public which has increased the need for a formalized policy regarding the processes staff will be required to take to work remotely.

The Telecommuting Policy 3.3.5 outlines what telecommuting is, that it is not an agency-wide benefit but an as-needed option. This policy explains that each employee is required to work at a minimum 60 percent of their time on HRA premises. The Homeowners Associations of the Northeast confirmed that employees who reside in different states are subject to the policies that their respective states mandate. Policy 3.3.5 has been put in place to avoid having to pay into other states' insurance, pay into other states' unemployment, and streamline the deployment of technology, request processing, and termination of telecommuting as needed.

The Inclement Weather Policy 3.3.4 was also updated to state that in the event of inclement weather, telecommuting is an option. When the office is closed for a snow day, employees may work but they will not be required to.

The Option for Additional Sick Leave Policy 6.6.3 also saw a minor change to clarify that paid the Paid Sick Leave Policy will mirror the changes that the State of Massachusetts made to the authorized paid sick leave for Covid-19.

L. Cornish added that the main concern when making these updates was the ongoing knowledge base that will need to be kept up with regarding labor law changes nationwide. By putting these policies in place there will be less likely to be applicants who live in other states 100 percent of the time which could lead to accommodation discussions. This simplifies everything. L. Brown agreed that this gives good continuity and levels the playing field.

Commissioner Brown moved, and Commissioner Worgaftik seconded a motion to accept the HRA Personnel Handbook Policy Changes as presented.

17-4294 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

### **3. Staff Reports:**

No discussion

### **4. Other Business:**

#### **SHA and HRA Merger**

G. Govoni noted that the SHA and HRA merger has passed through the House Council. Nothing has changed the merger, just making sure everything aligns with the wishes of the state and what is needed to comply with 121B. This is moving forward, and it is still possible to be approved within this legislative session.

#### **CHAMP**

G. Govoni explained that CHAMP is a primary reason that there are so many vacancies. There has been some staff and community outrage as this mandated system is now being positioned to take on the MRVP program. Money is being put in without issues being resolved. HRA is planning to reach out to legislators to advocate for the realignment of the investments. The main fear is that this inclusion of MRVP will expedite the exclusion of MRVP from the Franklin County area.

M. Cucchiara requested clarification on who administers CHAMP and if it is subcontracted. G. Govoni answered affirmatively, that it is through DCHD who subcontracts through Cyber Vision. HRA has offered to advise on fixing known issues, but ultimately, the system is still largely inefficient

M. Cucchiara expanded upon his prior question to ask if it is run through the public housing section? G. Govoni answered affirmatively.

#### **Sanderson Place**

G. Govoni announced that HRA will begin marketing Sanderson Place, but the income guidelines have not been released yet. The lottery is anticipated for July.

M. Cucchiara asked if HRA had noticed utility changes for 2022? Further stating that if not, it is happening. It is part of the inflationary cycle.

#### **RDI**

L. Brown went over the details of the previous meeting regarding RDI. Sanderson Place was discussed, as well as the pipeline. Additionally, there is a new RDI member Shaundrell Diaz, and the financials were covered.

#### **5. Documents for Informational Purposes**

No discussion

#### **6. Other Business not Reasonably Anticipated 48 hours in advance**

##### **Forgiveness Committee**

G. Govoni explained that Alyssa Larose had previously taken Jessica Atwood's position on the Forgiveness Committee. This space is now open. She asked if anyone wanted to join this committee.

M. Cucchiara asked how frequent the meetings are. G. Govoni explained that they have not met since before the pandemic.

M. Cucchiara agreed to join the Forgiveness Committee.

##### **HRA Resignation**

M. Slowinski asked for clarification on who has resigned from HRA. G. Govoni answered that it was Josh Kasuba, the Housing Rehabilitation Specialist. There are currently three applications for his position.

#### **7. Adjourn**

There being no further business Commissioner Slowinski moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:26 p.m.