

MEETING OF BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE TOWN OF MANCHESTER  
February 15, 2012  
7:00 PM

Attending: Chairman Josh Howroyd  
Vice Chairman Timothy Becker  
Paul Rubin  
Patrick Barder, Executive Director

Absent: Flora Jimenez  
Robert Shanbaum

- I. Chairman Howroyd opened the meeting at 6:05 pm and welcomed residents of Spencer Village and introduced the Board and staff members. He explained that two Board members, Mr. Shanbaum and Ms. Jimenez would not be attending this meeting.

## II. Public Comments

Chairman Howroyd opened the public comments portion of the meeting. He explained to the residents this is an opportunity for them to speak to the Board about their likes, dislikes and any concerns they may have.

Ms. Nicole Seymour addressed the Commission.

Ms. Seymour asked if a sign could be put up that shows the apartment numbers and where they are located. The numbering sequence at this unit is very confusing and if there was a sign with arrows pointing to their direction it would be helpful to visitors.

Mr. Becker added that signs would also be in the interest of public safety.

Ms. Seymour also asked if this complex, specifically the community room could have a generator. During the October storm, while residents were only out of power for 3 days it would have been nice to have a warm place to go.

Mr. Tom Hoff addressed the Commission.

Mr. Hoff said he has been living here since 2000 and this place needs updating. The driveway should be widened to allow for larger vehicles to enter more easily. There was talk about putting a gazebo in and that would be nice to go outside and have a place to sit and play cards or something.

Chairman Howroyd indicated that in the last week MHA has gotten word that the State will be putting money to make improvements in complexes such as this. MHA wants to upgrade the community centers and make sure they all have generators.

Ms. Linda DePamphilis addressed the Commission.

Ms. DePamphilis asked what she can do about a neighbor that is saying things about her that is not true. Chairman Howroyd explained that there is nothing that the Board can do about problems with neighbors. He went on further to say if a resident feels that they are being harassed then that is a matter for the police.

Mr. Wayne Madden addressed the Commission.

Mr. Madden expressed he is happy with the improvements that are being made. He voiced his advocacy for his mother, Patricia Fox who is asking to get moved into a one bedroom unit.

Mr. Leo Germaine addressed the Commission.

Mr. Germaine explained that the snow in October, while it was devastating for everyone it was especially frightening for him because he is heavily handicapped. He does not have 24 hour coverage and during the time he did not have coverage no one came to check on him and he was afraid. He has a cell phone and the battery died and he had no way to get out and get it charged. Mr. Germaine asked if there are plans in place to check on residents with disabilities.

Mr. Barder said yes there are plans.

Chairman Howroyd added that this October storm caught everyone off guard and we have learned a lot. MHA is looking to make improvements by getting generators for the community centers at each of its complexes so that residents have a place to go, get warm, maybe get a meal, take a hot shower and charge their cell phone.

Mr. Barder shared that MHA is forming a Residents Advisory Board and Ms. Dottie Farrington has agreed to represent this complex. He is looking to get someone else from this complex to be on the board as well. If anyone is interested, please write him a letter expressing their interest. This Board will meet with him once a month and discuss issues and comment on the business of each complex.

Mr. Barder also explained he is going to ask the State of Connecticut for a rent increase at this complex, about \$50 a month. The increase will be staggered to ease the burden of the increase on residents. This money will be targeted for Capital Improvements at this complex. He went on further to say the State has earmarked money for complexes like this one and he will ask for as much money as he can from the State to be able fund some badly needed improvements. Some of the improvements we are looking to make are, new kitchen cabinets, new energy efficient appliances, and bathtubs will be replaced with walk in showers and new windows.

Mr. Madden asked about the insulation that was being done and then stopped.

Mr. Germaine said that no one came to his unit at all.

Mr. Barder explained that not all of the units required that attention. Some of the units were inaccessible due to too much stuff in them.

Mr. Bruce Farnell addressed the Commission.

Mr. Farnell asked if the bathroom showers would be easily accessible.

Mr. Barder explained there would be a three inch lip on the tubs to make it easy for tenants to get in and out. Grab bars and seats will be installed as well.

Mr. Germaine shared he currently has a shower that he can roll into with his wheelchair.

Mr. Barder said wheelchairs will be accommodated and if a resident does not have a wheelchair but then has to get one the showers can be fitted with a roll-in type pan instead of one with the lip.

Chairman Howroyd commented that the Commissioners will be asking Mr. Barder questions about the proposed rent increase before the request goes to the State. There are many capital improvements that need to be done here and at other complexes within MHA. MHA is also looking at a company that will finance the purchase of energy efficient appliances, windows, doors, furnaces at a low cost to us and the energy savings will be significant.

Mr. Madden mentioned he needs to have two of the burners and all the metal drip pans replaced on his stove. He can only use two of the four burners at one time. Mr. Madden also wanted to say that has noticed all the work that is being done around this complex and he wanted to thank this administration for that.

Mr. Barder told him to call the maintenance line and report the problem with his stove.

Mr. Barder indicated that stoves are being replaced with ceramic tops.

Mr. Hoff added he had requested his stove be replaced when Carol was here.

Mr. Barder stated that changes will happen and he asks residents to be patient. It will get done it is just going to take some time. Any changes that MHA wants to make will have to strictly adhere to State and Federal codes and regulations.

Public comments portion of the meeting was closed at 6:40 pm. Chairman Howroyd thanked residents for coming and said there will be another Board meeting at this complex later in the year.

Mr. Becker moved to suspend the rules and take item 9A Revised Personnel Policy (draft). Mr. Rubin seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

#### **IX. New Business – Revised Personnel Policy (draft)**

A. Chairman Howroyd explained that quite a bit of time last year was spent in negotiating labor agreements. MHA has had a personnel policy in effect for many, many years. While negotiating with the union the personnel policy was eventually going to get rolled into the collective bargaining. Attorney Holding said he has reworked many of those changes in to this draft document to include many of the issues agreed upon during the collective bargaining process. We made certain commitments to all the employees, also to update the general provisions because some of them were not in compliance with state and federal law and to try to make it easily read. The purpose of having personnel policies and procedures is so that the MHA knows what to expect from their employees and at the same time the employees know what to expect from MHA. It is something subject to BOD review and employee review. There are some things that were not discussed during the bargaining meetings such as the waiting period for health benefits.

Mr. Barder indicated there is no waiting period for benefits for new employees.

Atty. Holding explained there are some employees that are paid out of federal/state funds. He referenced the Ethics Policy and the BOD may want to add some things to this.

Chairman Howroyd agreed this policy needs to be reviewed and it was a HUD requirement and part of the MOA.

Atty. Holding added there is something interesting about Ethics Committees, which is usually a committee of three; one municipal employee, one commissioner and one other. Ethics committees that are established under municipal law, if there are issues of municipality, it actually has subpoena power.

Atty. Holding explained he added a confidentiality clause that the employee will have to sign.

Mr. Becker agreed that employees handle confidential/sensitive information about residents and MHA needs to have it in their personnel policies. There may be many pages that the employees will be signing that indicates they have read the document and understand what it says and what is expected of the employee in regards to this policy.

Atty. Holding added the idea is to have in one place a book that the employee can reference at any time.

Atty. Holding stated MHA has a provision for hearing an appeal following termination or suspension of an employee. This complies of what he believes to be the due process requirements. The terminated employee has a right of due process and this process is pre-termination hearing and the Executive Director would administer that prior to making a final decision to suspend or terminate an employee. The Board role has been established to hear these complaints. The BOD could eliminate this procedure because it is not required; a pre-termination hearing is required. The post termination the employee is on their own and they could go to court. If MHA has an administrative procedure to have a hearing before the BOD they you can require that the employee exhaust those remedies before going to court and the failure to do that would deprive them of a court hearing. It does put the burden on the BOD to spend time hearing this and reaching a decision. If you provide that, there is an opportunity to fix it and avoid the possibility of prolonged litigation. Employee has an opportunity to come before this Board and explain their side of the issue. A hearing can dissipate the anger.

Mr. Barder shared when the BOD sets the system up to over rule the Executive Director that does pose some risk.

Mr. Becker added if an employee feels that they have gotten a fair hearing through an administrative process even though they lost it may diffuse the will or the interest to bring it to superior court to have the case heard there. Mr. Becker asked from a legal standpoint if an employee went through both administrative process and they were done correctly, and they still choose to continue on to superior court, does that weaken their case at that level.

Atty. Holding said he would be there arguing that this case has already been before the MHA BOD. We would not have to retry the case it would be a cause for judgment by the court.

Mr. Becker said he think we should keep this provision in.

Mr. Barder agreed that this also good for him to check on whether or not he was reasonable in his decision. He does not want to make a decision in anger or reasonable judgment and this is a way to make sure all his ducks are in a row should he have to bring this before the BOD.

Chairman Howroyd shared we should keep this provision in good faith rather than take it away from them. He said he wants the employees to have an opportunity to review the new personnel policies and get back to the BOD with any changes/suggestions by a certain date. Chairman Howroyd asked what the next steps are.

Mr. Barder explained that the BOD needs to go through this document and make any edits/changes. Then give the employees an opportunity for them to review within a certain time frame and bring it back to the BOD for approval.

Atty. Holding spoke about reimbursement for education of employees for job related training and courses. MHA will pay for the course and pay employee to take class if it specifically relates to their job. If an employee is seeking to get a higher degree, MHA has the option of paying for the courses but not paying the employee to take the courses. There can be provisions in place to in pay for higher education courses after the employee has successfully passed the course.

Atty. Holding shared that during the union negotiations we had discussed a Long Term Disability policy but it was never really adopted. We did limit the number of sick days that can be cashed upon at separation.

Mr. Barder indicated he has scheduled time for AFLAC to come and give a presentation by employees about their LTD benefit package.

Mr. Becker asked about the employee coming to the BOD for a hearing and there is a clause of what the Executive Director can do should the BOD be in that clause as well. To what extend can the BOD

call witnesses, question witnesses. Mr. Becker indicated he wants to have in writing what the BOD should/could be doing at the hearing. Another question Mr. Becker asked is for an explanation of wording "closed hearing".

Atty. Holding said what that means is that the BOD can close the meeting and then render their decision.

Mr. Becker asked if the wording could be changed to "end the meeting or conclude the meeting" to avoid confusion.

In reference to filing a position and promoting from within, Mr. Becker said current employees should have the right to post for a position.

Chairman Howroyd commented this is a small organization and there really are no pronounced career ladders. Until recently we did not even have job descriptions.

Mr. Becker asked about the holidays.

It was explained that if a holiday falls on a Saturday employees would get that Friday off; if the holiday falls on a Sunday they would get the Monday after off. In some cases there is a difference between a State and a Federal holiday.

Chairman Howroyd indicated that during the union discussions we were going to observe whatever holidays we agreed to. There was some discussion about ½ day before Christmas. There was some discussion about going to a Presidents day in February to eliminate a winter holiday in the event that we would be paying time and a half for snow removal.

Atty. Holding spoke about the smoking policy.

Mr. Barder explained there is no smoking on the property and that includes in MHA vehicles. It was suggested that the word "vehicle" be included in the policy for further clarification.

### **III. Adoption of Minutes January 18, 2012**

Mr. Becker moved to accept the minutes as written. Mr. Burke seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

### **IV. Correspondence**

Mr. Barder handed out copies of the Capital Fund Occupancy Report for review by the BOD.

Mr. Becker shared he received a telephone call from a tenant looking to transfer to a larger unit. He explained to the tenant that we do not have to transfer tenants to other unless there is a need. An example of such need would be if they are currently on the second floor and they have mobility issues to warrant them being on the first floor and they would be moved to the same size unit on the first floor.

Mr. Barder said he will have letters out to those tenants that have requested transfers to other units but do not have any health issues that would require them to be moved from their current space.

### **V. Accounts Payable**

Mr. Becker asked about a bill paid to a printer when he thought that printing company had gone out of business. Mr. Barder said he would investigate and get back to him.

Mr. Becker asked about payment to a property inspector asked if that inspector is licensed with the State of Connecticut.

Mr. Barder explained that this individual is not licensed.

Mr. Becker asked if it wasn't the decision of this Board to only use licensed home inspectors. He went on further to say if an inspector is not licensed by the State of Connecticut but is taking courses to obtain that license he sees no problem with him continuing to inspect for MHA.

Mr. Barder said he will see that he gets licensed or tell him that he can no longer do home inspections.

Mr. Becker asked about a fee paid to Rome/McGuigan. Mr. Barder explained it was for legal fees for a suit brought about by a tenant. MHA won the case but we are not able to recoup the legal fees from the tenant.

## **VI. Executive Directors Report**

### **A. Financial Statements & Management Reports**

Mr. Becker asked about the AMP I and the heading Routine Contracts.

Mr. Barder said he would get back to Mr. Becker with a breakdown of the expense. Mr. Barder explained he thought it important to show the BOD the ending balance sheet so they can see where the short falls are and why it is necessary to seek a rent increase.

Mr. Barder reviewed the Management Reports and said that filling vacancies will help us get some of these things moving more quickly to completion. We are making progress it is just slower than he would like.

### **B. ACOP Policy Update (Discussion only) – Nothing to update**

### **C. Integrated Pest Management Control**

Mr. Barder reported this is a policy required by the State of Connecticut and MHA does not have one. The requirements are what kind of insecticide is being used, who is doing the pest control, what kinds of pests and how often the units are being treated. The State is also requiring that we go green. We have a pest company that we have been working with and they came back with a quote for their service. Mr. Barder said he will continue to use them but after a year he will put this service out to bid.

### **D. CHFA-NOFA**

Mr. Rubin asked what NOFA is and Mr. Barder explained it is Notice of Funding Availability. Mr. Barder said he will be working on the application and request for the maximum amount allowed which is \$35k per unit. It is a sizeable request and all of the MHA properties can use that and more but we will take whatever we can get.

### **E. Resident Advisory Board**

Mr. Barder reported the RAB is up and running. We do have one representative from each complex. He would like to have two representatives from each complex; that way if one cannot attend a meeting each complex will still be represented.

F. Web Site Rebuild

Mr. Barder shared he has been looking at two companies that provide this service. Their prices are comparable, about \$2k and both companies do provide monthly maintenance. He will make his selection this week and get that rolling.

**VII. Chairman's Report – None**

**VIII. Old Business – None**

**IX. New Business**

A. Revised Personnel Policy (Draft) – Andrew Holding – Covered above

**B. Resolution 2012-3 – Resident Consultations for DDA0004561 –**

Mr. Barder explained that the Resident Advisory Board has been notified and consulted about this resolution.

Mr. Rubin moved to adopt application Resolution 2012-3.

Mr. Becker seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Mr. Becker moved to suspend the rules and add to the agenda under New Business item 9c Discussion of Ethics conference attended by Mr. Rubin. Mr. Rubin seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

C. Discussion of Ethics Conference

Mr. Rubin reported he attended an Ethics Conference on January 23 and he found it very informative and helpful. They were given case studies to look at. There were discussion groups and one issue that was made clear is that you have to have policies, they make sense and it gives everyone rules that have to be followed. Things can get overlooked. Mr. Rubin went on further to say the other workshops offered were how to be an effective Commissioner. They outlined what the responsibilities and duties are for being a commissioner.

Mr. Becker moved to suspend the rules and add to the agenda under New Business 9d discussion of 2012 goals for the Executive Director. Mr. Rubin seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

D. 2012 Goals for Executive Director

The Board outlined the 2012 Goals for the Executive Director of MHA. Chairman Howroyd outlined them as:

1. Vacancies – Reduce the number and time it takes to get a unit repaired and up for occupancy.
2. Web Site – Build a new and functional website.
3. Resident Advisory Board – Increase representation from each location.
4. Modernize/Upgrade the property management Office at Bluefield Drive.
5. Modernize the Community Centers at all of the MHA sites.
6. Seek additional State and Federal Funds for capital projects

Mr. Becker moved to adopt these goals as written.  
Mr. Rubin seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

**X. Items for Future Agenda**

**A. Emergency Plan for the BOD to consider**

- Make sure the staff knows what their responsibilities are when there is an emergency. Have a list of residents that have mobility or handicapped issues and have someone responsible for checking on their welfare.

**B. Contract Extension for Legal Council**

- Our current legal contract was for three years with an option to extend for two more years with the same agreement on the fees.

**C. Schedule the Executive Director's Evaluation for Executive Session**

**XI. Adjournment**

Mr. Rubin moved to adjourn the meeting.  
Mr. Becker seconded. Motion passed 3-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 pm.

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**CHAIRMAN**

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_