

Dec 01 2023 3:55 pm

Fitchburg Housing Authority

Minutes of FHA Regular Board Meeting, September 20, 2023

Daniels Heights Community Room, 1 Daniels Heights Street, Fitchburg, MA

A Regular Meeting of the Fitchburg Housing Authority was called to order by Chair, Linda Byrne at 8:30 AM on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, in the Daniels Heights Community Room at 1 Daniels Heights Street in the City of Fitchburg, Massachusetts.

Present:

FHA Board Members:
Linda Byrne, Chair
Adam Goodwin, Vice Chair
David Basilio, Assistant Treasurer

Absent:

FHA Board Members:
David Rousseau, Treasurer
Thomas Hughes, Member

FHA Staff:

Douglas M. Bushman, Executive Director, FHA Board Secretary
Andrew Skoog, Deputy Director
Kim Hergert, Director of Finance/HR
Yoko Ishii, Executive Assistant
Genesis Ruiz, Director of Public & Community Housing
Roberta Kozak, Director of Leasing Housing
Norma Letamendi, Assistant Director of Public & Community Housing
Felix Velazquez, Resident Service Coordinator, Resident & Community Services
Bruce Budrick, Director of Maintenance & Facilities
Marc Cunningham, Elderly Maintenance Foreman
Ada Santos, Leasing Clerk, Public & Community Housing

A.J. Tourigny, Special Assistant to the President
Community, Governmental Affairs and Special Projects, Fitchburg State University

FHA-FSU College Intern: Sarjine Legros and her family (Frank Legros & Lea Legros)

FHA Tenants:

Daniels Heights -Janice Spellane, Candida Martinez

Quorum: Yes (Quorum Requirement: Three FHA Board Members)

1. Motion to Open Meeting

Chair, Linda Byrne opened the meeting at 8:30 am

Move: David Basilio

Second: Adam Goodwin All in favor

2. Motion to Open Public Comments.

Move: Adam Goodwin

Second: David Basilio All in favor

The Chair talked about the MassNAHRO Conference, which was held in Falmouth, and let attendees of the conference talk. Kim Hergert, Director of Finance/HR talked about the employee evaluation which she learned at the conference. Andrew Skoog, Deputy Director talked about 3rd party for CHAMP, hoping we can get people housed quicker, also could meet with the state Construction team about the FHA construction project at the conference. Douglas Bushman, Executive Director talked about the seminars he took which were Domestic Violence & Pre-Eviction Assistance and said that Green Acres Community Admin Building Bid process will be starting by June 30 next year. The Chair stated that we need a good cosmetic look on scatter sites, it's all about caring. We need to keep up the properties to show the city how we care. Public Comments- Janice Spellane, Daniels Heights Tenant, said that it is about respect, lawn mowing is not kept up, the snow plowing was great last year but Daniels Heights was done last not till 2pm. Emergency Vehicle needs to access the road. The Executive Director replied that he agreed and Bruce Budrick, Director of Maintenance & Facilities was hired and would address property issues. Bruce Budrick introduced himself to the Board.

3. Motion to Approve Minutes of Regular Session Meeting held on August 16, 2023

Move: Adam Goodwin

Second: David Basilio All in favor

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4. **Motion to Approve Minutes of Executive Session Meeting held on August 16, 2023**
Move: Adam Goodwin **Second:** David Basilio **All in favor**

5. **Motion to Approve FHA Payables for August-September FY 23 (Attachment A)**
Move: Adam Goodwin **Second:** David Basilio **All in favor**

6. **Motion to Approve Financials for January-August FY 23 (Attachment B)**
Move: Adam Goodwin **Second:** David Basilio **All in favor**

7. **Tenant Account Receivable (TAR) Updates (Attachment C)**

8. **FHA FY 2023 Budget Approved (Attachment D)**

The Executive Director commented on the Budget approval letter. The FHA's reserves were improved to 44.41%. Our Budget should be increased \$400,000 next year. He thanked the Board and the staff.

9. **EOHLC FY2023 Budget-Historic Increased for Public Housing.**

10. **Implementation of Organizational Changes**

11. **EOHLC (Executive Office of Housing & Livable Communities) CIP (Capital Improvement) and Annual Plan Hearing. (Attachment E)**

The Executive Director updated the CIP plan schedule. Robocall has already been planned.

- Tuesday October 3, 2023 – Review annual plan with Local Tenant Organization
- Wednesday, October 18, 2023 – Review and vote on plan at FHA Board meeting

12. **Review the FHA's updated Reasonable Accommodation Policy-** still reviewing.

13. **MassNAHRO Annual Convention September 17-20 at North Falmouth.**

The Chair mentioned it in the public comment section.

14. **OFH (Formerly Our Father's House) Management Agreement Review**

The Executive Director stated that the OFH hired Ann Dumezil. Her title is now Administrative and Finance Assistant, but that will probably change. The OFH Board was notified how to move forward. Linda Bryne, the Chair and Adam Goodwin, the Vice Chair, are OFH subcommittee members.

15. **Motion to Approve OFH FHA Employee Incentive Pay.**

Move: Adam Goodwin **Second:** David Basilio **All in favor**

The Executive Director stated that the FHA staff did phenomenal jobs on the OFH management tasks, and recommended the following staff members receive a one-time \$500 incentive payment from the funds received by the FHA from OFH. The Recipients are Andrew Skoog, Deputy Director, Kim Hergert, Director of Finance/HR, Yoko Ishii, Executive Assistant, Genesis Ruiz, Director of Public & Community Housing, Marci Haneisen, Director of Resident & Community Services and Tamara Castro, Assistant Director of RSCS.

16. **Motion to Approve Douglas M. Bushman as Limited Legal Representative**

Move: Adam Goodwin **Second:** David Basilio **All in favor**

The Executive Director explained that to reduce legal costs due to evictions, he seeks approval from the FHA Board to represent the FHA in 14-Day (Non-Payment) eviction cases and seek limited approval for these actions and representation will not be for all 14-day cases. He has sought a legal opinion from the Massachusetts Bar Association concerning this matter. While he is approved to represent the FHA in such matters, he would have to withdraw any representation if he in his capacity as the executive Director was involved with the file in any discretionary matter or if it appears that there is a potential conflict of interest between his role as the Executive Director and as an attorney for a 14-day notice to quit. The Deputy Director is the prime employee that interacts with the property management staff to decide if cases proceed to eviction.

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17. Recent Weather Emergency in Leominster

The Executive Director stated that the FHA reached out to Ben Gold, Executive Director of Leominster Housing Authority due to the recent extreme weather storm. The FHA has a draft emergency plan that was prepared by Christopher Masta, the 2022 FHA-FSU college intern. The report will be updated and will seek out guidance from Fitchburg’s public safety department.

18. 5th Annual FHA Employee Appreciation Day-August 16, 2023.

The Executive Director thanked the FHA staff for their great jobs and appreciated our community partners including Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale, State Representative Michael Kushmerek, and State Senator John Cronin and their staff.

19. Audit and Management Review (Attachment F & G)

Motion to Approve Acceptance of the AUP Management Review

Move: Adam Goodwin Second: David Basilio All in favor

The Executive Director updated that there were no findings and the best AUP reviews we have ever had, thanked the Deputy Director and the Director of Finance/HR and their staff.

Motion to Approve Accept Authority-Wide & HCVP Audit-No Findings

Move: Adam Goodwin Second: David Basilio All in favor

The Executive Director thanked Roberta Kozak, Director of Leased Housing, and her staff.

20. Evictions and Vacancy (Attachment H)

Andrew Skoog, Deputy Director updated the eviction cases, total 19 cases so far. The FHA served 35 eviction notices and 3 forced evictions in FY 2023. The Deputy Director also updated the Vacancy rate for September 1st, 66 units.39 units are offline at Wallace Towers. David Basilio, Assistant Treasurer asked about the storm door project. The Executive Director said Force Account Project would be discussed in the executive session.

21. Union Negotiations (Attachment I)

The Executive Director noted that there is a negotiation meeting tonight September 20th at 5pm and settled the unfair labor practice.

Resident Service

22. Resignation of Felix Velazquez, Resident Service Coordinator (Attachment J)

The Executive Director acknowledged Felix’s work at the FHA and thanked him.

23. New Leasing Clerk.

Genesis Ruiz, Director of Public and Community Housing, introduced Ada Santos, new Leasing Clerk

24. Covid/Flu Clinic -October 3 at Wallace Tower & October 6 at C. J. Durkin

25. Construction Update

The Executive Director updated that we usually receive FISH Fund \$700,000 a year.

- **FISH097124-** Final Completion motion will be next month.
- **FISH097127-**Final Completion will be soon.
- **Modphase Project-FISH097165-** ASHP 100% CD is soon.
- **FISH097153- Gateway GA Project-**Need a community building and playground, the FHA needs an additional \$3 million. The state agreed the needs. The FHA will go out to Bid by June 30 2024.
- **FISH097168-**Force Account Vacancy Turnover project.

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- **FISH 097180- Canton Valley and Daniels Heights Master Meter Gas Project.**
- **FISH097188-Rooftop Ventilation**
The Executive Director explained that the Board of Health and Building Dept do not recommend cleaning the vent.
- **Milk Street Renovation Project- construction will begin in weeks.**

26. Motion to Approve HUD Voucher Payment Standards (Attachment K)

Move: Adam Goodwin Second: David Basilio All in favor

Roberta Kozak explained payment standards to the Board. The Board discussed the vouchers.

27. Motion to Approve Voucher Utility Rate 2023-2024 (Attachment L)

Move: Adam Goodwin Second: David Basilio All in favor

The Executive Director mentioned about FYI voucher that he would modify the voucher program for the FHA.

28. FHA-FSU College Intern Sarjine Legros was recognized.

A.J. Tourigny, Special Assistant to the President, Community, Governmental Affairs and Special Projects, Fitchburg State University remarked for the college internship with the FHA. The director of Finance/HR and Executive Assistant talked about how she was doing at FHA, she was an excellent intern. The FHA wished her first year of FSU. Sarjine’s family, her mother, Lea Legros & her uncle, Frank attended.

29. Motion to Enter to Executive Session (at 10:18 am)

Move: Adam Goodwin Second: David Basilio All in favor

30. Motion to Close to Executive Session (at 11:17am)

Move: Adam Goodwin Second: David Basilio All in favor

31. Motion to Adjourn (at 11:17am)

Move: Adam Goodwin Second: David Basilio All in favor