



**FRANKLIN COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING &  
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

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**MINUTES  
Special HRA SHA Joint Board of Commissioners Meeting  
February 28, 2022**

The Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority Board of Commissioners conducted the special meeting of the Authority on **February 28, 2022**, via Zoom.

**1. Call to Order**

Commissioner Brown called the meeting to order for HRA at 4:30 p.m. Commissioner Flaccus called the meeting to order for SHA at 4:30 p.m.

**\*\*\*\*Note:** All votes were taken via roll call\*\*\*\*

**Commissioners Present (via roll call):** S. Worgaftik, S. Cottrell, M. Cucchiara, L. Brown, M. Slowinski, A. Bresciano, F. Williams, Attorney P. Chesky, Penny

**Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** G. Govoni, L. Cornish, N. Sauber, L. Vieland

**Guests:** R. Maccini, S. Flaccus, K. Levitch, R. Bowen Weld

**2. Action and Discussion**

G. Govoni introduced Attorney P. Chesky who has assisted in drafting the legislation. G. Govoni continued by presenting the contents of the draft legislation and a recap of previous events. In February and March of 2020, there was an initial vote between each board separately to respond to the Public Housing Notice 2019-24. In January and February of 2021, the application was submitted to DHCD and was approved. The first joint meeting was in April of 2021, and at that meeting, there was a decision to break into a smaller planning committee with two members from each board meeting who would work together to work towards a resolution on key changes that would be needed if the two authorities were to merge. On Sep 28, 2021, the second joint board meeting took place in which it was decided to move forward with the merger. In October 2021, the report was finalized and later sent to DHCD in November of 2021. In December of 2021, DHCD stated they agreed to certain awards for the newly merged regional authority. In December and January 2022, legislative outreach began.

With this merger, the Shelburne Housing Authority would cease to exist as a separate entity: all monies, real property interests, personal property interests, and all files, legal, financial records, and other material transfer ownership to the regional housing

authority. A new revised regional housing board would be formed with seven members. Of these seven members, five would be appointed by FRCOG, and two would be appointed by DHCD. With this legislation, there is the removal of the one person per town limit and it adds one FRCOG appointee to be a tenant member, with preference to an LTO representative.

G. Govoni stated that the language that states all members must be proportionate to operations, which is seen in section eight, will be changed. The new proposed language would be "Appointing authorities shall, to the best of their ability, select members proportionately from the towns in which the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority operates, provided there are not less than two members representing Shelburne, but should there not be available or interested members then appointment authorities may select members from a town within Franklin County".

G. Govoni continued by stating the next steps would be to finalize the draft legislation. Once this is completed, it will be submitted to the House and Senate Counsel to ensure that it is ready for the clerk to make an affirmative committee assignment. From there, the legislators would need to steward this legislation. Additionally, we would be working with DHCD on implementation and system changes in the reserves augmentation and system changes. Once these steps are done the board merger and re-appointments will take place as well as the drafting of new by-laws for revised HRA.

Commissioner Slowinski moved and Commissioner Cucchiara second a motion to approve and authorize Executive Director, Gina Govoni, to all steps necessary to proceed with the merger between Shelburne Housing Authority and Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority; including submission of the revised draft legislation to Massachusetts General Court and Department of Housing and Community Development, and stewardship of the legislation, including the authority to modify the terms if needed, provided that the legislation maintains the key components of the agreement between the Boards.

Commissioner Maccini moved and Commissioner Bowen Weld second a motion to approve and authorize Executive Director, Gina Govoni, to all steps necessary to proceed with the merger between Shelburne Housing Authority and Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority; including submission of the revised draft legislation to Massachusetts General Court and Department of Housing and Community Development, and stewardship of the legislation, including the authority to modify the terms if needed, provided that the legislation maintains the key components of the agreement between the Boards.

K. Levitch raised a concern that he wished for more time to consider this as it is a big step and is unclear whether this excludes any changes or further reflection in the future. M. Cucchiara interjected that we are only voting to submit the documentation today, and there will be further opportunities to comment on this. G. Govoni stated that if there is not an agreement that we want to go down this road, she would not be sure how much more time there would be available to put into this. P. Chesky added that getting the draft legislation was a lot to take in at one time, board members could authorize Gina to pass on this draft legislation to the staff of the legislators and have them take a

preliminary review of it. After that is done, Gina could come back with the final draft, and nothing would be delayed.

G. Govoni asked K. Levitch to expand upon his questions. K. Levitch stated he wanted to talk to the other boards and tenants to get feedback. G. Govoni countered stating that there was an extensive process, that there were stakeholder interviews, and we went out of the way to make sure we were getting a good representative voice heard. There was also a tenant survey. L. Cornish added the idea of a merger was what was pushed towards, but one entity must go away to get that merger to happen. S. Flaccus agreed with Lisa, stating that she had reservations before but is happy to see two members from Shelburne will be on the board. K. Maccini stated this merger will help Shelburne.

R. Bowen Weld stated he would be fine with delaying to look over everything more. He raised a concern that Greenfield does not want this and that he is unsure why HRA and SHA were made separately in the first place. G. Govoni responded by stating that this was likely set up to satisfy the desire for local control. Regarding Greenfield, they pre-existed.

M. Cucchiara shifted the focus in conversation to what is being gained, stating that the boards reside in two small parts of MA. By combining forces, the boards are gaining certain economies of scale and a solid reputation at the state level. There is a real opportunity to undertake new initiatives and to show DHCD that the housing authorities are moving in a way that optimizes efficiencies is a powerful message to send. This could attract additional funding. L. Cornish stated all the DHCD funding is contingent on this merger.

L. Brown added that the word "merger" is important and looks forward to working with Shelburne. M. Slowinski stated that during another merger in the past, there was a delay that proved to not be fruitful, and he did not feel there was anything to gain from a delay. M. Cucchiara echoed M. Slowinski's concern about timing, not wanting to lose momentum, and the legislative cycle.

P. Chesky added that the powers and authorities of the SHA merge into Franklin County, so the power of eminent domain goes into the merged entity and so even though it is not specifically covered in this legislation, the legislation all remaining powers held by SHA vest in the surviving entity. Thus, if SHA is concerned about the other powers going away, that does not happen.

R. Bowen Weld added that he was not sure if the town of Shelburne would be willing to give up that type of power. M. Cucchiara stated as a practical power there has not been a need to use this power in some time but regardless, all the SHA powers go into the Franklin County Housing Authority which shows this is truly a merger. K. Levitch stated the timing is where he finds things difficult, but he wants to vote for this. Although there are some reservations, looking at the whole document this is the direction the boards have been going in.

S. Flaccus asked for clarification on how HRA feels that SHA has two seats on the new board. L. Brown stated that they spoke of a proportionate representative. M. Slowinski added that it should be left with two seats and see how it works out.

K. Levitch requested clarification on if anything can be modified after a vote. G. Govoni stated that yes, she is asking for the ability to guide this forward with the potential for tweaks. What is wanted tonight is an agreement that the terms discussed here are the most important pieces. Some changes can be made depending on how substantial they are. P. Chesky clarified that this vote gives Gina the authority to move the legislation forward and approve any modifications of the terms that do not substantially change the key components of the legislation.

SHA 17-182 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

HRA 17-4281 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 1 abstaining

### **3. Adjourn**

There being no additional business Commissioner Slowinski moved a motion to adjourn the joint meeting.