



**FRANKLIN COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING &
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

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MINUTES

Regular Meeting – April 24, 2023

The Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority Board of Commissioners conducted the regular meeting of the Authority on April 24, 2023, via Zoom. at 4:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order

Faith Williams called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m.

F. Williams reported that the online public meeting law has been extended through March 2025, allowing the HRA Board of Commissioners to meet online. The Board will continue to meet virtually until otherwise stated. In addition to this confirmation, it has been confirmed that a roll call is required for Board Member attendance and all items voted upon during meetings.

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

Absent: S. Worgaftik

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

Guests: Mary McClintock, Penny Clark, Ria Biley, Barb Hoffman, Gandhi Gracia

2. Actions

HRA March Minutes: Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Bowen Weld seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the March 20, 2023, regular meeting of the Board as submitted.

L. Brown noted a typographical error in the minutes on page nine under Staff Report. K. Kelley will review the minutes for any typographic errors and adjust them accordingly.

17-4368 Vote 3 in favor; 0 opposed; 1 abstaining

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

17-4369 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Annual Operating Budget Certification (Revised): L. Cornish explained that the HRA and SHA budgets were combined. All exemptions were incorporated, including the exemption for the unrestricted net asset for SHA.

G. Govoni added that the budget has not changed, only the formatting.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Bowen Weld seconded a motion to approve the revised annual operating budget for state aided housing for fiscal year 2023 as presented.

17-4370 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

G. Govoni requested that Board Members email K. Kelley a copy of their signatures to affix to the required documents. Additionally, K. Kelley will, going forward, during this period of remote meetings, have the authorization to sign any documents that require a Board Member's signature and are approved via vote during Board Meetings with said signatures.

Contract for State Rental Assistance: G. Govoni clarified that this contract is updated with DHCD for state rental voucher programs. The change seen in this contract is the inclusion of MRVP and AHVP into the CHAMP system. Good customer service guidelines are being implemented, though HRA staff members currently already follow these guidelines, with the required timeline for following up with participants being two days. Additionally, DHCD is allowing for the use of digital files and the posting of additional signage regarding domestic violence.

There is now a requirement that any MRVP applicants or participants that have a connection to a staff person or Board Member are considered to have a conflict of interest. Staff members will be required to put in an administrative transfer for that applicant or participant so that their voucher will be administered by a different housing authority.

Finally, another new requirement put into place is that HRA must adhere to DHCD's shared database. There are inherent concerns related to this, though HRA has not yet used this program.

F. Williams clarified that CHAMP stands for the Common Housing Application Massachusetts Program.

F. Williams questioned if the waitlist will be purged prior to people being added to it. G. Govoni responded affirmatively, clarifying that HRA does not currently have a waiting list.

R. Bowen Weld noted that the legal name of HRA is incorrect on the contract, requesting that it be fixed. G. Govoni responded, stating that DHCD created the contract. Otherwise, the title of the Agency would be adjusted; there is no cause for concern with this error as it does refer to HRA.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Bowen Weld seconded a motion to authorize Gina Govoni, Executive Director, to sign the amended contract for state rental assistance programs for FY24 to FY28.

17-4371 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Internal Control Policy: G. Govoni explained that this policy has been updated to ensure that it is consistent with the updates made to the By-Laws. In revisiting the policy, several opportunities for updates were identified. This policy was taken from a PHA model instead of an LHA model, which required a thorough review to ensure the HRA policies and procedures related to HUD and DHCD were correct.

L. Cornish added that this policy should be reviewed annually. It had been put together at the recommendation of the audit team. There are some items in the policy that have not yet been implemented but will be in the future. The majority of this policy reflects current HRA operations.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to approve the HRA Internal Control Policy as revised.

17-4372 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Wage Match for State Housing Programs: G. Govoni stated that DHCD requires this to be brought to the Board annually. In September, this was brought to the Board due to a change. The item has been brought up today to ensure compliance with DHCD.

Guest Mary McClintock questioned what Wage Match is. G. Govoni explained that it is a database used to verify information to determine eligibility; there is a separate federal system used for Section 8 called EIV.

Commissioner Bowen Weld moved, and Commissioner Cucchiara seconded a motion to approve the annual wage match certification.

17-4373 Vote 4 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

3. Staff Report

Guest Mary McClintock stated that regardless of the attempts made to promote regional equity, it appears that DHCD is prioritizing MRVP participants regardless of region. G. Govoni responded, stating that while this is the case, positive signs are coming out of the legislators, such as James Arciero writing a new amendment to provide additional funding for a CHAMP review regarding the equitable distribution of slots for housing; Natalie Blais is working to support this amendment.

G. Govoni added that DHCD reached out to HRA today asking if additional AHVP vouchers are wanted in Franklin County.

Guest Mary McClintock questioned what time the Sanderson Place ribbon-cutting event is scheduled. G. Govoni responded, stating that the Save the Date will be sent by Wednesday.

F. Williams thanked HRA staff members for putting together the Shelburne Housing Authority recognition event on April 11. G. Govoni echoed this comment.

4. Other Business

Guest Penny Clark noted that the LTO has had successful social hours.

G. Govoni reminded Board Members to complete their required trainings.

Guest Gandhi Gracia explained that he recently applied for family medical leave as an HRA staff member and was denied due to HRA being exempt from family medical leave. Thus, two months of

vacation time will need to be used to cover the required time out of the office. The healthcare provider indicated that family leave is only offered if the employer offers equal or better benefits.

N. Sauber stated that in 2019 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts declared that nearly all employers with more than 50 employees were required to pay into the family medical leave act. Some agencies were exempt from this rule, including HRA. The Board voted in 2019 to not offer paid family medical leave. The topic has not been revisited since. After analyzing the amounts, it appears that less than one percent of total wages would be contributed to a fund.

Guest Mary McClintock stated that having paid family medical leave offered to employees is an attractive benefit that could assist with hiring and staff retention; not having this as a benefit puts HRA at a disadvantage.

M. Cucchiara added, for clarity, that implementing paid family medical leave would cause a deduction to staff member wages. N. Sauber responded, stating that the maximum that would be contributed would roughly range from \$6,000 to \$12,100 per year.

F. Williams suggested that HRA staff members work to create a new policy to be presented with potential budget scenarios at the May HRA Board Meeting. N. Sauber responded affirmatively. G. Govoni also responded, stating that the personnel committee would need to meet to discuss this change. The concept could be considered and potentially retroactively changed if it is approved.

Guest Gandhi Gracia advocated for this change, stating that by implementing this policy, HRA would be consistent in its mission to help people.

Guest Mary McClintock questioned if there is a way to proactively consider which HRA policies should be modernized or reviewed. G. Govoni responded, stating that N. Sauber has been actively working on this with the personnel committee.

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 R. Bowen Weld 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 5:25 p.m.