

**MELROSE HOUSING AUTHORITY
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
NOVEMBER 12, 2024
PUBLIC SESSION**

A regular meeting of the Melrose Authority was held on Tuesday, November 12, 2024, in the main office of the Melrose Housing Authority, C.J. McCarthy building at 910 Main Street, Melrose, Massachusetts 02176 at 7:30pm.

1. Roll Call

Ellen Connolly	Present
Dana LeWinter	Present
Charlie Harak	Present
Steven Douglas	Present
Doreen Breland	Present

Martin Corona, Executive Director, was also present as well as Susan Tuminelli, CHAMP Coordinator, who served as clerk.

Chairperson Ellen Connolly declared a quorum present.

2. Minutes Pending Adoption:

- Minutes from October 8, 2024, MHA Regular Board Meeting

The Board of Commissioners reviewed and discussed the October 8, 2024, MHA Regular board meeting minutes. Chairperson Ellen Connolly brought up one typo which Martin Corona agreed to fix. Upon a motion by Commissioner Charlie Harak, duly seconded by Commissioner Dana LeWinter, and unanimously approved, the board voted to approve the October 8, 2024, MHA Regular board meeting minutes. Chairperson Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

3. Tenant Association and Public Comments:

McCarthy Tenant representative/Commissioner Doreen Breland stated she thinks the tenant meeting room at the Steele building is not necessarily handicapped accessible. The tenant meeting rooms are not completely set up, but everything seems to be going well.

At this time, Chairperson Ellen Connolly asked for a motion to suspend the regular minutes and open up to public participation. Commissioner Charlie Harak made the motion and Commissioner Doreen Breland seconded. Chairperson Ellen Connolly stated that the AYES have it.

- Update on McCarthy & Steele Tenant Association Elections

Elections have been completed and were very successful. Irene Doyle requests that the McCarthy LTO should be recognized as a Tenant's Association based on the fact that they had a fair election and have created bylaws. The Steele tenant's Association is voting on November 19, 2024 on their bylaws. The plan is to recognize both associations at the December board meeting.

- Drafting of MOU between MHA and Tenant Associations Effective 1/1/2025

Irene Doyle asked for a postponement of the date of 1/1/2025 for the MOU. After discussions Ellen Connolly suggested creating a preliminary MOU. The opening paragraph should state a more formal MOU is being worked on and will be addressed during the first quarter of the year 2025, followed by bullet points stating budget is in place, offices are in place, phone system is being worked on, internet is being worked on, meetings will be held once a month, and bylaws are in place. Charlie Harak suggested contacting Annette Duke, she is a lawyer at Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and has worked with the Mass Union for 30 years, for help with drafting an MOU. Irene Doyle was assured 12 months of tenant's association money is in the budget. Wi-Fi will be available on the entire first floor of the McCarthy building. The MOU should be on the February agenda to confirm there is progress being made.

Martin Corona submitted a request to the MassHousing TAP program for them to come to the McCarthy building with their resources to work with the residents and the Tenant's association board on Community Building Concepts. Once established at the McCarthy building this will be offered at the Steele building.

Irene Doyle was given an explanation of the difference between operating budget/capital plan budget/modernization budget. Dana LeWinter made a suggestion that once both tenants' association boards are in place they schedule a meeting with Rich Conlon to do a walk through of the budget for next year. Rich Conlon explained that at the very beginning stages of creating the budget the accounting office sends out a budget questionnaire, this is when the tenant's association gets involved. This can be done for next year's budget.

Mass Union recognized Melrose Housing for not only sponsoring but also for residents participating in the Mass Union conference in Springfield and also for the election turnout.

Leo Pagliaro, president of the Steele Tenant's Association, introduced his entire board and thanked all members for being present at this board meeting. He reported his board is currently participating in a webinar for the next 6 weeks on developing skills in leadership and management.

Chairperson Charlie Harak asked for a motion to close public participation and return to the agenda. Commissioner Doreen Breland seconded. Chairperson Ellen Connolly stated that the AYES have it.

4. Communications

Nothing to report.

5. MHA Program Management/Operations Report (Executive Director Report):

a. CHAMP Admission/Intake/Screening:

- PHN-Notice Veteran Preference-New MHA Task-Screening Veterans

The state has delegated the task of verifying the veterans' preference to housing authorities which will expand the screening process for the Melrose Housing Authority.

- Update on Applicant Processing

Melrose currently has 200 applicants in the screening process.

b. State-Aided Elderly/Handicapped Programs (667-1)- Elderly/Family Housing (667/705)

- Rent Collection Report (October 2024)

1 to 2 residents in the elderly buildings working with repayment agreements and also 1 to 2 in family housing

- Vacancy Report (October 2024)

3 vacancies at McCarthy, 1 is rentable, 2 are off-line

2 vacancies at Steele, 1 is rentable, 1 is off-line

2 units: 969 Main Street and 489 Lebanon Street have been vacant for a long time. Still working on proposals for both 969 Main Street and 489 Lebanon Street. Demolition on the bathroom has begun at the occupied apartment at 487 Lebanon Street.

Commissioner Charlie Harak mentioned in the public housing program that the vacancy percent is way lower than it has been in a long time, it is currently at 2 or 3%. He feels this is remarkable. Martin Corona stated, this is our focus.

c. Special Needs Housing Program (689)

- Meeting with Caritas, Inc (Roger Plourde) and Rent Increase Eff 11/1/2024

Martin Corona and Patrick Walsh met with Roger Plourde – Melrose Housing Authority did increase the rent for 2025, it was a COLA increase. 2026 will not be a COLA increase.

d. Maintenance Department

- October 2024 Work Order Report

Work order report is self-explanatory. These inspections do generate some protective service referrals for residents who may need some help.

- Bed Bug Inspections (K-9) Conducted in October

5 units at Steele and 4 units at McCarthy had bed bugs and were treated – overall not bad. These inspections did cause some angst for the tenants, which is understandable.

- B&B Pest Control Community-Wide Extermination

Winter season is coming and rodents can get in. B&B inspected every unit and blocked some holes and did some baiting.

- Update on Capital Improvement Projects

487 Lebanon Street demolition has begun. 969 Main Street and 489 Lebanon Street still working on capital improvement plan. Steele exterior door contract has been awarded - just waiting for the notice to proceed.

- Snow Removal Preparation

Cleaned both parking lots of leaves in preparation for winter snow. Currently working at the McCarthy building with having residents re-register their vehicles. Tenants must bring a valid MA license, proof of insurance and valid registration and they will be issued a new parking sticker. Once the process is completed at the McCarthy building the same will be done at the Steele building.

d. Rental Assistance (Section 8/MRVP/AHVP/DMH)

- October 1, 2024, report

Report for Section 8 program, nothing much has changed other than we have lost a few vouchers.

- FSS Grant Submission

Grant was submitted. Waiting for it to be approved.

- HCV Shortfall Request

HUD granted our shortfall request - \$58,000.

- Update on HCV/S8 Payment Standards (2024 FMR Appeal by BHA/CHA/EOHLC)

Greater Boston/Metropolitan area payment standards are on hold. BHA/CHA/EOHLC appealed the FMR's. They went down. Hud has kept the 2024 fair market rents that were in effect for our area the same as they hear the appeal.

e. Financial Administrator's report

- Approval of Disbursements- September 2024

Commissioner Charlie Harak moved to approve September disbursements in the total amount of \$677,176.63, seconded by Commissioner Steve Douglas, all in favor, AYE. Chairman Connolly declared the AYES have it.

- Review of Disbursements- October 2024

October is very straight forward. Commissioner Dana LeWinter questioned one October disbursement to Doreen Dillon, Vice-president of the McCarthy Tenant's Association. Martin Corona explained this was reimbursement for the chairs that were purchased for the association's meeting room.

f. Personnel

- Northeast Vocational Coop Program (1st day was on 10/28/2024)

Victor is our new part-time employee. He is an honor roll student at the Northeast Vocational High School. He started at the McCarthy building two weeks ago and is at the Steele building this week. He is very motivated. Martin Corona is hoping going forward we can hire another student.

g. All Other Matters that May Be Presented

- Met with City of Melrose Director of Emergency Management/Tabletop Exercise Training with Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Residents on 10/8/2024

The McCarthy Tenant's Association met with Martin Corona, Tracy Breeden, the Melrose fire chief, the Melrose police chief and the Emergency Management Team to discuss a disaster plan and get the residents involved. The same will happen later this month at the Steele building.

- MHAs Participation at Mayor's Senior Resource Fair on 10/28/2024

Tracy Breeden and Susan Tuminelli attended the Mayor's Senior Resource Fair to provide information about housing options for residents.

- MHA met with SDM Foundation (Melrose Foundation) in October

Met with the SDM Foundation. They provide free electronic and technology assistance for residents. Their office is on Main Street. Tenants are more than welcome to attend trainings. We hope to communicate this information to our residents in our newsletter.

- IT Security Health Check (IT Disaster Recovery Plan)

Submitted an application to the state. They are doing a security check. It will take 30 days. They will give us the results at the end of the month and determine how vulnerable we are. If it is determined that we are vulnerable there is a possibility that they will provide grant money to help us.

- MVES search to hire Service Coordinator & MHA Protective Services Referrals

The residents miss Betsy Kantt. Residents very much relied on her. MVES is still interviewing. There are two substitutes a couple days a week.

- MHA Staff completed Rent Calculation Training in October

Tracy Breeden and Susan Tuminelli completed rent calculation training in Holyoke at the Holyoke Housing Authority. Tracy and Susan also completed an on-line Housing 4-Pack One: Housing Literacy through MassHousing.

- MBI Retrofit Grant Program (Letter of Interest)

Martin Corona submitted on behalf of the Melrose Housing Authority a letter of interest to get approved to get retrofitted to bring in all new internet lines. Hopefully we qualify.

- AC Removal Completed

All the A/C's have been removed. Any A/C's still in windows have been approved due to reasonable accommodation.

6. Report of Committees: (Nothing to Report)

7. Unfinished Business:

- Approval of Energy Rate Contract

The contract expires December 31, 2024. Request was made to table this.

8. New Business

- Presentation and Approval of 2025 Annual Budget-Rich Conlon, Fee Accountant

Rich Conlon explained - This is the annual operating budget for 2025. We have 4 programs that belong to the housing authority; the state 400-1 program, 689 handicapped housing, state MRVP and then we have our Management Program. We have a grant funding program from the federal government for family self-sufficiency which is a program we get money from to help people become self-sufficient, this is a break-even budget. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts determines our budget. This year the budget is a 12% increase over last year.

Commissioner Charlie Harak moved to approve the State 400-1 program as stated in our written materials in the annual operating budget as presented to us. Commissioner Dana LeWinter seconds. Chairman Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

Commissioner Charlie Harak moved to approve the MRVP budget as stated in our written materials in the annual operating budget as presented to us. Commissioner Dana LeWinter seconds. Chairman Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

Commissioner Charlie Harak moved to approve the budget for the 689 program as stated in our written materials in the annual operating budget as presented to us. Commissioner Steve Douglas seconds. Chairman Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

- HCV/S8 5-Year Plan Approval

Back in 2020 the commissioners approved the HCV 5-Year Plan. It has expired. Martin Corona is submitting the 2025 to 2030 plan. The information has not changed. Waiting for the mayor to sign the certification form. It is a requirement to have this approved by the board.

Commissioner Charlie Harak moved to approve the Housing Choice Voucher 5-Year Plan, seconded by Commissioner Doreen Breland. Chairman Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

- Approval of CSC/CFC for Fish #178135

Required vote to approve certificate of final completion for Fish #178135 which is the office air conditioning project. Project has been completed with no issues. Contractor has signed off.

Commissioner Charlie Harak moved to sign off and approve the certificate of completion for Fish #178135, seconded by Commissioner Steven Douglas. Chairman Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

9. Adjournment

Upon a motion by Commissioner Charlie Harak duly seconded by Commissioner Doreen Breland and unanimously approved, the Board voted to adjourn the MHA Regular Public Board Meeting at 8:58pm. Chairperson Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it. The next MHA Regular Public Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 10, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.