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MELROSE HOUSING AUTHORITY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2025

PUBLIC SESSION

A regular meeting of the Melrose Authority was held on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, in the main office of the Melrose Housing Authority, C.J. McCarthy building at 910 Main Street, Melrose, Massachusetts 02176 at 7:30pm.

1. <u>Roll Call</u>

Ellen Connolly Present
Steve Douglas Present
Dana LeWinter 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. <u>Minutes Pending Adoption:</u>

- Minutes from January 14, 2025, MHA Regular Board Meeting

The Board of Commissioners reviewed and discussed the January 14, 2025, MHA Regular board meeting minutes. Upon a motion by Commissioner Dana LeWinter, duly seconded by Commissioner Steve Douglas, and unanimously approved, the board voted to approve the January 14, 2025, MHA Regular board meeting minutes. Chairperson Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

3. <u>Tenant Association and Public Comments:</u>

Leo Pagliarulo reported that today, 2/25/2025, they had a health fair put on by the Melrose Wakefield Hospital. They gave a “slips, trips and falls prevention” class. There were 18 attendees. On March 8, 2025 there will be a Mardi Gras appetizer night. There is great excitement in the Steele building with all the planned activities. The main concern at the Steele building is the laundry room. The time spent waiting for service on the machines is becoming an issue. The tenant’s association feels cameras should be installed. The Steele House Tenant’s Association are now officially members of the Chamber of Commerce and the MMTB in Melrose. The Association’s first live podcast is being recorded on 2/26/2025. The Association is in the process of planning a flea market event in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce that will be open to all the residents of Melrose.

4. <u>MHA Program Management/Operations Report (Executive Director Report):</u>

a. *<u>CHAMP Admission/Intake/Screening</u>*:

- Update on Applicant Processing

We have two wait-lists open and are processing 100 applicants.

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

- Rent Collection Report (January 2025)

We have improved somewhat in rent collection from December. A couple of people do have large balances and we expect them to be paid by RAFT and through court action. We currently have 2 people under a court ordered agreement and a third going to court on March 13. Hopefully we will resolve this and collect the rent owed through RAFT. On the family side we have two people with balances in process. One has been issued a private conference notice and one has not replied to the recertification process and has been issued a 14-day notice. We will allow the legal process to work this out. The 400 program is over budget by $4500 on the legal line item. This is the cost of doing business.

- Vacancy Report (January 2025)

Steele – 3 vacancies currently be worked on and within 60 days we will lease them up.
McCarthy – no vacancies at this time
Family – 2 units under construction

c. *Maintenance Department:*

- January 2025 Work Order Report

The average is 278 work orders on a monthly basis. These are made up of inspections, emergencies, and regular work orders. We are trying to get residents registered to use the portal to put in work orders. Every emergency work order was completed. The jet draining at both buildings is scheduled for March.

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

- January 2025 Report
- HCV Shortfall Update

Currently we are covered for the first quarter, however they do anticipate a slight shortfall for FY 2025. We are considering either suspending rent increases or capping rents and also trying to prevent tenants from moving to higher cost areas. We are looking at ways to manage this situation by making some decisions on these situations. The budget has not yet been approved. We are being very conservative because of what is going on. We are looking to limit rent increases. Anticipate a $30,000 shortfall for 2025. Marting Corona is attending on a weekly basis the NAHRO legislative meetings where they are talking about reducing the HUD workforce. Our FSS grant was reduced from $125,00 to $100,00. Martin will keep the board updated. There is only 1 port-out at this time. We have a couple of port-ins from Manchester and Chelsea. We collect an admin fee for these vouchers. We need to manage this situation.

We have four AHVP vouchers that are available. The State has asked that these vouchers not be issued at this time.

e. *Financial Administrator's report:*

- Approval of Disbursements- December 2024

- Review of Disbursements- January 2025

Our water bills went over budget. We are unsure if this is due to toilets running or dripping faucets. We will be looking into this.

Commissioner Dana LeWinter moved to approve the December disbursements in the total amount of $804,041.80, seconded by Commissioner Steve Douglas. Chairperson Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

f. *All Other Matters that May Be Presented:*

- Approval of 2025 Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant Program

This grant is part of the IT Technology Plan. Martin reached out to the Commonwealth of MA (EOTSS) regarding this grant program. They did a test on our program and we qualified. This will prevent fishing and fire wall issues. We were awarded this grant. Commissioner Dana LeWinter moved to accept the 2025 Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant Program, seconded by Commissioner Steve Dougles. Chairperson Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

5. New Business

- Approval of MHA & EOHLC's Contract for Financial Assistance (CFA) and Update authorized signatories for CFA

EOHLC asked us to enter into a Contract for Financial Assistance having to do with capital improvements and the Cap Hub Program. For 2025 we need a board vote to approve this contract for Financial Assistance. Commissioner Dana LeWinter made a motion to approve the Contract for Financial Assistance, seconded by Commissioner Steve Douglas. Chairperson Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

- Approval of FISH #178150 – Asphalt Walkway Replacement – Steele

There is a payments schedule with an estimated cost of $40,000. The design consultant has executed the document and Jeff Baxter from RCAT has approved it. Now need approval by the board for Martin Corona to sign this scope of services to have asphalt removed and replaced at the Steele building. This will be completed in the spring. Commissioner Steve Douglas made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Commissioner Dana LeWinter. Chairperson Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

- FYE 2024 Certification – (Lead Law, Top 5 Compensation, etc)

Martin Corona needs to enter into the HAFIS system the FYE 2024 Certification, the Lead Law and the Top 5 Compensation. Need a board vote and Martin will upload into HAFIS before March 1, 2025 so it can be approved. Commissioner Dana LeWinter made a motion to accept Martin's certification of FYE 2024 Certification, Lead Law and Top 5 Compensation, seconded by Commissioner Steve Douglas. Chairperson Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

- Brittany Bezok, CBIZ Fee Accountant, FY2024 Year End Financial Reports and Approval

CBIZ Fee Accountant, Michael Gudyer: This is our preparation of the year-end financial statements for submission to EOHLC which will then be subject to audit. This is the year-end close budget to actual financial statements for the Melrose Housing Authority by program and there is a presentation of each of the Authority's programs. The overriding theme across the board shows similar results in that the authority budgeted very conservatively for fiscal year 2024 and the actual results consistently were better than budgeted. Each program generated a surplus and in all cases was better than what was budgeted with the exception of the Management Program which did generate a surplus but not as much as was budgeted.

401 Program -Administrative salaries were under budget by $85,000. The overall surplus for 401 came in at $118,000 compared to what was budgeted which was a deficit of $63,000. At the end of the year the Authority has unrestricted reserves of $414,000 and that is about 34% of the maximum reserve, slightly below the minimum reserve requirements. However, with the financial performance in 2024 we expect that to continue somewhat in 2025. It is anticipated that the authority will be above that minimum reserve balance at the end of 2025. Chairperson Ellen Connolly thought this figure looked low. Michael Gudyer explained this is in part due to the fact that the budget that was prepared for FY 24 was on the conservative side, both the minimum and maximum reserve are a calculation of average budgeted operating expenses. The higher you budget expenses to be the higher reserve level you need to achieve that minimum reserve. The operating performance in FY 24, despite the relatively high level of budgeted expenses, was still favorable and I expect that trend to continue in 2025. Chairperson Ellen Connolly suggested this might be something we want to watch in our budget planning in the next year or two.

689 Group Residence - not too much going on here. Bottom line number was better than what was budgeted for, with a surplus of $1900. There are no subsidies for this program. $33,000 in reserve which is a small reserve but it is a small program.

MRVP Program - similarly there is not much activity in the MRVP Program, nonetheless there is a better surplus than what was budgeted for. We have some unrestricted reserves in the MRVP program. We have not had any conversations about these reserves, however at other Housing Authorities we are suggesting that other clients repurpose those reserves to other programs that have more needs. You might shift some of these reserves ($136,484) to any of the other state programs. This would just be a matter of submitting a request to EOHLC for their approval. Chairperson Ellen Connolly suggested putting this on a to-do list for the spring.

Section 8 Voucher Program - took in more interest income than what was budgeted, had more fraud recovery, and salaries were down a bit and there is a corresponding favorable variance for employee benefits resulting in a net surplus of $159,123 in the voucher program, much better than what was budgeted for. There are very good reserves in the voucher program, the equivalent of almost 2-years worth of operating expenses ($848,250). These reserves have to stay in this program. With reserves this high what we tend to do is, we try to shift expenses within a reasonable allocation methodology to shift deficits to the voucher program in order to utilize some of those reserves. Commissioner Dana LeWinter asked if we are at risk of losing this money. Michael Gudyer felt that would not be the case.

FSS Program – This program is budgeted and run at a break even point. This is not reported to EOHLC. This is also not subject to what is being voted on tonight. These numbers for FSS will change a bit as the process is completed.

Management Program – The Management agreement with the Housing Corporation. The corporation had some revenue issues this year therefore that trickles down to the Housing Authority. Budgeted for $46,000 but came in at $19,000 but there is a reasonable reserve of $93,747.

All 5 Commissioners need to sign a financial certification.

6. <u>Adjournment</u>

Upon a motion by Commissioner Dana LeWinter and duly seconded by Commissioner Steve Douglas and unanimously approved, the Board voted to adjourn the MHA Regular Public Board Meeting at 8:27pm. Chairperson Ellen Connolly declared the AYES have it.

**The next MHA Regular Public Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. at 910 Main Street, Melrose, MA. 02176*