

**PROVIDENCE HOUSING AUTHORITY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING: Thursday, July 25, 2013; 5:30 p.m.**

PHA Conference Room

100 Atwells Avenue

Providence, RI 02903

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Nicolas Retsinas called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present:

Nicolas Retsinas
Dolores Cascella
Roger Giraud
Ricardo Patino
Hilary Silver
JT Taylor
Dorothy Waters

Absent:

Thomas Ryan
John Iglizzi
Kevin Jackson
Nicholas Narducci

Seven members were present constituting a quorum to conduct business.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Patino seconded by Commissioner Waters to accept and approve the regular meeting minutes of 6/27/13. The minutes were approved with a unanimous voice vote.

RESIDENT'S COMMENTS

None

Chairman's Report

Chairman Retsinas stated that two people were arrested in the incident at Hartford Park with the shooting of the 12-year-old girl. He stated that we need to continue our vigilance and attention. He and the Interim Executive Director have been meeting with community groups to raise money for additional youth services and additional law enforcement in the Hartford area.

INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Tavares introduced the Manager of Special Projects, Melissa Sanzaro, who gave a narrative of the NAHRO Awards. The PHA was awarded four awards of merit as follows:

Safety and Detectors Matter – FEMA Grant 2012
Recycling Program
PHA Smoke Free Documentary
Youth and Police Initiative

The PHA Smoke Free Documentary and the Youth and Police Initiative were awarded the Regional Award of Excellence from NAHRO and are up for National Nomination for Award of Excellence. The Chairman and the commissioners congratulated the PHA for their great work.

Director Tavares noted that due to the efforts of Councilman Michael Correia, GTECH donated a computer lab and site improvements at Manton Heights where there will be a ribbon cutting on August 5th.

As stated at the June Board Meeting, budgeted projected revenues for FY-2014 will be \$3.6 million less than FY-2013. Corrective action was required to secure prudent operational reserves.

The budget was approved with components of four furlough days and the authority to make organizational changes to bring efficiencies to the organization and ultimately costs savings. Every department in the agency will be reviewed for efficiency and conservation. The Director stated that in making decisions, several things were taken into consideration:

- First and foremost, to minimize the negative impact upon residents.
- Financial considerations.
- The overall operations of the organization.
- Union contracts and legal concerns.
- Certainly not least, with consideration for our employees.

Twenty (20) positions: 12 non-union, 5 Teamsters, and 3 Laborers were impacted. Seven positions were addressed through attrition with retirements or employees who voluntarily left the organization, those positions will not be filled. Three 'essential positions' are vacant and will either remain vacant or delayed hiring. In addition, two part-time positions hours have been reduced by 50%. Lastly, layoffs were addressed, focusing on positions that had the least negative impact to our organization. The following positions were eliminated: Special Assistant, Administrative Officer, Special Projects Assistant, Special Projects Intern, part-time temporary laborer, and a temporary clerk. Traditionally, we had five foremen who managed the maintenance of our developments. After one foreman retired, we restructured to have four foremen cover the responsibilities. It became apparent that this same structure could reduce the need of Property Managers from six to four, which induced the layoff of two property managers.

Director Tavares commented how it was difficult and challenging to have to terminate the employees due to circumstances out of our control. This is an ongoing process and there may be more staffing decisions required. The Director will continue to take advantage of retirements and voluntary layoffs. The actions to date represent approximately \$1 million in savings to the organization.

The Director stated that the new development realignment would be:

- Manton Heights and Scattered Sites, 574 Units
- Hartford Park, 508 units
- Chad Brown, Admiral, Sunset, Coddling Court, and Roger Williams, 535 units.
- Carroll Towers, Dexter & Dominica Manor, Kilmartin Plaza & Parenti Villa, 989 units

Chairman Retsinas reminded the commissioners, that the actions of the PHA are consistent with the budget approved by the Board in June.

Commissioner Waters questioned whether the management offices at the sites would remain for the residents. Director Tavares indicated that the management offices will remain at the sites, but he cannot guarantee that there will not be staff changes. Commission Waters also felt that the resident representatives should have been informed. The Director stressed that when terminating employees, it would be inappropriate to notify tenants before notifying the impacted employee and respective unions. Director Tavares assured the board that the implementation was done with the utmost consideration and respect to the impacted employees.

Chairman Retsinas reiterated that there will be more budget cuts, and they will try to make the changes as prudently and respectfully as possible.

Commissioner Silver expressed her thanks to those employees for their years of service and that what has happened reflects external pressures and not the choice of the PHA, most importantly, the decisions were not a reflection on their performance.

Director Tavares stated that the Department Enforcement Center's (DEC) investigation of the agency initiated in March 2012 has come to resolution. In May 2012, investigators from HUD issued a report that was not given to PHA, but was distributed to the Providence Journal by Senator Grassley's office. However, in August 2012 we received a letter from the DEC where they identified six issues and made two observations of which they asked us to address. Over the last 10 months, there have been numerous communications with HUD, addressing the various issues, and on August 28, we received a letter from HUD that the PHA had complied with their entire request.

Noteworthy, is that there was no evidence of any criminality or mal-intent on behalf of the PHA. Director Tavares stated that the lesson from this experience is that the agency needs to be consistently observant of all policies and procedures. This matter is now concluded.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Budget and Finance: (Comm. Giraud)
- Resident Services: (Comm. Silver)
- Capital Improvements: (Comm. Cascella)
- Executive Committee: (Chair Retsinas) Verbal Report

Commissioner Patino translated for a resident who was present at the board meeting, voicing his concerns about people who do not live at the PHA properties, yet are entering the building at night and on the weekends and sleeping in the stairwells. Although security is present, trespassers are urinating in the halls and stairwells and leaving paraphernalia behind. Commissioner Cascella voiced her concerns as well with non-resident problems at Dominica Manor. Director Tavares commented although we have not cut back in our security, the Providence Policy Department has had some severe cutbacks, and the impact of that is being felt throughout the City. The Director assured the tenant that the issues are very high on his agenda and he is exploring ways within the resources of the PHA to correct the issues.

Chairman Retsinas stated that the Executive Committee will be meeting in August regarding the search firm and will report to the commissioners at the September board meeting.

RESOLUTIONS:

None

OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Patino wanted to thank the Providence Police Department in their efforts of apprehending the people who appeared to be responsible for killing the 12-year-old girl at Hartford Park.

NEW BUSINESS

In keeping with the monthly presentations, Director Tavares introduced Dan Murphy of Security and Fraud Recovery who gave a presentation. Various Commissioners and staff members took part in the dialogue.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Retsinas accepted a motion to adjourn by Commissioner Patino, seconded by Commissioner Taylor. Said motion passed with a unanimous voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Minutes Submitted and Approved By:

Lisa Cancelliere
Recording Secretary

Paul Tavares
Interim Executive Director