

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING
- OPEN SESSION -
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD ON SEPTEMBER 17th, 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 at 4:00 PM on September 17th, 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

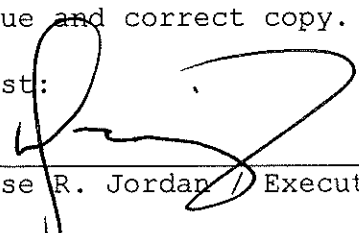
Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 23B of Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts Laws, as amended, that the annual Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Springfield Housing Authority will be held at 4:00 PM on Tuesday, September 17th, 2024 at the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress St., Springfield, Massachusetts.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
/s/Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director
September 13th, 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 September 13th, 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 on Zoom)
Angela Robles (attended on Zoom)
Willie Thomas
Raymond Warren

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT

Blanca Berrios
Priscilla Chesky (attended on Zoom)
Fidan Gousseynoff
Austin Harris

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John Healy (arrived at 4:05 pm)
Denise Jordan
Nicole Kane

The Board reviewed the Minutes of August 20th, 2024. With no questions or comments and upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Quinonez and following a board roll call, it was by a majority vote (Commissioner Thomas abstained)

VOTED: to approve the Minutes of August 20th, 2024.

The Board moved to the 1st item of the New Business - Election of Officers. Upon a motion made by Commissioner Warren, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and following a board roll call, it was by unanimously

VOTED: to keep the slate of officers as follows: Chairman - Thomas Labonte, Vice-Chair: Angela Robles, Treasurer: Raymond Warren; Assistant Secretary: Jessica Quinonez; Commissioner: Willie Thomas

John Healy entered the Conference Room at 4:05 pm.

Director of Rental Assistance Office Blanca Berrios presented the next item on the agenda requesting the Board's permission to approve correction to the 2023 payment standards. Ms. Berrios answered to Commissioner Thomas's and Chairman Labonte's questions and explained that during the recent compliance review, HUD identified that the payment standards were not rounded correctly.

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

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9806 to approve the correction of the Payment Standards for the period of: 10/01/2023 - 09/30/2024.

RAO Director Berrios asked the Board to approve the new fair market rents and payment standards to go into effect on October 1st, 2024. She confirmed that the calculations were checked by HUD and Deputy Kane to make sure the numbers are rounded correctly. Ms. Berrios requested to approve FMRs at 110% to stay competitive.

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

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9807 to approve the FMR and Payment Standard for Housing Choice Voucher Program effective: 10/01/2024 - 09/30/2025 as follows:

Bedroom Sizes	NEW FMR 2024	2024 Payment Standards
	100%	110%

	Effective 10/1/2024- 9/30/2025	Effective 10/01/24 - 9/30/25
0 Bedroom	1,044	1,148
1 Bedroom	1,205	1,325
2 Bedroom	1,496	1,645
3 Bedroom	1,823	2,005
4 Bedroom	2,037	2,240
5 Bedroom	2,342	2,576
6 Bedroom	2,648	2,912
7 Bedroom	2,953	3,248

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve new utility allowances for the HCVP. RAO Director Berrios explained that the allowances were calculated by a vendor, Happy Software. She reported that the numbers went down comparing to last year and it is supposed to help the participants. Ms. Berrios responded to Commissioner Thomas's question and confirmed that the new allowances will be used for both existing and new program participants.

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

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9808 to approve the Summary Allowance for Tenant-Furnished Utilities and other Services prepared by Happy Software

HR Director and Executive Department Manager Fidan Gousseynoff presented the next two agenda items regarding updating VAWA policy the need for which was also identified during HUD's visit. She explained that the changes to the SHA policy are based on the changes proposed by HUD in 2022, including changing the definition of a domestic violence victim as well as adding some language on prohibition on retaliation and right to report crimes and emergencies. She explained how copies of VAWA policies are distributed to tenants and participants. In response to Commissioner Quinonez's question regarding what happens when a person who gets a priority as a DV victim and then allows the person she filed an order against to live with her, Executive Director Jordan explained that it will be investigated and treated as a policy violation. In response to Commissioner Thomas's question, Ms. Gousseynoff confirmed that despite its name, VAWA Policy protects both females and males' rights.

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

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9809 to adopt updated VAWA Policy for the SHA's Public Housing Program

Blanca Berrios left the Conference Room at 4:14 pm.

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

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9810 to adopt updated VAWA Policy for the SHA's Housing Choice Voucher Program.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to approve the SHA's Recordkeeping Policy. HR Director and Executive Department Manager Fidan Gousseynoff and Deputy Healy explained that up until now, the SHA has been following the State recordkeeping requirements by submitting requests for approval for destroying records in accordance with the Massachusetts Records Retention schedule but in order to comply with HUD's recommendation, now needs to adopt its own Policy.

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

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9811 to adopt the SHA's Recordkeeping Policy.

The Board accepted the SHA's Annual Report. Chairman Labonte and Executive Director Jordan expressed their appreciation to all SHA staff Managers for their contribution to the preparation of the report.

Denise Jordan presented her Executive Director's report. She reported about meeting with the foremen and trades to discuss preparations to the fall and winter season; meeting with the Hampden County Sheriff's Department to discuss collaboration with their employment after incarceration program; meeting with residents at Jennie Lane Apartments. Ms. Jordan informed the Board that her annual meetings with all SHA departments will be starting soon to provide the staff an opportunity to share their suggestions and concerns. The Executive Director reported about the call she received from Undersecretary Stone and the letter from the Mayor who offered his support to the SHA. Ms. Jordan expressed her satisfaction with receiving so much support from the local business community and elected officials in the light of all the issues the SHA has been going through due to the software problems. She provided brief information about the 2nd strike letter and the letter from HUD and informed that the SHA staff continues working to address reporting issues and prepare a corrective action plan.

Commissioner Warren inquired about the SHA's plan to respond to HUD and EOHLC to provide a corrective action plan and address every deficiency and recommendation. Denise Jordan stated that the management met with all the departments managers to work on the corrective plan and discuss the timeline and added that she has no concerns about meeting the deadlines defined by HUD. Deputies Kane and Healy provided some information about how some deficiencies have been addressed already and confirmed that more comprehensive response will be sent out. Deputy Healy stated that the new software provider has already put together a schedule for the upcoming conversion and training. In response to

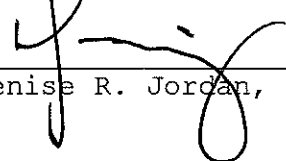
Chairman Labonte's question, he said that it is not expected that the transition to a new software will be as difficult as last time. Finance Director Harris informed that independent auditors will be working on site in two weeks. Commissioner Thomas asked that a copy of the SHA's response with the corrective action plan be provided to the Board. Commissioner Robles inquired whether the SHA has had a conversation with HUD whether the agency is on the right track or if there is an indication that it will receive another strike. Ms. Jordan stated that the SHA is on the right track and Deputy Kane informed that everything has been submitted for the current fiscal year.

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 Thomas, and following a board roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn the Open Session of the Annual Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 5:09 PM.

ATTEST


Thomas Labonte, Chairman


Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director

