

GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

Board Meeting
December 17, 2015
Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ann Condon, Veronica Cunningham, Nan Wile, Richard Needelman

MEMBERS ABSENT: Deborah Salem

OTHERS PRESENT: Executive Director Barbara Heaphy,
Tenants: Jackie Sinico, Marlene Koloski, Jane Green, Linda Steinberg, Susan Morris,
Barbara Chamberlain, Citizens: Eileen Mooney, friend of Barbara Chamberlain

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Ann Condon at 2:15 p.m.

Citizens Speak:

Citizen Speak rules of order were passed out to all attendees before the start of the meeting.

Jackie Sinico asked Nan if she was the tenant representative. She stated that tenants have been complaining to her about several wants and concerns. Jackie passed out to board members a copy of maintenance policies and procedures which was adopted by the GBHA in 2006. She asked if she could be put on next month's agenda to discuss this policy.

Marlene Koloski asked why there were only two board members along with Barbara at the board of health meeting on December 3rd. Deborah was ill for several weeks, Ronnie had a previous commitment. Marlene stated that the mold in her daughter's apartment goes back to 1995. It is not housekeeping and the board has known about this. She stated that the board does not represent the tenants. They should have done something about the mold issue before this.

Jane Green stated that a few months ago, she brought her concerns to Barbara and Rich and they put her worries to rest. Maintenance issues were taken care of in a timely fashion. The power washing was done. When she got up to speak at the November meeting, she was told her time was limited. It was rude. That is why she was upset. Ann explained it was our first experience with Citizen's Speak in this room and we've done things differently this time. Now we are all facing the group and couches and chairs have been arranged in a more welcoming set up.

Linda Steinberg asked about the tenant representative on the board - Barbara stated that DHCD has set a policy where tenant representative will be mandatory and tenant will be elected by the other tenants, not at a town election. DHCD is still working on how a tenant election will be implemented.

Susan Morris asked if she can bring harassment issues to the board. Ann responded that she bring harassment issues to Barbara first. An issue can be brought to board members who would take it up with the Executive Director. Susan said she's very appreciative of what has been done so far for her in regards to this harassment issue.

Ronnie stated that she expects Barbara to bring tenant issues to the board meetings and inform the board on the measures she has taken to correct them.

Ann thanked everyone for their comments and concerns and said the board would be making specific efforts to address them. She said that tenants are always welcome at board meetings.

Minutes:

Motion made by Ronnie, seconded by Nan to accept the November minutes. All members voted in favor.

Board of Health Report:

Barbara spoke about a correction order issued by the Board of Health regarding a chronic dampness issue in three family apartments: 11, 13 & 15. The problem was addressed back in August and is currently being addressed with the Health Inspector. Vegetation around buildings has been removed, a tree was cut down and more efficient bathroom fans were installed. A few items cited as not being done by December 10th have been taken care of. Soffit has been repaired and chipped siding replaced on #11. A professional cleaner was hired to clean one unit. The other two are being scheduled. Back yards were regraded and more drainage installed. At the December 3rd meeting, the Board of health concluded that we needed to do more. An industrial hygienist or mold expert must be hired to come in and do testing to determine if the chronic dampness is causing mold and if it is a dangerous, toxic mold.

DHCD has been involved and will be providing funding for the professional hired. February 3rd is the deadline to hire someone who will set up a plan of action in treating the problem if one is found. A plan must be in place by April 6th. The Housing Authority will meet with the Board of Health again in February.

Richard Needelman arrived at 2:50 due to a flat tire.

Susan Morris mentioned that there is moss growing the roof of her building at Brookside.

Barbara Chamberlain mentioned that there is mold growing up the sidewalk and it is on her windows.

Ann stated if anyone would like a copy of the report they can stop by the office, call or email Barbara.

Board Members Response to a Tenant's Concern:

A tenant wrote one letter to all board members that contained concerns and also personal content. Ann stated that the personal content in the letter need not be discussed. She would be happy to meet with this tenant.

Tenant issues that were listed, are being addressed. Nan appreciates the input. Jackie Sinico said she appreciated the feedback and would continue to bring her concerns to the board.

Check Register:

After Barbara answered questions about the check register, motion made by Ronnie, seconded by Nan to accept the November check register. All members voted in favor.

After reviewing the Hill Engineering bill for roofs at Brookside. Nan mentioned the importance of notifying the tenants ahead of when the work would start. Barbara stated that all tenants would receive written notice about this work and what to expect. Nan also mentioned recent investigation into National grid possibly over charging customers.

Executive Director's Report:

Currently there is one vacancy at Brookside. It will be ready for occupancy around January 15th. The accounts receivable balance has gone down somewhat since this report was done on the 15th. Two elderly and one family have paid. Two of the families involved with chronic dampness issues are withholding rent.

Dewey Court:

We are 100% occupied at Dewey Court.

Barbara recently attended a construction meeting with M&W Heating. That project is almost complete. There is heat in building #3.

689 Special needs Bathroom Upgrade:

This project won't begin until after the 1st of the year. A few of the workers are on vacation now and Diversified is still looking for a local plumber.

Roof Replacement at Brookside – Buildings 1 & 4:

Diversified Construction was the only bidder on this project. Because the weather has been so mild, the plan is to complete this project, which will take about three days, before the snow and cold hit. The roofers won't work if temps get below 32 degrees.

Citizen Speak Issues:

Jane Green was upset that the board meeting held at the Senior Center in October was not posted at Flagrock. Barbara will post it at Flagrock and Brookside next time it is changed.

Jane Green was concerned about mold and nicotine in an elderly apartment. A professional was hired by the HA to clean the bathroom. It was not mold or nicotine but cooking build up, dust residue caused by an inadequate bathroom fan. The fan was cleaned and readjusted and is working efficiently.

Jane Green mentioned a badly stained rug in one of the accessible units. It's been cleaned with the HA carpet cleaner but a professional may have to be hired to clean it.

Linda Steinberg stated it was unfair to limit citizens speak time. Jane green agreed.

Diana Hankey's concern about her brother not being housed was addressed. Barbara schedules a meeting with Diana and her brother. His file was reviewed and it was agreed by all parties that he had not provided adequate verification of his emergency status. Once he understood, he was able to provide the third party verification required.

Ronnie asked how Rich felt about taking on Dewey Court. Barbara said that he was glad we took it over and it is working out fine.

The letter that Jackie Sinico handed to Board Members, dated October 22nd, was addressed.

Health Department Update:

Barbara talked about the meeting and who attended from the HA – Barbara, Rich Phair, Richard Needelman and Ann Condon. Barbara stated that many corrections have been made with direction from Tom Barthelette. Tenants were upset and disagreed. Their issues included health problems, damaged rugs and furniture. BOH voted to order the HA to hire an expert to assess the chronic dampness issue and cover the cost of electricity used for dehumidifiers. Richard spoke about a device he found on line that meters electric usage of individual appliances.

Richard suggested in the future, if there are only two or three people at a meeting, don't use a timer. It is important to be flexible.

Attorney Contract:

Atty. Patricia LaFore's contract is up for renewal. The monthly charge of \$125 has not increased. Motion made by Ronnie, seconded by Nan to approve Attorney LaFore's contract for 2016. All members voted in favor.

Change Orders:

Special Needs Bathroom Rehab - time extension to completion time of January 29, 2016. Motion made by Ronnie, seconded by Richard to approve this change order. All members voted in favor.

Special needs Bathroom Rehab – floor tiles be completely changed because the current tile could not be matched. This would be an additional cost of \$3,801.00. Motion made by Nan, seconded by Ronnie to approve this change order. All members voted in favor.

Ann spoke about a family tenant in unit 19 who complained to her about mold. Barbara has not heard from her. Ann asked if tenants are given 48 hours' notice of inspection. Barbara said yes.

Barbara said the Smoke Free Property Policy should be revisited. The process would take a year to implement. Many Housing Authorities in Berkshire County are smoke free. At the December BOH meeting, Tri-Town Health Agent pointed out that Great Barrington is one of the only Authorities in the county that is not smoke free. Non-smoking tenants have complained about the smoke seeping into their apartments. Barbara will bring information on going smoke free to the next meeting.

Nan talked about communication and stated that the BOH meeting notification was vague. Barbara sent board

members an email regarding meeting but no one got it. Nan said if she had known that GBHA was put on the agenda sooner, she would have changed her plans. Nan said the change of venue to the Senior Center was not communicated efficiently as well. Moving forward, Nan would like email exchanges among board members and Barbara to be more specific including dates, times etc.

We will continue to hold board meetings at the Senior Center and when we do, a notice will be posted at Flagrock and Brookside in the community rooms.

Nan asked exactly what her role is as a board member. Barbara said that Nan is a board member who happens to be a tenant. When Nan's term is up, the next tenant representative would be voted in by the tenants according to DHCD guidelines that will be in place by then.

The Board wants to go into either an executive session or a work session to discuss issues of protocol, communications. Board needs a specific reason to go into executive session. Eileen Mooney stated that she has the guidelines.

Nan stated the importance of limiting Citizen Speak time because there are so many items on the agenda and the meeting gets very long.

Motion made by Nan, seconded by Richard to adjourn at 4:03 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Next meeting is December 17, 2015

Respectfully Submitted,

Barbara Heaphy
Secretary