

**PROVIDENCE HOUSING AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING: Thursday, January 28, 2016; 5:00 p.m.**

---

**100 Broad Street**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room**

**Providence, RI 02903**

---

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Nicolas Retsinas called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:**

Nicolas Retsinas  
Thomas Ryan  
Dolores Cascella  
Jessica Cigna  
Mary Kay Harris  
Gilberta 'JT' Taylor  
Dorothy Waters  
Ricardo Patino

**Absent:**

Roger Giraud  
John Iglizzi  
Hilary Silver

Eight members were present constituting a quorum to conduct business.

Chairman Retsinas welcomed a new member of the board, Commissioner Jessica Cigna.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chairman Retsinas asked for a motion to accept and approve the annual meeting minutes of 12/10/15. The motion was made by Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Patino. The minutes were approved with a unanimous voice vote.

**RESIDENT'S COMMENTS**

None

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

None

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Executive Director Paul Tavares introduced the new Staff Accountant, Erica Mandeville, he also stated Staff Attorney Michelle Bergin left to go into private practice, Marcela Betancur from Special Projects has taken a position with the Woonsocket Housing Authority, Louise Chapman has retired from the Procurement department, and finally, Karla Crispin from Special Projects has accepted employment elsewhere.

The Director stated that we received our unaudited 2015 PHAS score (Public Housing Assessment System) of 89, just one point short of being a high performer. He also stated HUD has approved a requests made by the PHA for Tenant Protection Vouchers for the tenants of Barbara Jordan II. Thirty-three of the seventy-four units are still occupied. We are working with HUD to implement the process of relocating those tenants. The Director thanked and praised Councilwoman Harris and the City officials for their efforts.

Additionally, there was an electrical issue at Kilmartin Plaza due to the main switch burn out. The City allowed us to by-pass the switch as long as we had 24-hour coverage of a "fire watch" at the building. The building will have no electricity on Monday, 2/1/16 as repairs are made. Since the building is electric heat, Facilities Management Director Allan Pacific has arranged to have

heat and power in the community room for tenants, and the Police canteen will be providing food.

DARE organization, Behind the Walls Campaign, brought to our attention issues concerning people who have been formerly incarcerated and the need to have them reunite with their families. We are moving forward with policy revisions and plan to discuss the subject with the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) then with the board for final approval.

Finally, the Carpenter's Union has yet to sign a contract.

Vice Chair Ryan requested an update with the waiting list. Director Tavares commented PHARI has issued an RFP to procure a vendor/supplier of central wait list services. We will have an update at the February 18 board meeting. As for any change in our policy, currently our policy requires that we only have to advertise how applicants can apply.

**Budget & Finance:** Vice Chairman Ryan stated the finance committee met with the auditors from RSM Global. The Finance department has done a tremendous amount of work to step up procedures, and is in good shape. The auditors will be giving a presentation on the audit.

**Resident Services:** Sorrel Devine, Director of Resident Services commented we did not receive the Jobs Plus Pilot Program (JPPP) and Continuation of Social Innovation Fund (SIF) grants. We have a conference call coming up with HUD to see where we fell short. We have an application to HUD for the Juvenile Re-entry Assistance Program (JRAP) that assist juveniles 16-24 who were formerly incarcerated and who have housing issues. The Deputy Executive Director Melissa Sanzaro elaborated more on JRAP and the partnership with Rhode Island Legal Services in their efforts to assist juveniles, only in public housing, with their challenges in school or with their jobs, how to interview for a job, child support issues, etc. Additionally, Sorrel submitted an application for a Citizens Bank grant designed for Citizens Helping Citizens Manage Money, and finally, our fourth year Community Job Fair is scheduled for April 13, 2016 at 50 Laurel Hill from 10:00-2:00 p.m.

Melissa added the PHA Annual Planning Process is taking place to go over the new Annual Plan template as well as the contents. Additionally, HUD has a new CNI Planning Grant with a new component called the Action Grant. We want to apply for the Action Grant for \$1.5 million; however, it is specific to neighborhood activities. Since we could not lead the application, we are collaborating with One Neighborhood Builders, and they are co-applicants with the City of Providence Planning and Development Department.

**Capital Improvements:** Commissioner Cascella reported an in-house Telecommunications Specialist and technician have installed a transfer switch in the maintenance garage at Hartford Park to provide emergency power during outages. Bids will be advertised to convert one unit each at Parenti Villa and Carroll Towers to handicap accessible units. Bids will be advertised soon to replace three transformer sub stations at Admiral Terrace in the spring.

Chairman Retsinas asked Melissa Sanzaro for an update on the implementation of the policies discussed at the last meeting. Melissa stated the Pet Policy was passed, and posted for 30 days, with no resident comments; The Weapons Policy was also passed and translated into Spanish and posted throughout the PHA with no resident comments; there will be a weapon's policy training for staff on February 23. The Smoke Free Policy is specific to the remaining properties, Manton Heights, Hartford Park, and Scattered Sites. Resident Services Department and Property Management Staff will be invited to a smoke free training through The Department of Health prior to implementation of the policy. A comment was added to the HUD proposed rulemaking of the smoke free policy stating that the PHA supports the policy and the RAB Members support it as well with some recommendations. All policies are included in the new leasing package.

#### **RESOLUTIONS:**

None

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

In keeping with the monthly presentations, Chairman Retsinas asked the Executive Director to introduce the auditors. Director Tavares introduced Dan Bonnette of RSM Global, in turn; Dan introduced Troy Merkel and Veronica Bulman. Dan stated there was a dramatic improvement in the financial reporting and accounting records of the organization over the last two years and the audit of FY2015 is complete. All deficiencies and material weaknesses have been resolved. He commended the organization for the dramatic improvements in implementing new procedures and the reporting process.

After an informative and in depth presentation the commissioners addressed their questions, and thanked Dan and his team for the informative presentation.

Chairman Retsinas asked for a motion to accept the FY2015 Audit. Vice Chairman stated the Finance Committee made a recommendation to accept the audit report as presented subject to the non-material adjustments that need to be made. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Patino. Said motion was unanimously passed 8/0.

## **Executive Session**

None

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

## **Minutes Submitted and Approved By:**

---

Lisa Cancelliere  
Recording Secretary

---

Paul Tavares  
Executive Director