

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
- OPEN SESSION -
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD ON OCTOBER 15th, 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 October 15th, 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, October 15th, 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
October 10th, 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 October 10th, 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
Angela Robles
Raymond Warren

ABSENT

Willie Thomas

ALSO PRESENT

Fidan Gousseynoff
Denise Jordan
Austin Harris

John Healy

The Board reviewed the Minutes of October 3rd, 2024. With no questions or comments and upon a motion made by Commissioner Quinonez, seconded by Commissioner Robles and following a board roll call, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the Minutes of October 3rd, 2024.

HR Director and Executive Department Manager Fidan Gousseynoff presented the 1st item in New Business. She explained that the EIV policy was drafted as per the HUD's requirement during the recent compliance review. She stated that even though the SHA has not had a formal policy, the staff has been following the protocols listed in the newly drafted policy. All SHA staff members who have access to EIV and HUD Secure Systems as a whole are required to complete the annual Cyber Awareness exam, follow the EIV and HUD Rules of Behavior and follow other protocols to ensure safety of the confidential data obtained through EIV. Mrs. Gousseynoff reported that the staff runs all required reports on a timely manner, including discrepancy reports, deceased tenants reports, zero income reports, new hire reports. EIV reports are pulled at annual recertification and might be used for interim rent recertification and are used in addition to other 3rd party income verifications. Applications Department runs reports for new admissions to calculate rent for the tenants moving in and to make sure they are not receiving double subsidy. The SHA staff obtains and keeps on file signed forms 9887 and 9887A as well as printed out EIV reports. All new hires are provided with guidance on how to protect confidential information both by the HR at the time of the orientation and by their managers.

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

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9814 to adopt the SHA's Enterprise Income Verification Policy.

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to adopt the Section 3 policy, also presented by Fidan Gousseynoff who explained that the policy has been drafted as per a HUD's recommendation. She provided brief information about SHA's efforts on attracting Section 3 hires and reported that some of new employees hired in the past few weeks are SHA tenants and program participants. She explained that Resident Services staff have been increasing their communication with tenants to notify about hiring events and opportunities, including through using a SMS distribution system. The Financial Advisor who was hired earlier this year has also been working actively with public housing tenants to promote self-sufficiency. SHA is constantly looking for opportunities to increase its outreach to organizations offering income-based programs. The Capital Improvements Departments includes required language on Section 3 hires to all RFP paperwork, however, it is hard to make contractors hire residents who might not have a lot of experience to complete projects that require a lot of special skills. Mrs. Gousseynoff also explained that a lot of factors beyond the SHA's control contribute to the fact that the Section 3 numbers are not too

high, including the impact of getting a job on benefits, lack of education, not meeting minimum requirements for some posted jobs, and other factors.

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

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9815 to adopt the SHA's Section 3 Policy

The Board reviewed materials and a recommendation to adopt the SHA's Rent Collection Policy. The Executive Department Manager explained that this was another policy required by HUD and it establishes regulations and protocols for rent collection and charges. In response to Commissioner Warren's question, Mrs. Gousseynoff provided brief information about the protocols used when a tenant does not pay rent, including sending a 30-day notice, communicating with residents, conducting informal meetings before proceeding to legal action. She explained that the staff is doing their best to work with residents to decrease the delinquency rates, however, a lot of people continue abusing the system. In response to Chairman Labonte's question, Denise Jordan stated that court cases for non-payment of rent take a long time and there is still a lot of tenants who do not qualify for emergency financial housing assistance like RAFT anymore but they still do not pay their rent on time, even though many of them are on fixed income. Ms. Jordan praised the work of the SHA Property managers and Assistant Property Managers and Resident Servicess staff for all their efforts on working with tenants to improve rent collection.

In response to Commissioner Warren's question, Finance Director Austin Harris confirmed that the Accounting Department does not longer post checks to the system and it's being done by the property management office staff.

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

VOTED: to adopt Resolution #9817 to adopt the SHA's Rent Collection Policy.

Deputy Healy presented the next item in New Business asking the Board to approve purchasing two new snow machines to replace 24-years old John Deere machine. He explained that the new machines will be used at two large properties - Reed Village and Sullivan Apartments and with a big, 48" attachment and better speed that the old John Deere equipment, it is expected to remove snow much faster.

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

VOTED: to award a contract to Taplin Yard and Pump, of Agawam, MA in the amount of thirty-eight thousand three hundred ninety-six dollars and thirty cents (\$38,443.30) for purchase of two (2) Ariens Mammoth Snow machines.

Deputy Healy informed the Board that no vote is required on purchasing yard leaf vacuums and the item E-5 was removed from the agenda.

Executive Director Denise Jordan started her report by informing about the Home City Housing project that was completed in the City End recently. She shared with the Board great news about the SHA winning a friendly softball match against Holyoke Housing Authority on September 20th. The report was continued by informing the Board that the annual meetings with foremen, maintenance staff and trades have been recently completed. She shared concerns about some tenants being very disrespectful to the SHA maintenance workers, repeatedly abusing SHA property (for example, clogging toilets, punching holes in doors) and expecting SHA staff to clean after them. Ms. Jordan stated that at the two meetings she had with residents in the previous months, she explained to the tenants that it is tenants' responsibility to keep their apartments clean and clutter free. Ms. Jordan reported about her meeting with the Director of Code Enforcement and voiced her concerns about tenants complaining about mold instead of taking care of their apartments and preventing mold from growing.

In response to Commissioner Robles's question, Ms. Jordan explained what instructions were given to the SHA workers on how to deal with tenants demonstrating abusive behavior.

Ms. Jordan reported about the meeting with Principal of Dorman school. The meeting was also attended by the Resident Services staff members - Pam Wells and TRS Coordinator Lynne Cimino. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss reconnecting with Behavioral Network to resume providing mental health services to SHA families in need.

In her Executive Director's report, Denise Jordan also touched on such subjects as: attending a Tenant Informational session at Rebecca Johnson school; meeting with the PHA Web team; attending a joint Statewide Housing Plan Listening Session hosted by EOHLC and MassHousing; hosting Housing Secretary Ed Augustus and Undersecretary Ben Stone who met with the SHA staff and elected officials at Riverview and toured tow units; completing the onsite portion of the audit. She thanked the Finance Director Austin Harris and his team as well as the fee accountant Guyder for all their assistance to the auditors who shared a very positive feedback about the SHA team's efforts on providing all required information despite all the software challenges. Ms. Jordan reported about an SRO monitoring program on September 30th and the complimentary comments received about the SHA staff. She expressed her gratitude to the RAO manager Matthew Rogers and for his work on the SRO audit.

Denise Jordan shared information about the Resident Advisory Board meeting and she completed her report by informing the Board about an electrical fire at Reed Village.

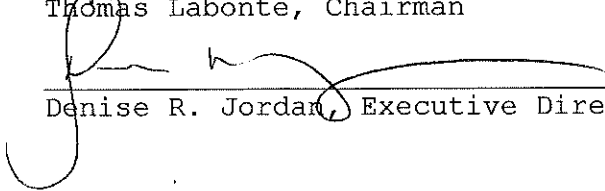
In response to Commissioner Warren's question, Ms. Jordan said that no information about how much money will be allocated to the SHA under the new Housing Bond Bill is available yet.

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 4:52 PM.

ATTEST:


Thomas Labonte, Chairman


Denise R. Jordan, Executive Director

