



**FRANKLIN COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING &  
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

241 Millers Falls Road • Turners Falls, MA 01376  
Telephone: (413) 863-9781 • Facsimile: (413) 863-9289

**MINUTES**

**Regular Meeting – March 20, 2023**

The Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority Board of Commissioners conducted the regular meeting of the Authority on **March 20, 2023**, via Zoom. at 4:30 p.m.

**1. Call to Order**

Faith Williams called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

F. Williams explained that the extension to Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, that allowed for public bodies to meet remotely ends on March 31, 2023. If this extension is not further extended, then meetings will have to return to an in-person setting. Unless the law is extended, the next meeting will be at the HRA main office with a rotating schedule of locations to be decided upon at a later time.

**Commissioners Present (via roll call):** F. Williams, M. Cucchiara, R. Bowen Weld, S. Worgaftik

**Absent:** L. Brown

**Staff Present:** G. Govoni, N. Sauber, K. Kelley

**Guests:** Mary McClintock, Penny Clark, Ria Biley, Anne Marie Derr, Barb Hoffman

**2. Actions**

**HRA February Minutes:** Commissioner Worgaftik moved, and Commissioner Cucchiara seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2023, regular meeting of the Board as submitted.

17-4363 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

**February AP Warrant:** Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Worgaftik seconded a motion to approve the accounts payable warrant for February 2023.

17-4364 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

**Nomination and Election of Officers:** G. Govoni explained that this election of officers varies from the typical timeline of elections. The officers elected today will serve until the Annual Meeting in October. Additionally, the motion contains open spaces for the current open positions, which thus requires a Board Member to nominate officers for the open positions.

S. Worgaftik nominated Faith Williams as the Chair, Michael Cucchiara as the Vice-Chair, and Leslie Brown as the Treasurer.

F. Williams accepted the nomination for herself as Chair and asked if anyone had consulted with Leslie Brown regarding being potentially nominated as Treasurer. G. Govoni responded, stating that Lisa Cornish spoke with Leslie Brown, who indicated she would be willing to fill the open seat.

M. Cucchiara stated that he is willing to continue as Vice-Chair, given that the responsibilities remain consistent.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Worgaftik seconded a motion to appoint the slate of Commissioners to serve as officers beginning on 3/20/2023 and ending on the date of the annual meeting to be held in October 2023:

- Chair: Faith Williams
- Vice-Chair: Michael Cucchiara
- Treasurer: Leslie Brown

17-4365 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

F. Williams added that she is pleased to be on this Board as its Chair and will attempt to continue to carry out the associated duties as diligently as possible.

**Grievance Policy:** G. Govoni explained that this policy, originally adopted in 2020, was largely shaped by the work completed on the policy by the Shelburne Housing Authority Board. The primary inclusion during that revision was the addition of Attachment A, which simplifies the ten steps to filing a grievance for state public housing. There are some differences between the two existing policies, which primarily concern HRA's voucher program. The Highland Village LTO has provided feedback on the policy and has suggested the presented changes.

S. Worgaftik expressed concern that the timeline of events explained on page three in the informal settlement conferences section is vague. F. Williams agreed, noting that other policy sections have clearly defined timeframes. G. Govoni responded, stating that this section could be amended to include a more specific timeframe, and asked if the Highland Village LTO had any input on this issue now or would prefer to bring the concept up at a future meeting. Guest and HVTO President Penny Clark stated that this can be revisited at a different meeting.

S. Worgaftik questioned when the 14 days begin, as cited in the informal settlement conference section on page 3. Guest Mary McClintock stated that the 14 days begin after the data HRA receives the grievance. S. Worgaftik followed up, asking if the 14 days begin before or after the informal process. G. Govoni responded, stating that the writing is unclear and should plainly state when the 14 days begin.

S. Worgaftik asked what other issue is referenced in the second sentence of the policy. Guest Mary McClintock expressed additional concerns regarding this sentence, stating that the overall structure of the policy is unclear due to the parallel processes with different timeframes. The policy's writing appears convoluted due to the way it is structured. G. Govoni suggested framing the policy as Process A for lease termination and Process B for all other grievances. Guest Mary McClintock agreed with this suggestion. G. Govoni added that the LTO should be consulted on this issue.

S. Worgaftik suggested removing the word "tape" under Procedure on page 4. Guest Mary McClintock suggested replacing the word "tape" with the word "audio." G. Govoni stated that this change will be made.

Guest Mary McClintock questioned if Attachment A only applies to participants in public housing units or if it also applies to voucher holders. G. Govoni responded that this could be better clarified. Guest Mary McClintock added that breaking the document into attachments and subsections, as applicable, would be helpful. S. Worgaftik suggested modeling the policy after the Attachment A chart.

Commissioner Worgaftik moved, and Commissioner Bowen Weld seconded a motion to revisit approving the HRA Grievance Policy as revised after the additional discussed revisions are made.

17-4367 Vote 3 in favor; 0 opposed; 1 abstaining

**Vacancy Write-Offs:** F. Williams requested clarification on whether the items in question were account receivables or vacancy write-offs. G. Govoni responded, stating that write-offs are currently held as account receivables.

G. Govoni noted that HRA began working with a collection agency last year. A six-month update was promised when the collection agency was approved, but there has been little follow-up from the collection agency, which has caused there to be minimal items to update the board on.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Bowen Weld seconded a motion to write off the public housing tenant accounts receivable balances in the total amount of \$7,494.35 for the vacated units as presented.

17-4367 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

F. Williams requested additional clarification if this motion is to write off \$7,494.35 worth of vacancy loss off the books. G. Govoni responded affirmatively.

S. Worgaftik questioned if these four balances are being sent to the collection agency if they are written off. G. Govoni responded affirmatively.

R. Bowen Weld asked if this is typical. G. Govoni responded, stating that the number is slightly high, though, in the past, there was a three-year span with no write-offs that totaled over \$25,000; this is likely high now due to items finally moving through the courts after a long lull. F. Williams added that this is typical at Way Finders as well. It is good practice to do write-offs in small batches.

### **3. Staff Report**

G. Govoni stated that there has been a recent positive development that was not included in the staff report. Yearly, HRA goes through an annual planning process. A conversation began with DHCD on February 13, which has since resulted in DHCD starting to merge data in their various systems, which would allow HRA to present a single Capital Improvement Plan for all properties and one set of policies. As September 30 is the fiscal year-end, there would ideally be a public

hearing for the annual plan in June or July. In advance of that meeting, HRA staff members must review all policies, which will likely result in future recommendations for policy changes.

F. Williams congratulated the HRA property management staff members on having fully leased Sanderson Place as of March 15.

Guest Mary McClintock expressed that while she is thrilled to hear a Housing Navigator has been hired, there are concerns regarding the changes to the RAFT program that will likely make the system more challenging to use and produce more individuals who cannot keep their housing secure.

G. Govoni stated that the new system DHCD has implemented for RAFT payments would make the system easier to use in the long term but more difficult in the short term. Issues have already arisen regarding inputting information into the system. Advocacy work has begun to ensure these issues are known.

Similarly, the state public housing and MRVP programs are projected to begin using the same centralized screening capacity as CHAMP later this year. There will be a new entity called ASG that will take documentation in and make the priority determination for homelessness. The smaller voucher program AHVP will also roll this out in July. There are strong concerns about having a third-party company integrated into the process due to the potential for miscommunication.

One item that is part of the legislative priority is to reverse the language that requires a Notice to Quit, which will likely help the pipeline. Any individuals who feel inclined to advocate for this change are encouraged to. HRA staff members will continue to monitor the CHAMP screening process, and there is hope that this will increase the speed at which people are entered into public housing. The concern is that Franklin County vouchers will be lost to homeless Boston area residents.

M. Cucchiara expressed concern regarding this situation. G. Govoni responded, stating that there is concern that some parties do not understand the gravity of the issue.

Guest Mary McClintock questioned if the legislative delegation and western Massachusetts housing authorities could meet to discuss these issues. G. Govoni responded, stating that this would be helpful, suggesting a meeting with partners and the local legislative delegation to ask how regional equity will be maintained with the MRVP onboarding to the centralized screening service in CHAMP.

S. Worgaftik questioned if Pamela Schwartz is involved. G. Govoni responded, saying that she is not.

G. Govoni stated that invitations for two HRA-hosted events will be sent in the coming weeks. An event to honor the departing Shelburne Housing Authority Board Members will be held on April 11 at 2:30 p.m. at Highland Village. A ribbon-cutting event for Sanderson Place will take place on May 19, likely in the afternoon.

Guest Mary McClintock suggested inviting the neighbors of Sanderson Place to the ribbon-cutting event. G. Govoni responded that they are on the guest list.

**4. Other Business**

**HRA Board Member Trainings:** K. Kelley explained that multiple board members were sent instructions regarding trainings that are due. The trainings take place on a biennial basis and are internally tracked to ensure compliance.

**Highland Village Tenant Organization:** Guest Penny Clark noted that the Highland Village LTO would have difficulty attending in-person meetings. Additionally, the next meeting of the LTO will take place on Thursday, March 23. The LTO recently met with Gina Govoni, Pam Parmakian, and Nikki Sauber to discuss MOU, which ended positively. Starting April 6, the LTO will be running social Thursdays at Highland Village.

G. Govoni stated that if the Commonwealth requires meetings to return to an in-person setting, it is likely that only the Board Members who make up the quorum must be present, with other individuals potentially being able to join remotely.

**5. Documents for Informational Purposes**

No discussion.

**6. Other Business not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance**

No Discussion

**7. Adjourn**

R. Bowen Weld moved, and M. Cucchiara seconded a motion to adjourn the regular meeting of the HRA Board of Directors as there was no further business to discuss.

The meeting convened at 5:31 p.m.