

# GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

Board Meeting  
March 17, 2011  
Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Magee, Deborah Salem, Ariane Blanchard

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bill Drumm, Dana DelGrande

OTHERS PRESENT: Barbara Heaphy

The meeting was called to order by Deborah Salem at 2:15 p.m.

Deborah was appointed to the board in 2009. Because she is the State appointee, her length of term is determined by gubernatorial elections.

Bob mentioned that Barbara was approved a raise two years ago. Last year she didn't get one when the budget was decreased by 4%.

## Minutes:

The accountant should have been clarified when introduced at the budget meeting. Sue Honeycutt, the accountant from Fenton & Ewald should have been stated in the beginning.

Motion made by Dana at the very end of the meeting was incorrect. She wasn't present. Should have been Ariane instead.

Motion made by Ariane, seconded by Bob to accept the minutes of the February 24th meeting. All members voted in favor.

## Check Register:

Motion made by Bob, seconded by Ariane to accept the check register for January. All members voted in favor.

## Budget:

Sue began by saying that there is no new funding this year, we are at 0% increase. This is better than last year's decrease however. Spending this year will have to fit into the same size budget as last year's. If an expense goes up, it will have to come from somewhere else. There haven't been too many changes from last year. One change this year is an increase in Barb's salary by 3% which amounts to around \$1,000.00 a year. Barbara hasn't had an increase in two years. Rich's salary is mandated by the state and the rate hasn't come out yet. We aren't allowed to budget for an increase in Rich's salary. Since Maureen has only been here six months, she will not get an increase. Another change is \$1,500 added in for Attorney Patricia Lafore since she is now under private contract with us. We agreed that her fee is reasonable and affordable to the housing Authority.

Contract costs, insurances and benefits went down a little to make up for the increases. We have been living within our budget limits and Sue is confident that we will continue to do so. We've been fortunate the last two winters to use seasonal snow plowing contracts which have helped a great deal in keeping spending down.

Our reserves are minimal and we are going to ask DHCD for \$20,000.00 to augment that reserve. Sue doesn't know if this will be approved but it's worth a try. Ariane asked where funding to upgrade units comes from. Currently, there isn't any. Capital funding goes toward priority projects and in our case: walkway, parking areas and driveway repairs at Brookside Manor are priorities right now. With the state

budget limitations, health and safety issues like roof repair, heating system replacement etc., and the more basic items are coming first.

We've spent more than anticipated on the family unit that was vacated this past year and there is a plan to recoup the funds for that. Anything unexpected, not budgeted for that comes up, Barbara will request payment from Capitol funds.

Barbara mentioned that she will have to be very careful spending especially when an apartment comes vacant. She will work closely with Rich when making cost decisions: For example: Can we clean carpeting professionally instead of replacing it? When is it necessary to replace a counter top? Do ceilings need to be painted? We must do everything we can to keep the costs down.

We don't have the extra money to budget for five stoves this year. If there's an emergency and we need to buy one, it will come out of operating. If a bigger emergency arises, it will have to out of our capital improvement money.

Motion made by Bob Magee to accept the 400-1 proposed operating budget. Deborah Salem seconded it.

All members voted in favor.

Motion made by Bob Magee to accept the 689-1 proposed operating budget. Ariane Blanchard seconded it. All members voted in favor.

Ariane mentioned that it wasn't her intention to upset Dana when she asked about the nepotism issue regarding the Snowplow contractor. Deborah felt it was a legitimate question but it was unfortunate that Dana wasn't present at that meeting to set the record straight then, instead of having to read about it in the minutes.

#### **Executive Director's Report:**

Barbara went over the accounts receivable. The past tenant with the small claims judgment has stopped paying. Barbara will have to take her to court again.

The kick off meeting for the heating system replacement in the family units took place on Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>. The job must be completed ninety days from the meeting at which a notice to proceed was issued. Pittsfield Pipers will be starting in the vacant unit on Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>. Working in a vacant unit for the first install will be easier. They'll be able to work out any problems if necessary before going into an occupied unit.

Ariane mentioned that she has some information regarding state bidding laws. Under the state guidelines for snow plowing, you don't always have to take the low bidder. Are these the same guidelines the housing authority falls under? Barbara will check into this.

Ariane also added that she is pleased with the current trash removal contract. That contract is not put out to bid every year. However, Gary O'Brien called Barbara inquiring about when trash contract goes out to bid. Bill suggested Barbara get a price from Gary.

Snowplow contractor has improved in regard to getting along with tenants. His work is still not up to par with Gary O'Brien's but it has improved.

Motion made by Ariane, seconded by Bob to accept the Executive Director's report. All members voted in favor.

The next meeting will be held on March 17th at 2:15.

Motion made by Dana, seconded by Deborah to adjourn at 3:40 p.m.

All members voted in favor.

Barbara A. DeFina, Secretary