

MELROSE HOUSING AUTHORITY
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
APRIL 11, 2023
PUBLIC SESSION

A regular meeting of the Melrose Housing Authority was held on Tuesday, April 11, 2023, in the Main Office of the Melrose Housing Authority C.J. McCarthy building at 910 Main Street, Melrose, Massachusetts 02176 at 7:30 p.m.

1. Roll Call

Charlie Harak	Present
Mike Barry	Present
Steven Douglas	Present
Ellen Connolly	Present

Lisa Young served as clerk. Jim Holt, MHA Executive Director was also present. Paula Kinnon, Financial Coordinator, was also present.

Chairman Ellen Connolly declared a quorum present.

2. Minutes Pending Adoption

The Board of Commissioners reviewed and discussed the March 28, 2023, Regular Board Meeting Minutes. Upon a motion by Charlie Harak, duly seconded by Mike Barry, and unanimously approved, the Board voted to approve the March 28, 2023, Regular Board Meeting Minutes. Chairman Connolly declared the AYES have it.

**At this time, Chairman Ellen Connolly asked for a motion to suspend the Regular MHA Board meeting to allow public participation. Upon a motion by Charlie Harak, duly seconded by Mike Barry and unanimously approved, the Board voted to suspend the MHA Regular board meeting to allow for public participation. Chairman Connolly declared the AYES have it.

Two residents from the Steele House were in attendance, Ms. Dorothy Rocklin, and Mr. Francis Burton. Ms. Rocklin stated that she sees various signs around the building advertising for residents to join the Tenant’s Association, and some of the duties listed of the Tenant’s Association are to mediate disputes between tenants, work with Mystic Valley Elder Services, etc. but nobody has shown any interest in quite a while. Ms. Rocklin stated that the current Tenant’s Association is racist and has made racist comments about people in the Steele House. Ms. Rocklin feels that the Tenant’s Association should be made up of members who are equal and who do not have more power than any other member because this could cause trouble within the building.

Mr. Francis Burton stated, ‘We just want to know how we can have a voice’. Mr. Burton also asked about who the individual was that was supposed to replace the previous Tenant Association board member, Francis Paglia. Jim Holt informed Mr. Burton and Ms. Rocklin that Mike Barry was chosen as the new Tenant Representative board member. Mr. Burton stated that since Mike Barry lives in the McCarthy building, he is probably too busy to be at the Steele House as well. Mr. Burton stated the Steele House wants equal representation. Chairman Connolly explained to Mr. Burton that there can only be one Tenant Representative member on the MHA Board at a time, but that Mike Barry is available for the Steele house tenants. Mr. Burton asked Mike Barry if he had been over to the Steele House at all and Mike Barry responded he has. Mr. Jim Holt stated that historically the tenant’s association votes for residents who they want to serve on the board and typically the position is flipped from the McCarthy to the Steele house, so each building has a turn. As the last MHA Tenant Representative was a resident of the Steele House, the tenant representative is now a resident from the McCarthy building. Mr. Holt met with those candidates and ultimately gave his recommendations to the mayor who made the decision on who would be appointed to the position on the board. The current President of the Steele House Tenants Association, Helen Blinstrub has put out signs in the Steele House encouraging residents to join the Tenant’s Association, however Helen is not the one that can appoint any resident a title on the board as those are voted by the residents of the Steele House. Helen Blinstrub has expressed to Jim that she does not want to be on the Tenant’s Association but is hanging on in hopes a new one will form. Mr. Burton asked Jim Holt why Helen is still involved, and Mr. Holt stated that Helen is still the President. Mr. Burton stated how can she be when the Tenant’s Association has been disbanded, to which Mr. Holt replied that the Tenant’s Association has not been disbanded. Mr. Burton then asked if the Tenant’s Association could be disbanded.

Commissioner Charlie Harak stated that the MHA Board of Commissioners does not get involved with the Tenant’s Association and has no power over them. Commissioner Harak asked if there were any by-laws, to which Mr. Holt stated there are by-laws and he would forward them to Mr. Burton and Ms. Rocklin. Mr. Burton and Ms. Rocklin stated that they cannot speak to Helen, Helen doesn’t like them, and she also bullies residents and makes racist comments to their face. Ms. Rocklin stated that when the food

pantry delivers food to the Steele House, Helen has taken it upon herself to decide who gets to take the food and has made comments about certain residents taking too much food.

Commissioner Charlie Harak stated that the board cannot interfere with the Tenant's Association. Commissioner Harak has a contact with the Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Tenants who may be able to help by the name of Sarah Byrnes- Sarah@massunion.org . Ms. Rocklin also stated that the Steele House residents had no notification that Mike Barry was the new Tenant Representative. Mr. Burton asked Mr. Holt if he could help facilitate a meeting at the Steele House with Mike Barry. Mr. Burton asked what it meant on the MHA Board Meeting agenda where it says, 'Tenant Association Representative Participation'. Chairman Connolly stated that that is an agenda item and if Mike Barry has any news to share, that is the point in the meeting that he will give a report.

Chairman Connolly thanked Mr. Burton and Ms. Rocklin for attending the MHA board meeting and invited them both to stay for the remainder of the meeting.

Upon a motion by Charlie Harak, duly seconded by Mike Barry and unanimously approved, the Board voted to close public participation and to reconvene back into the MHA Regular Board meeting. Chairman Connolly declared the AYES have it.

3. Tenant Association Representative Participation

Jim Holt went over to the Steele House recently after Mike Barry stated at the last board meeting that he visited the Steele House and saw an area outside that looked unkempt. It turns out this area is a flower/vegetable garden that some of the residents are trying to start.

Mike Barry asked about the windows at the McCarthy and when the MHA may be able to replace more. Jim Holt stated that there are funds in the Capital Plan for this project and that the planning phase of the window replacement project will begin in July of this year.

Mike Barry also asked about the parking lot at the McCarthy as there are drainage issues. The Steele House parking lot is also in need of repairs as well. Jim Holt stated the MHA is aware of these issues at both buildings and these repairs would be put into the Capital Plan.

Mike stated that recently he was in the lounge area/mail room of the McCarthy and was told by other residents that there was another tenant there who was being aggressive. Mike said he asked the residents if they felt threatened in any way and the residents stated they did not. Mike wanted Jim Holt to be aware of this in the event a resident comes to him to make a complaint.

Mike asked for follow-up on the smoking issues in the McCarthy. Jim Holt informed Mike and the board that meetings were held between residents who smoke in the building and a lawyer who represents the MHA. The lawyer and MHA informed these residents of the consequences that could come from them continuing to smoke inside the building.

Report was received and placed on file.

4. Communications

Nothing to Report

5. Report of the Executive Director

- a. State-Aided Elderly /Handicapped Programs 667-1/2
Elderly/Family Housing 667/705/AHVP

- (i.) March 2023 Vacancy Report

As of March 31, 2023, there are currently 27 vacant units between the McCarthy and Steele House. There were four move-ins this month.

There are three 705 units that are off-line.

Report was received and placed on file.

Special Needs Housing Program (689)

Nothing to Report

- b. Rental Assistance (Section 8/MRVP/DMH/PBV)

- (i.) April 1, 2023 Report

As of April 1, 2023, there are 242 HCV vouchers leased up for the Section 8 program.

There are 56 out of 57 PBV vouchers leased up between the Levi Gould and the Fuller House.

c. Financial Administrator's Report

(i.) Approval of Disbursements- February 2023

The Board of Commissioners reviewed and discussed the financial report for February 2023. Upon a motion by Charlie Harak, duly seconded by Mike Barry and unanimously approved, the Board voted to approve the February 2023 disbursements in the amount of \$557,195.94. Chairman Connolly declared the AYES have it.

(ii.) Review of Disbursements- March 2023

The Board of Commissioners briefly reviewed the preliminary disbursements for March 2023. The report will be placed on file to be discussed and approved next month.

d. Personnel

(i) Change in job title- Paula Kinnon

Mr. Holt is requesting a change in job title for Paula Kinnon who is the MHA's financial administrator. Jim would like to add Assistant Executive Director to Paula's job title. Jim feels Paula will be an extension of him and this change will allow Paula to address any issues within the office with Jim. Commissioner Harak asked Jim if there was a salary change with this additional job title and Jim said no. Jim stated that he feels Paula's current salary is commensurate with salaries of the same position in similar size housing authorities, but a salary change could be a discussion for the future. Commissioner Harak asked if Paula was going to be taking any management training to which Jim stated Paula has already taken a number of trainings and attends all of the NSHEADADA meetings. Upon a motion by Charlie Harak, duly seconded by Mike Barry and unanimously approved, the board voted to approve the change in job title for Paula Kinnon to Financial Administrator/Assistant Executive Director. Chairman Connolly declared the AYES have it.

e. All other matters that may be presented

(i) Fee accountant services

Rich Conlon, MHA fee accountant has submitted his proposal for services from 1/1/23 – 12/31/25. Commissioner Harak referenced an email he and the other commissioners received from the state that says the board of commissioners has an obligation to read every contract before signing. After some further discussion, the board agreed it would be best to revisit this contract at the next board meeting in May, so that all the commissioners have a chance to read through the proposal. Upon a motion by Charlie Harak, duly seconded by Mike Barry, and unanimously approved, the board voted to table the Fee accountant services contract for review and approval at the May 9th board meeting. Chairman Connolly declared the AYES have it.

(ii) Kone Elevator repairs

There is a proposal from Kone that was generated from elevator inspections completed back in 2021 of a new FS90 code compliant software that is required to be installed in the elevators. At the time this code was implemented, the elevator contractors did not have guidance as to how the new code complaint software should be installed. The MHA elevators have been receiving conditional certificates and extensions up until this time, but the state is requiring this fix to be completed in 2023. The total price for this software to be installed for the elevators at McCarthy and Steele House is \$11,748.00. Upon a motion by Charlie Harak, duly seconded by Mike Barry and unanimously approved, the board voted to approve the proposal from Kone Elevator to install the FS90 code compliant software for \$11,748.00. Chairman Connolly declared the AYES have it.

6. Report of the Maintenance Department

(i) March 2023 Report

The Board reviewed the Maintenance report for March 2023. The fire alarm replacement project at the Steele House is moving along. Asbestos abatement has been completed and electrical work is being done in units and common areas.

A stove was replaced at 919 Main St. after a small kitchen fire. Report was received and placed on file.

7. Report of Committees

Nothing to Report

8. Unfinished Business

Nothing to Report

9. New Business

- (i) 28 Greenwood St. City Hall discussion- Ellen Connolly

Chairman Connolly and Jim Holt met with City Planner, Denise Gaffey last week to discuss their concerns with the proposed project at 28 Greenwood St. If approved, this project would consist of the construction of 40 units as a 40B which eliminates the ability of the town to dictate the terms of the design, zoning, etc. This would be constructed about 200 feet from the Steele House. One major concern about this project is that there would be blasting of ledge for several months that could become problematic for the many residents who live in this area. Another major concern is the water that would result from the blasting that could cause flooding. The Steele House would be in the flood zone.

Denise Gaffey told Chairman Connolly and Jim Holt that a peer review study is scheduled where consultants will come and observe the area of where the construction would take place and give their recommendations. Commissioner Charlie Harak suggested that the board may want to seek independent advice or have another discussion with Denise Gaffey to ask if the engineers are qualified enough to know where the water would go and will they take into consideration that there is an elderly/disabled population nearby that could have major effects from this construction. There is an abutters group that was formed of residents who live in this area that are fighting against this project. Chairman Connolly stated that this group has retained an attorney. There will be open public meetings for the public via Zoom on this project for the next six (6) months.

10. Litigation or Possible Litigation

Nothing to Report

11. Adjournment

Upon a motion by Charlie Harak, duly seconded by Mike Barry and unanimously approved, the Board voted to adjourn the MHA Regular Public Board Meeting at 9:45 p.m. The next MHA Regular Public Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 9, 2023, at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

James Holt, Executive Director