

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
- OPEN SESSION -  
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY  
HELD ON MARCH 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024

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 March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

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

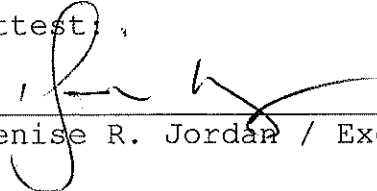
Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 23B of Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts Laws, as amended, that a regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Springfield Housing Authority will be held at 4:00 PM on Tuesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024 via Zoom video conference call for public 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  
March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024

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 March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 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 (attended via Zoom)  
Angela Robles  
Willie Thomas

ABSENT

Raymond Warren

ALSO PRESENT

Prsicilla Chesky (attended via Zoom)  
Stephen Ethier  
Betty Evans  
Fidan Gousseynoff  
Austin Harris  
John Healy  
Denise Jordan  
Nicole Kane  
Matthew Rogers

The Board tabled the review and approval of the Minutes of February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024 until next meeting.

IT Director Stephen Ethier provide update on the Yardi project. He stated that some progress has been done; a Yardi team was on site and had a productive meeting with the SHA staff. The work on VMS has been going pretty well and the staff continues conducting weekly meetings and getting a better understanding how the software works and how to resolve various issues while trying to continue doing daily and monthly tasks. The staff has been sharing its feedback with the Yardi team and getting some positive suggestions, like, for example, having a checklist which might be a very helpful tool when transferring tenants. Mr. Ethier expressed his regret that there is no progress with the cost of using the software with some modules costs increasing from \$8000 per year to \$100000. The staff is working on protecting the investment made to the software conversion, however, there are no quick fixes to the problems.

In response to Commissioner Thomas's questions, Mr. Ethier explained that the audit conducted by HUD last November identified some deficiencies with how the Section 8 data gets reported to HUD and the SHA came up with a corrective action plan which was subsequently approved by HUD. The SHA is expected to improve the identified voucher management system deficiencies by September in accordance with the submitted plan. The staff has been able to complete some most complicated tasks and continues looking for creative solutions. Mr. Ethier also stated that another RFP has been issued and the team will be soon selecting the most cost effective software. Executive Director Jordan assured the Board that it will be provided with monthly updates and that the SHA team is doing progress but it takes time to fix all the issues.

Commissioner Warren expressed his concern about the financial data deficiencies and the Finance Director Austin Harris reported about

daily communication with the fee accountant and that the audit will be resubmitted soon.

In response to Chairman Labonte's question, Deputy Executive Director Nicole Kane explained that the SHA will be looking to have a software that could potentially provide a lot of technological features, for example, to use tablets for inspections or to give tenants access so that they could pay their rent, update their contact and income information, upload documents etc.

In response to Chairman Labonte's question, Deputy Kane and IT Director stated that at the time when last RFP was issued, Yardi seemed to be the only good option.

Commissioner Warren urged the staff to stay on top of resolving the issues with not having a reliable financial data caused by the software transition.

Stephen Ethier left the Conference Room at 4:16 pm.

Rental Assistance Manager Matthew Rogers presented the Section 8 program update. He reported that the Inspections department is now fully staffed but 3 Program Specialist positions are still vacant. He also reported that since June of last year, the RAO has been issuing new vouchers to Section 8 Participants and, as of today, approximately 100 new voucher holders have been leased and the work on pulling new applicants during the new fiscal year will continue. In December of 2023, 75 names from the Non-Elderly, Disabled waitlist have been pulled to allocate 29 vouchers available for this program. In March 2024, 50 names from the CHAMP AHVP waitlist were pulled to allocate 11 available vouchers and in April 2024, 75 names from the CHAMP MRVP Mobile waitlist will be pulled for 27 available vouchers for this program. Mr. Rogers reported that the RAO has recently completed a project of leasing 8 new MRVP project-based vouchers for a new development in Great Barrington. In the Inspections department, the staff began Quarterly Quality Control Inspections in December of last year. He continued his report by informing the Board that the staff is working closely with Yardi to identify steps needed for VMS to report properly and to address the deficiencies found during recent HUD audit and the IT team is assisting with creating Quality Control reports to proactively identify future issues. Mr. Rogers provided update on the MRVP Program by informing the Board that the staff is finishing up a conversion of merging SHA MRVP waitlist into a centralized online waitlist and that the MRVP program rules adjusted 1/1/2024 by establishing payment standards based on zip code and changing annual reexaminations to bi-annual. He also provided information about the audit for Miracle House program.

Mr. Rogers continued his report by informing the Board about the work that is being done to update the Section 8 Administrative Plan

to go into effect on 1/1/2025 with Deputy Kane, RAO manager Evans and RAO Director Berrios meeting regularly to review the plan and make corrections to bring it in compliance with new HOTMA and NSPIRE regulations as well as to add language about SHA's special programs.

Commissioner Warren inquired about the utilization percentage and Matt Rogers and Nicole Kane explained how the utilization is tied to funding and how it is affected by lack of affordable housing with many new participants getting extension to find an apartment.

Matthew Rogers and Betty Evans left the Conference Room at 4:46 pm.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to accept the certificate of substantial completion for the camera grant project that was completed last summer. Deputy Healy explained that due to the Project Coordinator's retirement, the Board was not asked to accept the Certificate after the completion and now a formal vote is required for the file.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Robles and following a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the Certificate of Substantial Completion from Johnson Controls for the Installation of Security Cameras at Tri-Towers and Central Apartments, here by accepting the project as substantially complete as of July 24, 2023.

Deputy Healy presented the next item on the agenda - awarding a contract for the lead-based paint abatement project at 151 Sherman Street. He explained that this small project had to be completed after DPW conducted testing at the apartment due to the tenant reporting elevated lead level in their blood. The lead test in the apartment was negative but it was identified that some abatement is needed in the common hallway and around roof corners to remove peeling paint. Mr. Healy added that the vendor that submitted the lowest bid has worked with the SHA at Duggan Apartments. In response to Commissioner Robles's question, he stated that the tenant will not have to move out of their apartment while the project is being completed.

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

VOTED: to award a Contract to Ultimate Abatement Company Inc., 34 Mountain Street Plainfield, MA 01070, in the amount of Thirty-Nine Thousand Three Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$39,350.00), Lead Based Paint Abatement Project at 151 Sherman Street; appoint Executive Director, Denise R. Jordan as the Contracting Officer authorizing her to execute the contract.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to award a contract for window replacement at projects 705-2 and 705-3 presented by Deputy Healy. He explained that the project is funded by the State Capital fund and the SHA has worked with the contractors before.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Robles and following a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to award a Contract to Aegean Builders, of 131 Johnson Street Winchester, MA 01890, in the amount of Five Hundred Nineteen-Thousand Seven Hundred Dollars (\$519,700.00), for the Window Replacement Project at 705-2 and 705-3 duplexes; appoint Executive Director, Denise R. Jordan as the Contracting Officer authorizing her to execute the contract.

Deputy Healy provided information about awarding a purchase order for purchasing new golf carts to CCE Golf Cars. He explained that some of the golf carts used by the staff now are bulky and 30 years old with a lot of rust and other wear and tear. The new carts will have features like a windshield and front suspension and will be used at Robinson Gardens, Reed Village and Riverview Apartments. Commissioner Warren inquired about the durability and Mr. Healy said that a new cart that was purchased for Forest Park Manor recently holds pretty well. In response to Commissioner Robles's question, John Healy explained that the old carts will be included to the surplus sale. In response to Commissioner Warren's question, he said that some of the funds to purchase new carts will come from the operating budget.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Robles and following a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to award a purchase order to CCE Golf Cars of Wareham, MA to purchase five (5) new 2024 Club Car Carryall golf carts Sixty-Three Thousand Four Hundred Seventy-Five Dollars (\$63,475.00).

Executive Department Manager Fidan Gousseynoff presented the next item on the agenda explaining that every year, the Board has to certify the SHA's compliance with the lead-based paint notification laws. Each District Manager supplied a signed statement to certify that tenants get provided with proper notification regarding lead-based paint. Attorney Chesky recommended to modify the vote language by adding the words "to the best of our knowledge".

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Robles and following a roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9794 to certify that the Springfield Housing Authority is in compliance with state and federal

Lead-Based Paint Notification laws to the best of the knowledge.

Denise Jordan started her Executive Director's report by informing the Board about attending Mass NAHRO's Legislative Day to discuss needs and support of the governors Housing Bond Bill. She reported that the Executive Team, attorney Chesky and relative Department heads is working on updating the Administrative Plan and the ACOP to incorporate the new HUD required HOTMA regulations. It is expected that the work will be finalized by July, when the plan will be available for mandatory 45-day public review and a hearing and then will be presented to the Board in November or December.

Ms. Jordan reported about the recent technical assistance meeting with the visiting Yardi Support Team attended by the Applications, RAO, Finance, I.T., Executive team staff and the auditors. An RFP has been released to ensure the software is meeting SHA needs and cost effective.

Denise Jordan reported about the upcoming HUD's annual Compliance Review the week of June 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Jordan expressed gratitude to Deputy Kane for overseeing the corrective Action process for RAO and to Deputy Director John Healy for providing regular reports and information to HUD and HLC.

The report presented by the Executive Director also included brief overview of the progress work at the IT, Capital Improvements, HR, Applications, Finance, Trades, Warehouse, Resident Services, Public Safety and property management departments. She informed about the planned Anti-Discrimination Training to be provided by attorney Chesky and the Active Shooter Training. Ms. Jordan notified the Board that HUD has approved the SHA annual plan and also about hiring a new Financial Advisor who will be providing financial literacy classes to the residents. Ms. Jordan also provided update on the Section 8 program and expressed her satisfaction with the progress the staff has been making to address reporting and data entry issues.

Director Jordan concluded her report by informing the Board that the Hobby Club Sale has been finalized.

In response to Commissioner Warren's question, Denise Jordan and Nicole Kane provided explanation about the corrective action plan and upcoming audit this summer.

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

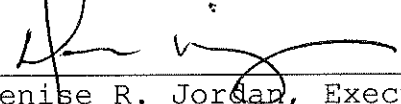
Chairman Labonte advised the Commissioners that if they want any items to be added to the agenda, to forward their requests to the Executive Department Manager.

There being no further business to come before the members of the Springfield Housing Authority Board, upon a motion made by Commissioner Robles, seconded by Commissioner Warren, 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 4:58 PM.

ATTEST:

  
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Thomas Labonte, Chairman

  
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Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director

