

Attending: Chairman Josh Howroyd
Carol Shanley
Paul Rubin
Patrick Barder, Executive Director

Absent: Robert Shanbaum
Flora Jimenez

I. Call to Order

Chairman Howroyd opened the meeting at 6:08 PM and welcomed the residents of Mayfair Gardens.

II. Public Comments – These minutes are intended to be an overview of the comments made and are not necessarily verbatim.

Ms. Ann Walsh addressed the Board.

Ms. Walsh shared she has worked for the Housing Authority for 7½ years and is here on behalf of some of the employees of the Housing Authority and we just want to be heard. We have worked with Mr. Barder for three years and no one has said anything to us “hey how is it going.” If we were asked by anyone on the Board about Mr. Barder you would find mixed reviews and that is understandable. Most of us have found a common ground and acceptance. We want to know how this decision was made and why it was it made so hastily.

I can’t speak for the tenants but as an employee I feel as if we don’t count and we have not been heard at all. Some housing authorities are losing their federal subsidies because of some of the cutbacks and Mr. Barder has so far maintained the housing authority with those cut backs.

In the last seven years we have had three Executive Directors and it does cause instability and frustration for the tenants as well as the employees. It is scary for both the employees and the tenants and we don’t know what is going to happen with a new ED. Expectations are different; policies are implemented differently with every ED.

She asked if there is a search committee and could some employees be on this committee to make sure that the overall picture of who this new ED is and is seen by everyone not just a small group.

Mr. Barder came here to help the Housing Authority and to be a leader and not all leaders are liked. He did not come here to be “Boss of the Year”. He came here to run the Housing Authority like a business and most of us do believe that is what he has done. Our concern is that the next ED will not be able to run the Housing Authority as well as Mr. Barder has proven to do it. We want to be heard.

Chairman Howroyd shared that later this evening the Board will actually have interaction with the consultant from the search firm. He said the Board will take your comments into consideration as to what the next steps are in the process and to what extent we can involve the employees.

Ms. Judy Taylor of the Resident Advisory Board and a Mayfair resident addressed the Board.

Ms. Taylor asked if the Board knows how the Mayfair residents feel about this upcoming change. She said that personally felt there was no communication and the people who complained about Mr. Barder were far from perfect and do not represent the residents of Mayfair. Mr. Barder’s job was to make improvements in the Housing Authority and he did that.

Ms. Martha Bertrand addressed the Board.

Ms. Bertrand stated she is the property manager for Spencer Village, Pascal Lane, various scattered sites, Mayfair Gardens as well as North Elm Street.

Some tenants from several of these communities approached her about the last meeting and felt they were overlooked by the Commissioners.

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They felt there was a coordinated effort on behalf of the Commissioners and certain tenants not to have fair tenant representation at last month's meeting.

They felt they were "conveniently" excluded from the decision-making process.

These tenants want it to be known that they love what has been done at their properties since Patrick Barder joined MHA.

Funding they had never seen was coming their way and it was very exciting to them. These tenants feel the Commissioners only heard certain voices.

Ms. Bertrand said she suggested to some of the tenants to attend this meeting but many of them felt as if it was too late. They felt the Commissioners aren't interested in hearing their voices.

The tenants are also concerned about their communities and property becoming neglected as it was in the past.

Mr. Wayne Madden Pascal Lane addressed the Board.

Mr. Madden wanted to thank Mr. Barder for all that he has done for our community on Spencer Street.

Ms. Dottie Farrington of the Resident Advisory Board addressed the Board.

Ms. Farrington asked the Commission to reconsider and have Mr. Barder back. He has done so much for the Spencer Village in the time he has been here. Residents are very happy. She shared from the first time she met Mr. Barder she was impressed with him. He spoke clearly and made her and the other residents feel that we mattered.

Ms. Cheryl Currier 243 North Main Street addressed the Board.

Ms. Currier wanted to invite Commissioners to a Thanksgiving dinner and she is one of the organizers and cook. She wanted to acknowledge the improvements that were made to this community center will make this possible.

Ms. Jacqueline Geist 291A North Main Street addressed the Board.

Ms. Geist asked what information was used in order for the decision concerning Mr. Barder to be made. None of the residents here were aware of these decisions and any information about it we had to read in newspaper. Ms. Geist said she was shocked, surprised and disappointed to read it.

Chairman Howroyd stated in fairness to everybody involved particularly Mr. Barder, he wanted to clear the air in terms of the perception that the decision not to renew his contract was not based on the turnout of last month's meeting. The Commissioners were evaluating Mr. Barder over the course of three years because the term of his contract was coming up. He said he thinks it is not fair to Mr. Barder that the media and others have the perception that the decision was made after that meeting last month. There was a handful of people that organized the "nay sayers" and the he said he acknowledges it.

Chairman Howroyd went on further to say that frankly that had no bearing on his decision and he did not want to speak on behalf of the other commissioners. It is very unfortunate that it got portrayed that way. He also acknowledged that Mr. Barder on the administrative side has done some amazing things on behalf of the Housing Authority. The complaints we heard at the last meeting were from a handful of people and it got overplayed in the press and frankly there were other concerns that the Board had heard over a longer period of time that weighed in. The Board did weigh in those factors in making the decision.

Ms. Geist admitted that was not the way it was perceived by Mayfair Garden residents.

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Chairman Howroyd explained he tried to be as clear as he could when he spoke to the media but that is not how it was reported in the newspapers. He also shared he still holds Mr. Barder in very high regard to the many positive contributions he has made to the Manchester Housing Authority.

Ms. Geist asked if Mr. Barder's contract is up at the end of this month and is there a replacement.

Chairman Howroyd stated his contract is up the end of the year and the Board does have a process in place to search for a replacement. Most likely there will not be a new person before the end of the year and we will be having discussions as a Board and with Mr. Barder as well as to discuss exactly what the time table will be. We will discuss this in Executive Session later this evening with regard to this matter.

Ms. Walsh asked if the decision was not based on the October meeting then why didn't the Board start a search for a new Executive Director earlier so there would be someone in place for January 1st. It looks like to all of us that it is kind of how it happened, that it is when everything started. If there were issues why wasn't the search started earlier.

Chairman Howroyd shared the October is typically when the Board does their annual evaluations and the last time it did come up we also started the search process in June of that year. There is no good way to go through this process.

Ms. Walsh said that the perception is that is how it looks like to us.

Chairman Howroyd stated in fairness to Mr. Barder he does not want to discuss the specifics of how the decision was made. Those discussions take place in Executive Session. Chairman Howroyd commented he has been chairman since Mr. Barder came on board and he has become very close to him and said we have worked together and done some good things. This has been a difficult a decision for me personally.

Ms. Bertrand shared she is curious as to how much time did the Board spent in the office before making this decision; looking at the day-to-day operations and speaking with staff.

Chairman Howroyd admitted he and Flora Jimenez are the only Board members who have contact with staff members and that is infrequent at best.. The Board members are all volunteers and are not experts in housing authority matters. The Board does try to do their homework and do the best they can. Interaction with the staff is generally not part of the equation and Chairman Howroyd said he appreciates what has been said both here tonight and what was voiced in support in the newspaper specifically from the Maintenance staff.

Ms. Walsh added that the housing authority needs a director that is able to guide us and clearly the way the housing authority has been run in the last three years it has become a nice place to where the employees know what is going on. She said she respects the Board's decision but the decision that was made is unfortunate.

A resident asked how they can find out what the status is on the search for a new Executive Director.

Chairman Howroyd shared the Board will be discussing this during the meeting but it may take place at the tail end of this meeting tonight or in Executive Session. It is safe to say given the need to advertise for the position that we will not have someone in place by the first of the year. The Board needs to have a more precise timetable, and we hope to have an answer in the next 2-3 weeks.

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Chairman Howroyd went on further to say that he has had discussions with the consultant on the executive search but he has not had an opportunity to share it with the other Board members. The last time we did this the process took about 6 months.

Chairman Howroyd closed the public comments at 6:40 pm.

A. Discussion of Public Comments – None

III. Adoption of Minutes – Meeting of October 16, 2013

Chairman Howroyd asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 16 meeting. Motion was made by Ms. Shanley to accept the minutes as written. Motion was seconded by Mr. Rubin. Motion passed 3-0.

IV. Correspondence - None

V. Accounts Payable

The Board had no issues with the A/P report.

VI. Executive Director's Report

Chairman Howroyd asked the status of Section 8 in light of the federal financial situation.

Mr. Barder indicated that there is enough money to pay the December bills. There are three main funding sources for housing authorities and the House and Senate are discussing this issue and a decision is supposed to be made by the 15th of December. If they don't reach a decision by the 15th, the "drop dead date", will kick in. There still is a gap between the House and Senate on this issue.

The auditors are in and things seem to be going good.

Chairman Howroyd asked how things are going with the HA Accountant and Mr. Barder reported his performance is satisfactory for the moment.

Mr. Rubin commented that last year the auditors were not happy with the lack of preparedness by MHA.

Mr. Barder replied that has been corrected. Usually audits take 10 days, last year it took 3 months. There was a significant amount of communication and preparation prior to the auditors coming in.

Mr. Rubin asked if there is anything that the Board needs to be concerned about. Are there any items, besides Section 8, that are more troubling than they were last month or the month before?

Mr. Barder stated that if there is no Budget Resolution on January 1 we will have no money except rent we collect. Payments to Section 8 landlords will not be made.

VII. Chairman's Report

Chairman Howroyd explained he will defer to Executive Session to give the Board the update on the search process for a new Executive Director.

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VIII. Old Business – None

IX. New Business

Preconstruction Loan – Connecticut State Portfolio – **Resolution 2013-15** –

Mr. Barder explained this Resolution format is the way CT DOH wanted it constructed. It has to be signed by the Chairman and it has to be notarized 24 hours after the Chairman's signature. Mr. Rubin moved to adopt Resolution 2013-15. Ms. Shanley seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Food Service Contract – The Congregate – **Resolution 2013-16** –

Mr. Barder remarked the only bid came from Humming Bird Catering and the submission was responsive to the solicitation.

There is a food committee at the Congregate and they met with the company and discussed the menu and made suggestions.

Mr. Barder did say MHA will have to purchase some new equipment for the Congregate, specifically a freezer and refrigerator, in order to meet the terms of our arrangement to provide food services.

Mr. Rubin expressed his concern about the length of the contract and he asked if we could go back to Hummingbird and ask for a shorter period of time as opposed to going with a 3-year contract.

Mr. Barder shared there are not that many companies that do this kind of catering.

Mr. Rubin commented the positive of having a three year contract is the price is locked in, the negative is if there are issues that aren't necessarily to the level that we can get out of the contract, we have to live with it for three years. Mr. Rubin moved to adopt Resolution 2013-16. Ms. Shanley seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Fence Proposal – Mayfair Gardens – **Resolution 2013-17** –

Chairman Howroyd reviewed the proposal from Hartford Wireworks that included a diagram of the fence, which would be a 260 feet long by 6 feet high black ornamental iron fence to be placed along the rear property line and go around the corner and attach to the school fence.

Mr. Barder explained this would prevent egress from the corner and would be attractive and that all interested parties should be satisfied with the barrier between the properties.

Mr. Rubin asked if there were any other fence companies/contractors that MHA looked at.

Mr. Barder said he spoke with Mr. Martindale, our construction consultant and that he had informed him there were not that many companies that had this type of fence or do this type of work for as competitive a number that had been quoted. This fence provides visibility between the properties; it is powder coated wrought iron that is cleanable and repairable.

Mr. Rubin commented this is a reasonable price for what we are getting. Mr. Rubin moved to adopt Resolution 2013-17. Ms. Shanley seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

X. Items for Future Agenda

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Chairman Howroyd noted that next month is our annual meeting and we do have to adopt a meeting schedule for 2014. In our rules for procedures/by-laws it specifies that we meet the third Wednesday unless we specify a different date. Is Wednesday the best night for other Board members going forward? It was noted that changing the day would require a by-law change.

Mr. Rubin shared Wednesday or Thursday would be better for him.

Chairman Howroyd suggested adopt a by-law and actually take out of the bylaw a specific day and put a provision that the Board shall annually set their meeting schedule at the December meeting. Chairman Howroyd stated he will draft the by-law change and the meeting schedule for 2014.

- 2014 Meeting Schedule
- Possible By-Law Change allowing flexibility for meetings

XI. Executive Session

Motion was made by Ms. Shanley to move into Executive Session at 7:20 pm to discuss personnel matters related to the search process for the Executive Director. Mr. Rubin seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Mr. Rubin moved to close the Executive Session at 7:50 pm. Ms. Shanley seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Rubin moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 pm. Ms. Shanley seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST: _____