

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY
OF THE CITY OF
WOONSOCKET, RHODE ISLAND

1. Call to order: 4:30 p.m. Annual and Regular Meeting of May 21, 2015 at the Woonsocket Housing Authority, 679 Social Street, Woonsocket, RI 02895

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:

David Lahousse, Chairman
Bernadette Rochefort, Vice Chairwoman
Sally Anthony
Charles Baldelli
Roger Bouchard
Marc Dubois

Attorney Joseph J. Rodio, Sr.
Patrick Morganelli
Robert Moreau
Christine O'Connor
Theresa Corbeille - absent

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2. Good and Welfare for the Audience

Vincent Ward, owner of Home Care Services of RI addressed a parking issue at Morin Heights that was making it difficult for his visiting nurses to provide services to a client at that development. Director Morganelli stated that it was a very reasonable request and asked him to make an appointment with Security Director Moreau to resolve the issue.

Albert Brien, 513 So. Main Street, Woonsocket, speaking as a private citizen of the City, not a City Councilman, began by mentioning that he previously served the Board of the WHA for twelve years and is familiar with the processes that the Board utilizes. He stated his concerns about the recent hiring of the Executive noting that it is not a reflection on Mr. Morganelli, but rather on the process that was utilized and the hiring process. He also stated that in all of his years of public service he has always endeavored to utilize local people for local positions and to accommodate local businesses. Mr. Brien stated that cannot believe that we do not have competent law firms in the City of Woonsocket that are capable of providing the services to the Woonsocket Housing Authority that it needs in the administration of its Mission Statement. Mr. Brien stated that he will be presenting a couple of Access to Public Records requests that he will be

delivering to the WHA office tomorrow morning. He asked the Chairman to whom he should present the request and who would be handling the request. Mr. Brien was advised to deliver the request to Christine O'Connor, Director of Administration & Personnel.

3. Good and Welfare for the Commissioners

Vice Chairwoman gave the Board an update on Commissioner Corbeille whom she visited recently.

Commissioner Dubois asked Director Morganelli if there could be a way for Board members to be advised of any happenings at the WHA that might result in media attention so that they can be informed and prepared to respond. The Commissioner noted that last week he was contacted by a few people in response to a story related to the Housing Authority on abc6 news that he knew nothing about. Chairman Lahousse indicated that he was notified by the Director and should have forwarded that information to all Board members. Director Morganelli said his instruction was to notify the Chairman of such events, but if Commissioners want, going forward, he will distribute such info to all Commissioners as an FYI. Commissioner Dubois thanked the Chairman for meeting with him to discuss his new appointment as a Commissioner and to share the future goals of the Housing Authority. Commissioner Bouchard noted that he was contacted by abc6 regarding the story Commissioner Dubois mentioned and he referred the called to the Executive Director.

4. On motion by Commissioner Baldelli, seconded by Commissioner Anthony, the Board unanimously voted (6-0) to accept the minutes for the regular meeting of April 16, 2015.
5. On motion by Commissioner Baldelli, seconded by Commissioner Vice Chairwoman Rochefort, the Board unanimously voted (6-0) to accept bills paid for the month of April 2015.
6. Communications and Interest of the Authority, none.
7. The Chairman asked for a motion to approve and place on file for the purposes of discussion, the report of the Secretary. On a motion by Commissioner Baldelli and seconded by Commissioner Dubois, the Board unanimously voted (6-0) to accept.

The Director submitted his Executive Summary as written highlighting some areas and reports that have been found to need some “tidying up,” clarification or improvement. Some reports have been revised resulting in improved turn-around time in unit vacancies in part due to improved communications. New forms have been developed such as the Average Public Housing Assistance Report which helps track and measure the amount of time a housing applicant must wait for housing assistance. This report is the result of the Board’s interest in assisting WHA applicants with their understanding of the waiting process. Our IT system is flawed and does not provide accurate information regarding waiting list status; there is a report in today’s Board Package that will assist Commissioners should they be asked about estimated wait time for a particular WHA property. The Director also spoke of the transition period underway at the WHA where individual team members’ actions are storming, conforming, norming and performing. So as anticipated, I remain extremely grateful to the early performers, embrace those who are in the norming stage, welcome those and remain patient to those in the conforming stage and work to find the right fit for those who are storming.

Regarding the Blackstone Valley Choice Neighborworks application, there was a meeting in late April to discuss the Planning Grant; Mr. Garlick stated that Blackstone Valley Neighborworks is not considering recommending a partnership role between the WHA and the Blackstone Valley Neighborworks. Mr. Garlick provided the Director with a draft of the application and asked him to make any revisions he would like; that is underway. Mr. Garlick stated that he cares about the City of Woonsocket and would like to be in any role that the WHA would like either him individually or with BVN to be a part of. Regarding a developer, Mr. Garlick recommends that the WHA choose a developer to partner with; there has been no decision on that yet. The Director has been working with legal counsel to work through the intricacies of the development issue in the best interest of the Housing Authority, still in the application phase. There is at his time no commitment from the WHA or from HUD to do anything. The Director remains confident of accomplishing great things with both internal processes and with future development.

Commissioner Baldelli asked about the point system for housing applicants. Are applicants made aware of the criteria for housing; yes, but the Director noted that the WHA needs to be more proactive and inviting to applicants.

8. The Chairman asked for a motion to approve and place on file for the purposes of discussion, the reports of the Direct Staff, legal and financial. On a motion by Commissioner Baldelli and seconded by Commissioner Anthony, the Board unanimously voted (6-0) to accept.
9. Report of Committees – none

10. Unfinished Business – none

11. The Chairman asked for a motion to enter into discussion of refinancing the bond. The motion by Commissioner Baldelli and seconded by Vice Chairwoman Rochefort was unanimously voted (6-0) to accept.

There was no discussion. A roll call vote was taken; the following were the “Ayes” and “Nays”.

AYES

NAYS

Chairman Lahousse
Vice Chairwoman Rochefort
Commissioner Anthony
Commissioner Baldelli
Commissioner Bouchard
Commissioner Dubois

The Director summarized the history of the bond. He explained that the bond was issued when interest rates were in the 7%’s, now 10 years later interest rates are in the 4%’s. By refinancing the debt, the WHA gains buying power. Robert Solomon of Beekman Securities, Inc. who did the work on the original bond over 10 years ago is present to speak about refinancing. Director Morganelli explained that Mr. Solomon was speaking only to explain the concept, not to submit a proposal. Mr. Solomon provided a summary and estimated that with refinancing, the WHA could get a check for roughly \$2.1 million and additionally save about \$150,000 per year from \$700,000 to \$550,000 in debt service. The savings must be spent on public housing purchases and the process takes approximately 90 days. The Chairman asked could we take money out to use for projects, or just substantially reduce the debt service? Yes, either. Commissioner Bouchard asked why this was not done before now. Mr. Solomon stated that there was a 10-year waiting period to refinance. Vice Chairwoman Rochefort asked of there had been any discussion about finishing rehabbing Morin Heights. Director Morganelli explained that last year there was a Property Needs Assessment done last year which identified the needs at each property; there would have to be an analysis of that report to see where the most critical needs are. The purpose now is just to provide the concept to the Board. Mr. Solomon added that if the WHA does a new bond, and Capital Funds go away, then HUD, not the WHA is responsible for the debt. The debt is secured only by receipt of the Capital Funds.

12. The Chairman asked for a motion to enter into discussion of Imputed Asset Income. The motion by Commissioner Baldelli and seconded by Commissioner Anthony was unanimously voted (6-0) to accept.

There was no discussion. A roll call vote was taken; the following were the “Ayes” and “Nays”.

AYES

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NAYS

The Director shared, for discussion only, that when rents are being calculated, rent is determined based on 30% of income (social security, wages, etc.). However, there is a regulation that says the Housing Authority has the authority to include assets up to 2% as imputed income. This would include cash or property. The WHA once used imputed income in calculating rents, but at some point the Board changed that policy, and many rents went down. The Director’s research shows about \$13 million in assets, which if the Board approved this change would result in at least \$50,000 more in WHA rents per year. There are other small pockets of money that the WHA has not been pursuing, but with attaining high performer status and other process improvements, the Director estimates that the WHA could gain \$100,000-\$300,000 extra in annual revenue.

Commissioner Bouchard asked why the imputed income process was eliminated by the Board in the past. Director Morganelli guesses that the majority of the residents affected were the elderly, so maybe for “good will”? Commissioner Baldelli asked when the policy was changed. The Director will provide at the next meeting. He will also provide a proposal and written report.

13. The Chairman asked for a motion for Executive Session to be convened pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5(a)(5) for discussion of potential purchase of real estate and potential establishment of vehicles to purchase to facilitate the real estate. The motion was made by Commissioner Baldelli and seconded by Vice Chairwoman Rochefort.

There was no discussion. A roll call vote was taken; the following were the “Ayes” and “Nays”.

AYES

NAYS

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Commissioner Anthony
Commissioner Baldelli
Commissioner Bouchard
Commissioner Dubois

14. The Chairman asked for a motion to return to open session and seal minutes in accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws sec. 42-46-5. A motion was made by Commissioner Baldelli and seconded by Commissioner Anthony.

There was no discussion. A roll call vote was taken; the following were the “Ayes” and “Nays”.

AYES

NAYS

Chairman Lahousse
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Commissioner Anthony
Commissioner Baldelli
Commissioner Bouchard
Commissioner Dubois

During Executive Session the Board unanimously voted (6-0) to authorize the Director to establish a not-for-profit with the Commissioners serving as the Board, and to engage legal counsel as needed.

15. Adjournment

Chairman Lahousse asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Commissioner Baldelli at 6:00 p.m.

Roll call vote was unanimous.

Patrick A. Morganelli
Executive Director