

Rhode Island Housing Resources Commission
Approved Minutes of January 11, 2013
Quarterly Meeting



Commissioners & Designees:

Cola, Jeanne – Chair

Botts, Christine; Representing Craig Stenning
DeLuca, William, Representing Paul McGreevy
Evora, Michael
Fenton, William
Richard Godfrey; Representing James DeRentis
Hannifan, Chris
Hirsch, Eric; Representing Jim Ryczek

Kravitz, Thomas
McGunagle, Joanne
Reed, James
Sekeres, Bonnie
Valliere, Albert
Vanderslice, Robert; Representing Ana Novais

Staff:

Dennehy, Peter
Frumerie, Caitlin
Kimes, Charles
Kue, Simon
Neirinckx, Ray

Price, Darlene
Sullivan, Laura
Tondra, Michael
Vittorioso, Dawn

Guests

Archambault, Laura
Bell, Gretchen
Brophy, Michelle

Gorbea, Nellie
Hernandez, Carlos
Porrazzo, Deborah

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Jeanne Cola, Chair at 9:00 a.m.

2. **Approval of Meeting Minutes – for vote**

2a. **March 30, 2012 Meeting Minutes**

Jeanne asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 30, 2012. William DeLuca moved to approve the minutes of March 30, 2012 as submitted. The motion was seconded by Joanne McGunagle. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

2b. **October 12, 2012 Meeting Minutes**

Jeanne asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes of October 12, 2012. Albert Valliere moved to approve the minutes of October 12, 2012 as submitted. The motion was seconded by Joanne McGunagle. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

3. **Report of the HRC Chair/Director**

Jeanne introduced Mike Tondra who then discussed the following items:

Bond Referendum - The big news for this Quarter is the passage of Question #7 in November, which authorizes the State to issue a \$25 million affordable housing bond. It passed in 35 of the 39 municipalities. The intent would be to distribute these funds over a two-year period, assuring this investment has sufficient economic impact.

Winter Shelter - An Emergency Shelter Task Force met periodically to prepare a Winter Shelter plan for any person experiencing homelessness. The final plan developed was submitted by the HRC to the Governor's Office for consideration. The State's OHCD Consolidated Homeless Fund has awarded \$150,000 in support of the winter shelter effort. Additional funding was received by United Way and RI Foundation. The committee has continued to meet and assess the winter shelter situation. The committee feels sufficient funding is available to support existing shelters through March, 2013 - at which point additional funding would be necessary to continue operations.

The Emergency Shelter Task Force (ESTF) has also considered the system's family shelter situation. Crossroads reports unprecedented numbers of families experiencing homelessness and they have been forced to turn away households. Some measures have been taken to mitigate the situation - including expanded homeless prevention efforts and creation of a "temporary" family shelters. These measures, however, have proven inadequate to meet the high demand. Changes in family shelter policies in MA could impact the numbers of families seen in RI in the year(s) ahead.

The Consolidated Homeless Fund application workshop is next Wednesday, January 16th.

Lead - This office has reactivated the Healthy Housing/Lead Workgroup. The first meeting was held November 13th. Gregory Shultz led the discussion. The second meeting is tentatively scheduled for February, 2013.

Opening Doors - Craig Stenning, Director of the State's Department of Behavioral Healthcare, has agreed to serve as Chair to the Opening Doors Implementation Team (formerly the Office of Homelessness). A few meetings have been conducted and subcommittees created around the strategies/goals of the plan, have begun meeting to form their identities and major tasks/goals for the coming year. Mike stated that the focus needs to be on moving forward with implementation and tracking performance. He then stated that he met with the Governor's Office to discuss issues related to homelessness.

Mike next announced that David Hammarstrom, Insurers Representative, resigned from the HRC and will be relocating to NYC. He then took a moment to welcome Richard Godfrey who is representing RI Housing.

Lastly, Mike noted that the OHCD submitted a plan for filling vacant/expired HRC Commissioners to the Governor's Office for consideration. Mike indicated that no action has been taken and then noted that the HRC contact, Steve Hourihan, left the Governor's Office. Mike said that he will resubmit recommendations again, impressing upon the Governor's Office to fill these roles. Recommendations of appointments will be staggered so that all HRC positions are not expiring at one time. Mike asked the Commissioners to email him for recommendations for openings to be considered.

Jeanne asked if anyone had any questions or comments for Mike. There being none, she thanked Mike and introduced the next item on the agenda.

4. **Housing Agenda 2013** – *for discussion & vote - Resolution #3*

Jeanne referred to the letter contained in the Commissioner's packet dated January 3, 2013 from Rhode Island Housing and then introduced Richard Godfrey who explained that the intent of the letter was to find one voice to address the key issues that everyone can agree on. He then discussed the following four suggestions as contained in the letter:

- Develop a plan and funding to upgrade or replace Harrington Hall.
- Identify the supportive services within State departmental budgets to link with the homes to be created pursuant to Opening Doors and the attached Financial Plan.
- Create a working group to identify a long term affordable housing production program to eliminate the need for future housing bond issues.
- Encourage statewide policies that foster the creation of homes affordable to the state's workforce, improving family health and prosperity and stimulating the overall state economy.

Jeanne reminded the Commission that this is an action item and then asked if anyone had any questions or comments for Richard.

Eric Hirsch expressed his appreciation to everyone for their collaboration to meet the same goal. He then noted that the RI Coalition for the Homeless recently did a count of people that are living outside. Eric said that 156 people are living outside and of that number, 30 people were living along the West Warwick

bike path. He then referenced Mike's comment in terms of family homelessness and said that Crossroads and other family shelters are seeing unprecedented numbers. Eric then expressed his support for Richard's letter.

Joanne McGunagle commented that she would like to see the rental assistance funding returned. In response, Jeanne Cola said that she and Mike were talking and they would like to put together a budget committee that would look at not only the Opening Doors Plan but also housing in a broader perspective.

Jim Reed stated that public housing agencies are looking for vouchers and public housing to accommodate homeless people in multiple jurisdictions. He then noted that they are not equipped enough to provide the supportive services necessary to deal with transitioning individuals or families from homelessness to independent living.

Jeanne stressed the importance of the working group and invited everyone to contact Mike if they were interested in participating. She then asked if anyone had any additional comments or questions.

Chris Hannifan said that she reviewed this with the Housing Network's Executive Committee and they all are in full support.

Bonnie Sekeres asked if the authorization will include expenditure of funds available. In response, Jeanne said that the agenda put forth identifies the needs in both types of housing as well as needs for funding of the housing; it is not an expenditure agenda. Bonnie said by setting forth the agenda, it is setting forth the expenditure. Jeanne clarified it and said that this is setting forth potential recommendations; potentially because we cannot spend money that is not available, but we still need to ask. Peter Dennehy wanted to ensure that the Commission understood the action item and explained that the action at hand will approve the creation of a Working Group that will become affective in thirty days. Thereafter, it will go on the agenda prior to December 31st of every subsequent year.

As there were no further comments or questions, Jeanne asked the Commission to approve the creation of the Working Group, which is authorized to develop within 30 days for calendar year 2013 and by December 31, 2013 and each year thereafter, a housing agenda to guide major efforts of the HRC in the respective current or following calendar year. Tom Kravitz moved to approve and it was seconded by Chris Hannifan. There were three abstentions from Bonnie Sekers, William DeLuca and Michael Evora. There was no further discussion and the motion passed.

5. FY'14 Financial Plan for Housing – for discussion & vote - Resolution #4

Jeanne introduced Richard Godfrey who explained that the budget process. Richard expressed the importance of collaboration and speaking as one voice for adopting a budget for housing. He is proposing to take the financial information directly from the Opening Doors Plan and say that this is the amount of money that is needed to be appropriated pursuant to the Plan for FY2014. Richard next explained that he added an additional \$250K, which is the difference between the \$400K for the winter shelters and the \$150K that has been provided.

Mike Tondra noted that he met with the Governor's office on homelessness and there was mention that starting with the next fiscal year's budget, the HRC may have the opportunity to submit a separate budget

proposal from DOA or the Division of Planning. This would give the HRC the opportunity to elevate the issue of housing and to be more detailed in the budget submittal than we have in the past.

Jeanne Cola thanked Richard and RI Housing for articulating the Plan and expressed the importance for moving the agenda forward. This will give HRC a case that is laid out thoughtfully, presented well and discussed in a positive proactive manner to address the issues at hand.

Jeanne asked the Commission if anyone had any questions or comments. Jim Reed referred to Agenda item C Creating safe, affordable homes (FY 2014 - \$12,500,000 bond funds) on page 3 and suggested preservation be added.

As there were no further comments or questions, Jeanne asked the Commission to approve the resolution as amended by Jim Reed, to include Preservation, the creation of a Working Group which is authorized to develop and communicate FY 2014 budget recommendations to the State's leadership on issues related to housing and homelessness, including specific strategies in furtherance of the Opening Doors Rhode Island Plan, within 30 days; and for each fiscal year thereafter by October 31 of the preceding year. Richard Godfrey motioned to approve and James Reed seconded the motion. There were three abstentions from Bonnie Sekeres, William DeLuca and Michael Evora. There was no further discussion and the motion passed.

6. **Affordable Housing Bond Regulations** – *for discussion & vote - Resolution #1*

Jeanne Cola thanked everyone again for their support on this passage. She then explained that everyone received an invite to participate and look at the bond regulations to analyze how the HRC could improve the existing bond regulations. She noted that the process worked very well and we are looking at the existing process to see how we could make the necessary changes.

Jeanne next asked Mike to discuss the changes made to the regulations. Mike referred to the document distributed in the Commissioner's packet and discussed the changes that were made. Jeanne pointed out that the last page of the Commissioner's packet contains a detailed listing of agencies in ranking order. She then added that twenty five percent of the funding will be set aside to address the Opening Doors Plan to end homelessness. Mike noted that the Opening Doors Plan recommends the state programs to have at least fifteen percent set aside for the homeless population. HRC is exceeding the expectation and the funds are set aside.

Next, Mike asked Ray Neirinckx to discuss the comments received as a result of the meeting. Ray explained that there were limited comments received from Commissioner's as well as the collaborating network agencies. The comments received were as follows:

- Formatting;
- A request for the definition of "Special Needs Household";
- Increase the unit subsidy for four plus bedroom units;
- Development budget versus per unit funding budget.

Jeanne thanked Ray and asked if anyone had any questions or comments. Chris Hannifan pointed out that the Housing Network's Board has not had the opportunity to review the document yet. She noted that they will soon meet and will submit their comments appropriately. Chris stated the language within the

homebuyer education section will most likely be edited to suggest that homebuyers go through the homebuyer education classes. In response, Mike said that the resolution is for the HRC to authorize posting the draft for public comment for a thirty-day period. Jeanne added that moving this forward will allow the HRC to formally adopt the regulation at the March 22, 2013 meeting.

Richard Godfrey took a moment to express his gratitude for presenting the Bond in a timely manner. He then explained that some of the funding programs such as the 811 Program for construction loans are no longer available and several matching funds have been reduced.

Jim Reed asked that RULE 1 on page one be updated to include preservation. Jeanne stated that she will note the comment and check with the Legal Department.

Bonnie Sekeres pointed out RULE 6.2.1 and stated that “At least 25% of the cumulative units supported by this program will benefit special needs households, including those experiencing homelessness” should be updated to reflect the cuts made to the 811 Program and the special needs households. Jeanne thanked Bonnie and stated that she would make the necessary edits.

There being no further comments or questions, Jeanne asked for a motion. William DeLuca motioned to approve and Jim Reed seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the motion was unanimously approved.

7. HUD Continuum of Care Application, Ranking of Projects - *for discussion & vote - Resolution #2*

Mike referred to the Project’s financial report that was distributed in the Commissioner’s meeting packets and gave an overview of the allocations.

There being no comments or questions, Jim Reed motioned to approve the project allocations as presented and Al Valliere seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the motion was unanimously approved.

8. Announcements

Richard Godfrey announced that Susan Bodington will retire on March 29, 2013. Jeanne took a moment to express her appreciation for Susan’s commitment and support with the HRC.

Jim Reed expressed his appreciation for Susan’s commitment and requested that the HRC send an invitation to for Susan to attend the next meeting where the HRC can appropriately recognize her for all of her efforts and wish her well. Jeanne agreed.

Ray Neirinckx also took a moment to acknowledge Susan on behalf of the Office of Housing and Community Development staff.

Chris Hannifan announced that the Housing Network will celebrate 20 years and invited everyone to attend the celebration on January 30, 2013 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Capital Square Smith Hill.

9. Public Comment Period:

There were none.

10. Adjourn:

As there were no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 10:11 a.m.