



**FRANKLIN COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING &
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

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**MINUTES
Regular Meeting – July 11, 2022**

The Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority Board of Commissioners conducted the regular meeting of the Authority on **July 11, 2022**, via Zoom.

1. Call to Order

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

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

Staff Present: G. Govoni N. Sauber K. Kelley K. Reardon

2. Actions

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Annual Plan: K. Reardon explained that is the annual plan that HUD requires. The only substantial change this year is the family self-sufficiency program which was altered to match HUD's new guidelines. The progress report covers Sanderson Place, current compliance with bilingual staff, and HCEC's increase in clientele. The most recent audit did not have any findings. The RAB meeting is this upcoming Wednesday.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Cucchiara seconded a motion to approve the HCV annual plan as presented.

17-4299 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) Admin Policy Update: K. Reardon stated that HUD has allowed services fees to be provided for the chronically homeless applicants for items such as the security deposit and moving expenses. These fees are primarily used for essential household items. This policy update expands what is considered essential household items.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Cucchiara seconded a motion to approve the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) admin policy update as presented.

17-4300 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

K. Reardon left at 4:36 pm

FY23 HRA (State Public Housing) Annual Plan and CIP revision: G. Govoni stated that the Annual Plan hearing was held in June. Since the public hearing, there has been a change to the Capital Improvement Plan. This change included the influx of ARPA

funding that will assist in upgrading outdated emergency fire alarm panels in some units and the HRA central office.

Commissioner Brown moved, and Commissioner Slowinski seconded a motion to approve the annual plan as presented on June 6, 2022 public forum with revisions to the CIP as presented.

17-4301 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

HRA/RDI Management Agreement: G. Govoni stated that this agreement is first being presented to the HRA board and has not been presented to the RDI board. The different revenue streams and work that HRA is doing were both examined. A two-way revenue change is being considered due to the influx of the ARPA earmark funding, new revenue coming in, and the potential for other grant funding. The first change is slightly increasing the management fee. The second change is allowing for overhead from the program-related revenue streams. With the HRA board's approval, this will be presented at the next RDI meeting.

L. Brown asked for clarification on the percentage increase. G. Govoni responded that she was not sure of the numbers. L. Brown stated that these need to be confirmed before next week as the management fee was previously dramatically decreased.

Commissioner Worgaftik moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to enter into agreement by and between Rural Development, Inc. (RDI) and the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) which amends the terms and conditions of the prior management agreement to include direct project management costs and related overhead.

17-4302 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

FY22 Budget Revision Certification: G. Govoni stated that the board discussed the budget revision in length during the May meeting, but there may not have been a motion.

Commissioner Brown moved, and Commissioner Slowinski seconded a motion to approve the HRA agency-wide annual operating budget for FY 2022 as revised.

17-4303 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Financial Review FY22-Q2 (3/31/22): G. Govoni stated that Lisa Cornish is not present for the review of the March 31 quarter-end. All appropriate materials are provided in the packet, though a discussion will not occur due to her absence.

Personnel Policy Updates: N. Sauber explained that the updates in question relate directly to the personnel handbook.

Section 4.6 is changed to state that all HRA employees will be issued a photo ID, not just employees who visit clients in their homes.

Section 5.7 proposes to allow all employees access to the deferred compensation/457 plan regardless of the length of employment.

The third personnel change relates to the language used regarding automatic payroll; there is no change of substance, only verbiage.

The fourth change is the introduction of a new Tuition Reimbursement policy. HRA would compensate up to \$3,000 per-year for related courses of study. Employees participating in the program are requested to stay employed with HRA for one year after course completion.

The fifth change is the introduction of a Family-Friendly Workplace Policy. The components of this policy include pregnancy-related accommodations, alternative work schedules, and allowing babies and children at HRA. The babies at work pilot policy would allow infants up to six months old, or crawling age, to be regularly brought to HRA. The children at work pilot policy would allow mobile children to be brought to HRA during extenuating circumstances. Both pilot policies have hold harmless agreements associated with their implementation.

The sixth change to the personnel handbook is to remove gendered language from the personnel handbook to be more inclusive.

S. Worgaftik questioned if, for tuition reimbursement, there will be limits on how a course related to a job is categorized. N. Sauber responded by stating that there is no fixed definition of an eligible course of study. All requests require detailed documentation and will be managed on a case-by-case basis. M. Slowinski added that most courses are applicable in one way or another. G. Govoni added that tuition reimbursement is a good retention tool for HRA. These policies were run by DHCD's risk management team, who provided helpful feedback.

A. Bresciano raised two questions regarding the policy updates. The first is if a legal entity has examined the two pilot programs regarding the potential difficulty in revoking them. The second is how many employees will potentially use the tuition reimbursement program annually due to the program's funding. G. Govoni responded by stating that \$10,000 is set aside to start the policy due to the ability to budget for it. Employees will be encouraged to apply for scholarships to complement what HRA offers. Though, these concerns will be considered when budgeting for 2023. For the pilot programs, DHCD's risk management team suggested the word 'pilot' to terminate the programs if necessary.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Williams seconded a motion to approve the changes to the HRA Personnel Handbook, as presented.

17-4304 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

HRA CORI Policy: Updates to Appendix B: N. Sauber stated that the proposed change to this policy is an amendment to the list of employees authorized to run CORI checks. The personnel coordinator, staff accountant, and modernization and maintenance coordinator will be removed from this list. The leased housing administrative assistant and director of operations will be added to this list.

Commissioner Williams moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to approve the updated list of personnel authorized to run CORI checks as presented.

17-4305 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Update to HRA Travel Policy: N. Sauber explained that the HRA Travel Policy is being updated to reflect the DHCD reimbursement rate change from 45 cents per mile to 58.5 cents per mile.

F. Williams questioned if it is possible to change the motion wording to indicate that HRA is benchmarking to name the source and that the organization will follow that benchmark. N. Sauber responded affirmatively. G. Govoni also responded affirmatively, stating that this would allow changes to be made to the rate without reiterating this conversation to the board.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to approve the changes to the mileage reimbursement amount as presented.

17-4305 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

ED Contract Update: G. Govoni explained there have been multiple attempts to receive clarification from Carolina Gonzalez to ascertain precisely how to make the ED contract comply with the DHCD guidelines. The issue is that the HRA personnel policy allows for an extra day and a half of holiday time that is not in compliance with an unidentified DHCD document. DHCD wants the ED contract to say that the "Benefits are as follows (if not in accordance with Authority personnel policy)." This statement does not appear correct when considering what the personnel policy states.

A vote is requested to allow HRA to establish how to craft this contract and provide it to Carolina to put this to rest.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Cottrell seconded a motion to update the contract cover page and/or HRA Personnel Handbook to align with DHCD standards as specified in the FY22 ED contract for personal days.

17-4307 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

HRA Regular Meeting Date Change: G. Govoni stated that the changes proposed to the HRA By-Laws are regarding the HRA regular board meeting date. The meeting date would move to the third Monday of the month, with the time staying the same.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to change Article III, Section 3, "Regular Meeting" to be the third Monday of the month.

17-4308 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

G. Govoni added that a more comprehensive examination of the By-Laws to identify necessary changes would occur once the merger has gone forward. A schedule of the new meeting dates for the rest of 2022 has been provided.

Bernardston Roof Repair Project #358140 - Notice to Proceed Contract: G. Govoni explained that in consideration of time, the contract and notice to proceed have both been signed on the board's behalf. This request is to have the board's approval to sign such documents retroactively. All bids have been provided, and work will begin in July.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Cucchiara seconded a motion to authorize executive director Gina Govoni to enter into contract between HRA and FRG for \$27,120 as presented, and to execute the notice to proceed.

Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Fire Safety ARPA Funding: G. Govoni stated that HRA had been awarded ARPA funding through the channels of DHCD's public housing formula funding for fire safety upgrades. There are four projects: one for the HRA central office, two at 705s in Orange, and the largest of the four at Stratton Manor. The total funding is in the \$120,000 range. The capital improvement plan shows this as only \$17,000, which reflects the repairs for the Congress Street facility.

A. Bresciano requested clarification on if the completion of the project is contingent upon the ARPA funding. G. Govoni responded by stating that if these projects are not completed through this round of funding, they will be once more funding comes in.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Slowinski seconded a motion to approve the use of the ARPA Targeted Awards for Federal Pacific Panel and Fire Alarm System Replacements.

17-4310 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

ARPA Funding Earmark and Formula Funding Award: G. Govoni stated that the formula funding award HRA received provided an extra year of ARPA formula funds for the public properties. Additionally, an ARPA Earmark was obtained for HRA to use for maintenance repairs on the properties and a subcontract to the Greenfield Housing Authority to provide services to the Winslow Building residents.

Commissioner Williams moved, and Commissioner Worgattik seconded a motion to authorize executive director Gina Govoni, on behalf of HRA, to execute a contract with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the amount of \$221,500 for the maintenance, repairs, renovations, and improvements to properties in Franklin County and the North Quabbin region, and to subcontract \$85,000 to provide wrap-around services to residents of the Winslow Building, managed by Greenfield Housing Authority.

17-4311 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 1 abstaining

Minutes of the May 2, 2022, regular meeting: Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Slowinski seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the May 2, 2022, regular meeting of the Board as submitted.

17-4312 Vote 6 in favor; 0 opposed; 1 abstaining

Minutes of the February 28, 2022, and May 23, 2022, special meetings: Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Slowinski seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2022, and May 23, 2022, special meetings of the Board as submitted.

17-4313 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

AP Warrants: April, May, and June: Commissioner Brown moved, and Commissioner Cucchiara seconded a motion to approve the accounts payable warrants for April, May, and June 2022.

17-4314 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

Housing Programs Assistant Job Description: G. Govoni stated that the proposed job description is for a 30-hour-per-week part-time employee in the HCEC department. This

employee would provide similar services to the department as what the Administrative Assistant provides to CDBG. In addition to assisting with housing applications, they will be doing applications and loan processing for the HMLP program. HMLP and HCEC will fund this position.

Commissioner Cucchiara moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to approve the job description as presented.

17-4315 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

RAFT/ERAP Funds: G. Govoni stated that this is a new model of being paid for services. Previously, RAFT was typically 18.95 percent of the total funding amount. With ERAP, HRA transitioned to using a cost reimbursement with a cap.

S. Worgaftik questioned if there is any downside to this method. G. Govoni explained that the perception is that it is overly generous to the providers as it is less money than the 18.95 percent.

Commissioner Slowinski moved, and Commissioner Brown seconded a motion to approve the FY23 RAFT/ERAP contract as presented with Amanda Watson entering this contract.

17-4316 Vote 7 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining

3. Staff Reports

G. Govoni informed that the merger legislation was voted upon favorably. The next step is to wait to hear what the two additional committees say. Natalie Blais' office feels confident that this will make it. The board will have to be reconstituted per the plan's outline on board reconstruction.

Regarding CHAMP, the problems at hand have not yet been resolved. There are 17,000 families on the waitlist for 27 units in the 705s. HRA is asking for a fix in the system and to receive a part-time support staff member to manage the applications coming through CHAMP. Legislators have been and will continue to be contacted regarding this.

Sanderson Place is on track to complete construction on time. The marketing period was successful. The lottery has closed, though waitlist applicants are still coming in. The lottery will take place on July 20, 2022.

RDI has partnered with a service provider and is looking at a permanent supportive housing development opportunity in Greenfield. MASH funds, a new ARPA-funded program, are being sought. RDI would be a development partner in this project. Additionally, HRA is looking at the August CEDAC meeting for a loan.

In June, HRA applied to the MassHealth Community and Aging Program, a five-year funding source to be awarded by September. The goal is to have someone hired to look at a receivership program. RDI will be asked to become a receiver through the AGO program. Part of the program would increase the overhead from RDI.

M. Cucchiara stated that this is a great idea, though risks exist. Mitigating said risks can be done by creating a for-profit entity LLC. This concept is efficient for RDI to make subsidiary entities and provides an additional support layer.

M. Cucchiara explained that there is no difference between a non-profit and a for-profit agency while the work is being done through RDI. However, legal risks associated with doing the work directly through RDI exist. G. Govoni stated that one attractive element is that all properties can be inspected before commitment.

F. Williams responded in agreement with Commissioner Cucchiara and suggested seeking legal counsel. M. Cucchiara stated that this is a good risk mitigation step to take regarding being involved in this concept.

A. Bresciano responded in agreement with Commissioners Cucchiara and Williams while asking if excess funding for this program would be taken out of the capital for RDI.

G. Govoni stated that it would not be taken from the RDI cash flow. The plan for this grant is that no fully renovated units will be produced until the program's second year. The first year would be spent planning and mapping out funding sources to ascertain the ability to obtain the capital for the projects.

M. Cucchiara responded, stating that RDI could apply for the funding and loan it to a sub-entity. G. Govoni noted that there is a great need for a community partnership and federal funds to come to this area to support the work.

G. Govoni stated that the home modification loan program (HMLP) allows homeowners to make accessibility-related modifications to their homes. The focus of this program is on homeowner control of all projects, which varies dramatically on how CDBG is run and funded. CEDAC has been told that HRA is only applying as part of this short-term procurement and that we hope to see changes to the program model before the full state procurement, anticipated in 2024. HMLP loans are wholly funded through CEDAC and stay on HRA's books. There is an inherent risk as there is less construction oversight due to the program model.

F. Williams responded supportively, stating that if the risks were too high for HRA, then it would not get involved. G. Govoni responded by saying that CDBG's program model and the strong relationships with contractors provide more comfort with the program.

G. Govoni stated that there was a decrease in RAFT expenditures for the first two months. ERAP ended and should be fully funded and out the door by the end of July. F. Williams responded in agreement.

F. Williams left at 5:43 p.m.

4. Other Business

No discussion

5. Documents for Informational Purposes

No discussion

6. Other business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance

No discussion

7. Adjourn

There being no further business Commissioner Slowinski moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:44 p.m.