



**FRANKLIN COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING &  
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

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**MINUTES  
Regular Meeting – August 22, 2022**

The Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority Board of Commissioners conducted the regular meeting of the Authority on **August 22, 2022**, via Zoom. at 4:31p.m.

**1. Call to Order**

Executive Director Gina Govoni called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

**Commissioners Present (via roll call):** M. Slowinski M. Cucchiara S. Worgaftik L. Brown S. Cottrell A. Bresciano

**Absent:** F. Williams

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

**2. Actions**

**Minutes:**

Commissioner Worgaftik moved, and Commissioner Bresciano seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the July 11, 2022, regular meeting of the Board as presented.

17-4317 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

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

17-4318 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

**Review of the 06/30 Financials:** L. Cornish explained that overall, there is a surplus of \$320,000 primarily from COCC, Section 8, and HCEC. There is a small loss in CDBG, which has some variance, though it is close to the budget.

Rental income for HRA, SHA, and SMIKES are all up. There are some variances in the subsidy, mainly due to the rise in utilities. This rise is likely attributed to the pricing as the primary heating season has ended.

There are differences in Section 8 as well. An analysis of the budget will be completed to have a better understanding of the accrued earnings per Section 8. Currently, it is recorded as accrued.

To date, HRA is ahead of the budget. CDBG is behind, as expected, due in part to a gap in staffing. This will be made up in the fourth quarter. HCEC is behind due to spending less than anticipated on the associated programs. G. Govoni interjected, stating that one of the largest areas of variance is in HCEC, mainly due to staffing. There will be an additional \$117,000 to be used for staffing in FY23. L. Cornish added that these funds are granted in July, causing the budget changes mid-year.

S. Worgaftik questioned if the HCEC positions in question would be permanent or temporary. G. Govoni responded, stating that all positions are subject to change. The extension of ERAP and HCEC is unprecedented. The scope of services will be assessed, and though the preference would be for permanent employees, some programs may end once the pandemic and associated economic losses wear. L. Cornish added that due to the associated difficulties with hiring temporary employees, permanent ones are preferred if the programs allow for it.

Section 8 had Cares Act Funding that ended as of 12/31, which caused the shown variance. The net unrestricted asset calculation has been updated to assess where the budget will be at year-end.

The formal documentation provided to DHCD quarterly has been included in the packet. For HRA, the numbers vary from the assessed budget as DHCD categorizes some items differently.

The Mod report comes through quarterly and shows what has been expended on open projects and what has been received back. G. Govoni stated that this will be submitted to DHCD as reviewed by the Board.

**FY23 HMLP Construction Monitor:** G. Govoni stated that the FY23 HMLP Construction Monitor is a service provided for CEDAC in recent years. HRA has been a monitor and continues to be going forward.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Cucchiara seconded a motion to execute the professional service contract with CEDAC for Construction Monitoring Services for the Home Modification Loan Program.

17-4319 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

**FY23 HomeBase Contract:** G. Govoni stated that HomeBase is a program that HRA has had a small organization "floor" for many years. Currently, only one family is being offered stabilization. Additional funding from DHCD has been requested to maintain staffing for this service.

Commissioner Brown moved, and Commissioner Worgaftik seconded a motion to approve the use of the HomeBase funds as presented.

17-4320 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 1 abstaining

S. Worgaftik questioned if any upcoming changes are expected based on the knowledge of evictions. G. Govoni stated that there is a likelihood that there will be an increase. The most significant source of the HomeBase program is stabilizing families existing in shelters and motel shelters through the family shelter program. There are currently no families living in motel shelters in Franklin County. The size of the program overall has expanded, though the number of people served will likely stay the same as the length of service has doubled.

**FY23 HCEC contract:** No discussion.

**Vacancy Write Offs:** G. Govoni noted that this will occur regularly going forward.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to write off the public housing tenant accounts receivable balances for vacated units as presented.

17-4321 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

**Rent Collection Policy:** G. Govoni stated that the primary amendment to this policy is the inclusion of a protocol for collections. This policy refers to vacated units to ensure that will tenants will still owe their balances after they are written off. The collection agency that will be worked with going forward was recommended by Amherst Housing Authority.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Cottrell seconded a motion to approve the rent collection policy as presented.

17-4322 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

S. Worgaftik questioned if the number of write-offs is typical. L. Cornish responded, stating that a collection agency has not been used in the past. This new tactic would be used to have a consistent and concrete policy on how such items are turned over to a collection agency to avoid discrimination. G. Govoni added that this historically has not been done regularly. There have been three balances in the past two years, which is not unusual.

L. Brown requested clarification on the process if a tenant passes away. L. Cornish explained that HRA has not, to her knowledge, attempted to collect owed money from families. With this policy, the collection agency will advise on the best manner of process on a case-by-case basis.

S. Worgaftik raised concern about the potential tactics this collection agency may use. G. Govoni responded, stating that HRA can stop working with the agency if its tactics prove unethical.

M. Cucchiara questioned if this process would affect the credit reports of former tenants. L. Cornish responded affirmatively. M. Cucchiara followed up, asking if there was a known timeline for how long this would affect their credit scores, citing a concern for homelessness prevention. L. Cornish responded, stating that the specific timeline is not known.

S. Worgaftik reiterated M. Cucchiara's concerns regarding how long this would stay on the tenant's credit reports. L. Cornish stated that this information would be found and provided. G. Govoni added that it would be the standard length of time and reiterated that this only applies to past tenants with past-due balances.

A. Bresciano requested clarification on when a former tenant is sent to collections. G. Govoni responded, stating that once a tenant has vacated their unit and has missed three attempts by HRA staff to collect the past-due amount. Any overdue balances that exceed \$100 that are not remitted will be sent to the collection agency. A. Bresciano followed up, asking if there is a percentage amount for the amount to be collected by the collection agency. G. Govoni stated that it would likely be between 25 and 50 percent.

S. Worgaftik requested that this be reviewed in six months to discern if the new policy is working as intended. G. Govoni answered affirmatively, adding that the accounts are also reviewed monthly.

**Property Management Collection Agency Contract:** Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to authorize the Executive Director to execute a contract with Western Mass Credit Corp. for pursuing collections of balances in excess of \$100 due to HRA from former tenants and residents.

17-4323 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

### **Staff Report**

G. Govoni explained that the HRA and SHA merger has not yet occurred. SHA did receive the budget exemption for additional maintenance staffing.

With more information about the HCEC contract being provided tomorrow, another position description may be on the agenda in September.

Both PHNs included are irrelevant to HRA but have been included for transparency.

The Sanderson Place electrical component has a ship date. There will be a ribbon cutting for the property in the fall, with further details to be provided.

M. Cucchiara questioned how this would affect the lease-up. G. Govoni responded, stating there will be a two-per-day move-in process with full lease-up expected by the end of the year. The stretch goal for a full lease-up is March 2023.

L. Brown questioned if Mark Fortier's last day is Friday, August 26. G. Govoni responded affirmatively, stating that he will be missed.

**3. Documents for Informational Purposes**

No discussion

**4. Other business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance**

No discussion

**5. Adjourn**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 5:16 p.m.