



**FRANKLIN COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING &
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

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**MINUTES
Regular Meeting – May 15, 2023**

The Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority Board of Commissioners conducted the regular meeting of the Authority on May 15, 2023, via Zoom. at 4:34 p.m.

1. Call to Order

F. Williams called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

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

Absent: None

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

Guests: Mary McClintock, Barb Hoffman, Deb Brinkman, Ria Biley

2. Actions

HRA April Minutes: Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2023, regular meeting of the Board as submitted.

17-4374 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 1 abstaining

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

17-4375 Vote 5 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

3/31 Financials: L. Cornish explained that the main notable difference is the merger of the SHA and HRA data, as the financials are now being reported as one entity.

The surpluses are ahead of the budget, in part due to Section 8 being accounted for on a cash basis, which may not all be earned. The true-up is not completed until September. CDBG was previously behind but is now ahead and will be reviewed for the year-end budget. HCEC, HRA, and SHA are all slightly ahead of budget. Some of this relates to having more rental income than anticipated, which is offsetting the utilities that are higher than normal; there is a considerable amount of debt in public housing, though this is not budgeted for.

L. Brown questioned if HRA has been able to recuperate any bad debt through the collection agency. L. Cornish responded, stating that nothing has been regained at this time.

S. Worgaftik questioned why the bad debt had doubled. L. Cornish responded, explaining that the debt varies every quarter. F. Williams added that this is likely due to the Covid-19 continuum. There was a sense that ERAP and RAFT would provide assistance in a way that they no longer do. L. Cornish responded, confirming F. Williams' statement, highlighting the continued issue with the courts being backed up.

R. Bowen Weld questioned if the increased electricity cost is a result of the HRA and SHA merger. L. Cornish responded, stating that it is not. An analysis was done after the first quarter, which showed that HRA had fallen out of contract with the supplier in January, which led to a renewal at a higher cost. In March, Pam Parmakian worked with aggregators to obtain new quotes at better prices for the properties. Of note, electricity is fully paid for through the subsidy for public entities.

Housing Choice Voucher Program: G. Govoni explained that HRA has both federal and state voucher programs, which produce two plans that are approved annually. A draft of this annual plan was posted last week, with hearings scheduled for May and June. There are no changes to the plan this year.

Guest Mary McClintock questioned where the document referred to in the annual plan can be accessed. G. Govoni responded, stating that Katelyn Reardon can share the document with anyone who requests it.

S. Worgaftik asked if there could be a discussion about key issues with the plan. G. Govoni responded affirmatively, adding that the resident advisory board meets in June.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to approve the FY24 annual plan (housing choice voucher only PHA) in compliance with PHA plan and related regulations as presented.

17-4376 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Personnel Handbook – Paid Family Medical Leave: L. Brown stated that due to the topic of paid family medical leave being presented by an HRA staff member at the most recent HRA Board Meeting, the personnel committee met to discuss the topic. The findings have not been solidified and are not ready for presentation. Currently, the HRA Personnel Handbook allows staff members to donate sick time to fellow staff members; this policy could be utilized to assist in the meantime.

N. Sauber added that if HRA offered paid family medical leave, this staff member would have earned approximately 80 percent of typical wages during his leave of absence. Members of the HRA management team have offered to donate enough sick time to match what this staff member would have earned.

Regarding policy development, there is interest in assessing how to adopt a paid family medical leave policy. However, more work is still needed. There is a desire to evaluate what other similar agencies offer in terms of benefits.

F. Williams explained that the methods used to assist this staff member during this time can be used to assist any staff members who present similar situations. Though it is not a permanent solution, it will be utilized until a final decision is made regarding the policy.

R. Bowen Weld questioned what impact this staff member's absence would have on the Agency. G. Govoni responded, explaining that plans are in place, and that there is also a third-party resource that can be utilized if needed for back up.

Commissioner Bowen Weld moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to table approving the changes to the personnel handbook as presented until further documentation is received.

17-4377 Vote 5 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

FISH#358115 Stratton Manor Trombe Wall Low Bid Approval: G. Govoni clarified that this project has been on the Capital Improvement Plan for several years in two separate parts. Part one was completed in 2016, and the second part can now be prioritized due to additional ARPA funding received through an earmark. Two bids were received to complete the final phases of the project, the lower of the two being presented.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Bowen Weld seconded a motion to authorize HRA to enter into contract with Diversified Construction Services in the amount of \$77,472 to complete the Trombe Wall project at Stratton Manor.

17-4378 Vote 5 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

3. Staff Report

S. Worgaftik asked if there was an update regarding MRVP. G. Govoni responded, stating that there is not.

Guest Mary McClintock questioned what time the Sanderson Place Grand Opening is scheduled to begin. G. Govoni responded, clarifying that doors open at 1:30 p.m., with the event starting at 2 p.m.

G. Govoni stated that the first Home Modification Loan Program has closed; the project is a renovation of a home in Gill.

4. Other Business

R. Bowen Weld stated that a recent DHCD training suggested that housing authority Board Members should have separate, business-only email addresses. Additionally, the training indicated that all Board Members should take an oath of office; this is referenced in Massachusetts general law chapter 41, section 107. The local town clerk indicated that they believed HRA should proceed with having all HRA Board Members take an oath of office.

L. Brown questioned if the oath of office would only be for the Board Members elected through the commonwealth.

G. Govoni stated that only the appointing bodies should be consulted regarding this matter. Linda Dunlavy of FRCOG will be consulted. M. Cucchiara echoed this statement, noting that there is a difference between appointed and elected officials. Covid-19-related suspensions of operations may have also allowed for exceptions to any rules in place.

M. Cucchiara expressed a disinterest in obtaining an additional email address. The current duties can be carried out with the current system in place if all Board Members understand that any emails pertaining to the Agency are public record and could be subpoenaed.

S. Worgaftik suggested having all questions communicated to G. Govoni or K. Kelley, who would then disseminate the information to everyone, citing that this is how business is conducted in other organizations.

L. Brown stated that they would prefer not to have another additional email address, citing that it is difficult to remember to check multiple emails. F. Williams agreed.

G. Govoni stated that there are operational concerns regarding Board Members having separate email addresses as the Board Members may forget to check their additional inboxes, which would cause delays in communication.

R. Bowen Weld stated that he had created a new email address and would forward it to K. Kelley.

Guest Mary McClintock suggested that all emails from HRA begin with "HRA" to allow emails to be filtered to a specific HRA folder. K. Kelley responded, stating that she would do this going forward.

5. Documents for Informational Purposes

No discussion.

6. Other Business not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance

No discussion

7. Adjourn

M. Cucchiara moved, and L. Brown 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 5:32 p.m.