

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
- OPEN SESSION -
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD ON DECEMBER 19th, 2023

The members of the Springfield Housing Authority met in Open Session at the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress St., Springfield, Massachusetts and with Zoom video conference option for public access at 4:00 PM on December 19th, 2023.

A copy of the Notice of Meeting, pursuant to Section 23B of Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, with the Certificate as to Service of the Notice, was ordered spread upon the minutes of the meeting and filed for records.

NOTICE OF MEETING

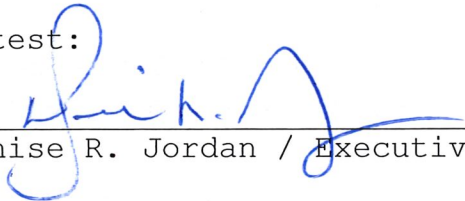
Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 23B of Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts Laws, as amended, that a regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Springfield Housing Authority and the Annual Plan hearing will be held at 4:00 PM on Tuesday, December 19th, 2023 via Zoom video conference call for public access and at the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress St., Springfield, Massachusetts.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
/s/Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director
December 14th, 2023

CERTIFICATE AS TO SERVICE OF THE NOTICE OF MEETING

I, Denise R. Jordan, the duly appointed and qualified Secretary of the Springfield Housing Authority, do hereby certify that on December 14th, 2023, I filed in the manner provided by Section 23B, Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, with the Clerk of the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, a Notice of Meeting of which the foregoing is a true and correct copy.

Attest:



Denise R. Jordan / Executive Director/Secretary to the Board

Chairman Labonte called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM, and those present upon roll call were as follows:

PRESENT

Thomas Labonte
Jessica Quinones
Angela Robles (attended via Zoom)
Willie Thomas
Raymond Warren

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT

Fidan Gousseynoff
Austin Harris
John Healy (arrived at 4:03 pm)
Denise Jordan
Nicole Kane

The Board reviewed the Minutes of November 21st, 2023. With no questions or comments and upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Robles and following a board roll call, it was by a majority vote (Commissioner Quinonez abstained)

VOTED: to approve the Minutes of November 21st, 2023.

There were no attendees for the annual plan hearing from the public. Deputy Executive Director John Healy presented information about the FY25 State Annual Plan with the targeted projects being windows renovation at scattered sites, upgrading fire alarm systems, upgrading kitchen at Harry Hogan development, looking into boilers, identifying energy saving measures to bring down water and gas consumption spending. In response to Commissioner Warren's inquiry about the budget, the Interim Finance Director Austin Harris explained that the budget included to the Annual Plan is the same one that was approved by the Board. In response to Commissioner Thomas's question, Mr. Healy confirmed that projects included to the plan are prioritized and some of the information was in response to some issues identified by the State, specifically, the energy consumption. Mr. Healy stated that the plan was posted for public review in October to ensure transparency and allow residents to look into it and share their concerns and suggestions.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Quinonez, seconded by Commissioner Warren and upon a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9792 to approve the SHA FY25 State Annual Plan and to certify compliance with the plan and related regulations.

The Board moved to the next item on the agenda - the FY24 Federal Plan - presented by HR Director and Executive Department Manager Fidan Gousseynoff who provided brief information about how the plan was prepared, what are the major anticipated changes, including introducing HOTMA regulations that would affect rent calculation, inspections, family composition, flat rent determination and other aspects of the programs. She explained that a Committee was established headed by Deputy Executive Director Kane to incorporate new rules and regulations to the SHA ACOP and Administrative Plan. Deputy Kane informed the Board that once the work is finalized, all changes will be available for public review and comments, then a hearing will be conducted and after that, the new ACOP and Admin Plan

will be presented to the Board in November. All the changes will have to go into effect on January 1st of 2025.

Commissioner Thomas inquired about the current comments. John Healy stated that on the federal side, some of the targeted capital projects include upgrading fire alarm systems, upgrading boilers, bathrooms, and plumbing systems at Sullivan. He stated that even though there are a lot of items that are included to the Plan, the implementation of all projects is not guaranteed and will depend on funding.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez and upon a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9793 to approve the SHA FY24 Federal Annual Plan and to certify compliance with the plan and related regulations.

Deputy Healy presented the next item on the matter of awarding a contract for electrical supplies.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Warren and upon a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the following contract award recommendations for electrical supplies totaling \$59,887.49: 14 items in the amount of \$39,819.11 to Rexel of West Springfield, MA and 17 items in the amount of \$20,068.38 to Graybar, PO Box 2514, Springfield, MA 01101

Deputy Healy presented the next item on the matter of awarding a contract for plumbing supplies. He explained that the parts are used for boilers. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez and upon a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED to approve the following contract award recommendations for heating supplies totaling \$28,537.62: 39 items in the amount of \$25,885.69 to FW Webb, 145 Performance Blvd., Springfield, MA 01104: 6 items in the amount of \$2,651.93 to Baystate Plumbing, 210 Hickory Street, Springfield, MA 01139.

The Board reviewed materials on awarding a contract for on-call backup mechanical services. John Healy explained that even though he reached out to a few companies who had expressed interest to the bid, only one bid was submitted - from the current service provider, Boulanger's Plumbing and Heating. Mr. Healy stated that the company has been very responsive for emergency calls for failing boilers and has been providing satisfactory services to the SHA.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez and upon a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to award Boulanger's Plumbing & Heating of Easthampton, MA an Indefinite quantity indefinite delivery Contract for On-Call Backup Mechanical Contracting Services for a period of 2 years with one 1year option. The total amount will not exceed \$150,000.00 over the length of the contract; Appoint Executive Director Denise Jordan as contracting officer to execute the contract.

John Healy provided brief information about the invitation for quotes for the SHA automobile insurance to which only 2 responses were received, including from the current insurance provider, Arbella and its local agent, HUB International. He explained that the 2024 quote was lower than in 2023 and reminded the Board that the SHA got rid of some old vehicles. In response to Commissioner Warren's question, he confirmed that the SHA is planning to continue upgrading its fleet to make it more efficient and to help the maintenance staff, for example, by installing liftgates. In response to Commissioner Thomas's question, he stated that there have been 2-3 losses but no work-related injuries due to a car accident and no vehicles have been totaled.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez and upon a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to award a contract to Arbella Insurance Group in care of HUB International 96 Shaker Road East Longmeadow, MA, in the amount of Forty-Four Thousand Four Hundred and Thirty-Six Dollars (\$44,436.00) based on a \$1,000.00 per occurrence deductible for the coverage period January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024; appoint Executive Director, Denise R. Jordan as the Contracting Officer authorizing her to execute the contract.

Executive Director Jordan started her report by informing the Board about the work of the maintenance testing committee with the purpose of making the testing system more efficient and eliminating tasks and questions that are no longer relevant. She told the Board about attending the West Mass Housing Coalition meeting with the West Mass delegation of elected officials with the focus on public housing. Ms. Jordan stated that she did express her appreciation to State Representative Gonzalez on the \$225,000 funding but explained that the funding is far from meeting the capital needs and stressed the importance of allocating more money to PHAs in Hampden County. Ms. Jordan reported about attending the award ceremony event to show appreciation to Baystate for all their support to the SHA staff and

residents during the pandemic, specifically, for organizing vaccination clinics for SHA residents and staff.

Denise Jordan spoke about the recent HUD audit on the Section 8 voucher management system. She explained that HUD's report is not available yet but it is expected that there will be some findings due to the ongoing issues with Yardi, including with data matching, old data reconciliation, data conversion etc. It takes a lot of time, effort, service hours and expenses to fix the issues. She reminded that the SHA is not the only agency that has been facing this type of issues with Yardi and HUD is aware about it. In response to Chairman Labonte's question, Austin Harris stated Yardi does not do much to assist and there is not much the SHA can do because the staff needs to use their services on a daily basis and if the SHA does not pay the bill, Yardi will shut off the portal and that will affect daily operations and funding, especially for the Section 8 program. Ms. Jordan and Deputy Kane stated that it would be in the SHA's interests not to proceed with legal action against Yardi but rather consider using an alternative solution to find a software that is working and compatible. Nicole Kane explained that when the SHA issued an RFP for a new software several years ago, there were only 3 big providers - Wintergrate (which was the system the SHA was using for many years and wanted to get away from), TenMast which was used by many PHAs and the feedback about that system was not very positive, and Yardi. She informed that the SHA staff will be attending a demo presentation by PH Webb, another software provider that was not a big player when the SHA's RFP was published but it has been growing in recent years. Currently, 900 of 3300 public housing authorities are using their services, the SHA fee accountant is highly recommending it and the cost of services is much lower comparing to Yardi.

In response to Commissioner Thomas's inquiry, Nicole Kane explained that there is a contract with Yardi but SHA is not obligated to use only their software.

Ms. Kane noted that even though the recent audit did identify some deficiencies, there were no concerns about the SHA staff's performance. SHA IT and Finance teams were praised for all their diligent work and efforts on trying to resolve the issues, including attending numerous conference calls, long meetings, working with consultants and trying their best to understand and fix the problems. The SHA would have been in a much worse position now without all those efforts.

Commissioner Warren's question asked if it would be possible to use a different software for the Section 8 program and continue using Yardi for other programs and Nicole Kane stated that the current Yardi

system is not very user friendly and the staff won't be opposed to the idea to switching to another software for the entire agency.

Ms. Kane explained that even though there is no report from HUD yet, the SHA has identified some corrective action measures. The RAO Director Berrios was transferred to the main office at Congress Street so that she could focus more on the compliance and reporting issues while the Managers would supervise daily operations and staff.

In response to Chairman Labonte's request, Austin Harris provided information about the situation with a check issued by the SHA for Equifax that was cashed by someone. He stated that he is working with the bank to get the money back.

Deputy Kane provided information about the situation with audit and the two options that the SHA has. She informed about a phone call scheduled with HUD on this matter.

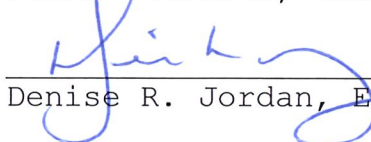
The Board accepted the Accounts Payable report for the month of November.

There being no further business to come before the members of the Springfield Housing Authority Board, upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez, and following a board roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn the Open Session of the Regular Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 5:08 PM.

ATTEST:


Thomas Labonte, Chairman


Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director