

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
of the
PORTLAND HOUSING AUTHORITY

Thursday, February 4, 2021

The meeting of the Portland Housing Authority was held at 14 Baxter Blvd, Portland, Maine, via Go-to-Meeting. Upon roll call, quorum is declared. Meeting called to order by Robyn Tucker, Chairperson at 5:35 PM

PRESENT	ABSENT
Robyn Tucker, Chairperson Kristin Blum, Vice-Chairperson Luisa Deprez, Commissioner Christian MilNeil, Commissioner Monique Mutumwinka, Commissioner Shirley Peterson, Commissioner Tom Valteau, Commissioner Cheryl A. Sessions, Executive Director Jay Waterman, Real Estate Director Brian Frost, Asset Manager Jay Waterman, Real Estate Development Director Trevor Nugent, Director of Property Management Leah Bruns, Director of Voucher Programs Richard Biggs, Maintenance Director Larry Giddinge, Finance Director Lourdes Alvarez, Admin Support Specialist	N/A

The meeting opened with Board member/PHA staff introductions and the newly appointment commissioner, Luisa Deprezt. She is a Professor Emeritus, retired from USM after 40 years of teaching. Her career started in Social Work, working at Preble Street. She also worked in Jersey City and the Newark’s inner city prior to her teaching career in Maine. Luisa hopes to bring her passion for issues concerning poverty to the Board and is delighted to be part of the Board.

1. Resolution to approve the minutes of the Board meeting of January 7, 2021

Resolution #3067

Be it resolved by the Commissioners of the Portland Housing Authority that the minutes of the meeting of January 7, 2021, be and hereby are approved.

The above resolution was moved by Shirley Peterson, Commissioner, and second by Christian MilNeil, Commissioner, and upon roll call, the ayes and nays were as follows:

AYES

NAYS

Robyn Tucker, Chair
Kristin Blum, Vice-Chair
Luisa Deprez, Commissioner
Christian MilNeil, Commissioner
Monique Mutumwinka, Commissioner
Shirley Peterson, Commissioner
Tom Valteau, Commissioner

None

Chairperson declared said motion carried and said resolution adopted.

2. Finance Committee Report

Mr. MilNeil summarized the meeting discussion covering Cares Act funds and the Income and Expense reporting. Funding is being used adequately and the budget continues to be balanced. Brian Frost reported on the tax credit properties. Christian had to leave the meeting at 7 PM and Ms. Blum took over the meeting. She added that the Riverton Park plan was discussed, including the redevelopment of one of the circles, which is included in the Project Plan to be presented later in the meeting.

Resolution #3068

Be it resolved by the Commissioners of the Portland Housing Authority that the Finance Committee minutes of January 19, 2021, be and hereby are approved.

The above resolution was moved by Christian MilNeil, Commissioner, and second by Kristin Blum, Vice-Chair, and upon roll call, the ayes and nays were as follows:

AYES

NAYS

Robyn Tucker, Chair
Kristin Blum, Vice-Chair
Luisa Deprez, Commissioner
Christian MilNeil, Commissioner
Monique Mutumwinka, Commissioner
Shirley Peterson, Commissioner
Tom Valteau, Commissioner

None

Chairperson declared said motion carried and said resolution adopted.

Christian continued with an overview of the Income & Expense Report. The Cares Acts funding expenditures continue as forecasted, with salary number going down as funding is used to pay salaries, allowing operating funds to be better used for needs as they arise.

Resolution #3069

Be it resolved by the Commissioners of the Portland Housing Authority that the Income & Expense Report for the period ending December 31, 2020, be and hereby are approved.

The above resolution was moved by Christian MilNeil, Commissioner, and second by Robyn Tucker, Chairperson, and upon roll call, the ayes and nays were as follows:

<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>
Robyn Tucker, Chair	None
Kristin Blum, Vice-Chair	
Luisa Deprez, Commissioner	
Christian MilNeil, Commissioner	
Monique Mutumwinka, Commissioner	
Shirley Peterson, Commissioner	
Tom Valleau, Commissioner	

Chairperson declared said motion carried and said resolution adopted.

3. Executive Director’s Report

Ms. Sessions presented a brief report in order to focus on the departmental reports to be presented by the various department heads. AVESTA Housing is interested in extending their note and proposal will be presented to Finance Committee in their next meeting and presented to the Board at the March meeting for approval. Mr. Valleau expressed opposition to redoing the financing.

Cheryl continued her report with a review of the cyclical agenda items document and asked the Board for their input. The Board concurred in adding the annual Executive Review in the month of November, noting that it goes through the HR Committee in October.

A. Public Housing

Trevor Nugent presented the Public Housing report. He reported on the occupancy/vacancy numbers. The high number of vacancies in some properties are in preparation of upcoming renovation work. For example, the Washington Garden Project is being done in 5 phases, 20 units at a time, so vacant units will allow for tenant relocation as needed so residents do not have to leave the neighborhood during renovations. He continued reporting on lease up numbers, which are higher in the properties where renovations are not yet planned. Since July 1, 2020, 81 clients were called from the waitlist for intake processing; 15 have been marked eligible for

housing. There have been 25 leases up since July, with eight of them formerly homeless. For Front Street Phase One, 28 households were successfully relocated: 14 went to another development, 11 got vouchers, a couple went to live with family, one went to a market rental, and one family bought a home. Relocations went very smoothly for this phase of the project.

Luisa had a question on how the housing waiting list works and Trevor will be calling her to clarify the process.

B. Maintenance

Richard Biggs presented the Maintenance report. Work order emergencies are being taken care of (high level issues) and the lower level work orders are being placed in a queue-based level of issue. Work orders with level 2 and 3 issues are moving right along, with focus on unit turnovers. All “emergency” orders are done within 24 hours. One “urgent” work order was closed after six days which normally are done in about three days. High level use of PPE is keeping staff and residents safe and healthy.

Cheryl reported that pest control was a challenge at the beginning of the pandemic, noting the contract changed during this time. Although upfront costs were high, there has been a decline in pest issues and its costing less monies to maintain units clean in the long run. Trevor added that the first year was the one expected to be the highest and costs are already going down. No clustering has been seen in the pest infestation cases. During this time, bedbugs are down to 0 cases and roaches to 7 cases. This is a great result.

Mr. Biggs ended his report an update on his open positions. Custodian positions have been hard to fill during the pandemic. He is searching to fill an Assistant Maintenance Tech position.

C. Voucher Programs

Leah Bruns presented the HCV department report. The staff has remained safe and health, working from home, masking and double masking in the office, working with clients in getting their forms done via *DocuSign* and drop boxes at the office building. There have been five new hires in the department, and they have been training on site. Voucher utilization needs to be at 95% per HUD and PHA is hovering around 94%. The VASH and homeless vouchers are the most difficult to lease and has been very challenging due to the low vacancy rates in Portland. One thought to increase usage is to convert VASH vouchers to Project-Based vouchers and attach units to these vouchers. Robert Parritt is the new Transition & Stability Specialist. He has experience in housing stability and homelessness so he will be helping in getting the utilization numbers up. The goal of having PBVs placed in community housing projects is to attain a half/half spread in the portfolio – half HCVs, half PBVs. She reviewed the voucher demographics to finalize her report. One item of note, 63% are households lead by women. A large percentage of the households are 1 or 2 member homes. There are 35% of residents who do not identify as white, keeping in mind the rate in Maine is 3.5%. Also, about 39% report a handicap or limitation. Average gross income is \$15,000/year. Search parameter is giving clients a year to find an apt. Keep in mind, admin fees don’t get paid for a voucher until lease up is completed. Currently, no voucher housing search is being terminated as long as the state of

emergency is in place. The new ordinances in the City of Portland provides that for landlords that rent to voucher holders they do not need to comply with listing the unit with the Rental Board. This may help overcome the stigma and help the agency increase their utilization. The FYI program has leased up 16 households since April 2020. They are getting clients into units after three-month searches, working closely with community partners. This would be a good success story for a PR pitch. Luisa would like to see income breakdown by race and Leah said those can be added.

Kristin asked about SEMAP score and Leah clarified that there is no SEMAP scoring this year due to COVID-19. Cheryl stated that although we had great SEMAP scores in the past, the last time the agency received 0 points on one factor because the utilization fell below 95%. Further, asking for new programs and vouchers such as VASH and FYI means PHA has move to lease to reach 95% and still do as they are needed.

4. Development/Redevelopment Update

Jay Waterman announced the completion of demolition of Front Street: Phase One as of last week, showing before and after pictures of the area around the former community center. Brownfields work will start up next to clean up the site. He proceeded to show plans for the three construction phases (Phase 1, 2, and 3). Home ownership units will be built in Phase 3. He showed some detail of the proposed construction. Zachder Company is the new construction manager, with a cost reduction that is less than previous contractor. Meeting is planned tomorrow with staff to discuss design with architects. Financing expected to close by the end of June. Construction will start as soon as the loan closes. About 13 months of construction once project is started. Relocation of residents was efficiently completed, and Board is thankful to Latoya Hunder for all the work that went into the smooth process.

Mr. Waterman continued with an update on the 337 Cumberland Project, in partnership with Youth & Family Outreach (YFO). He presented a general overview and update on the approvals. Ledgewood Construction is moving forward with design on the project. It's being done at a 4% tax credit from MaineHousing. YFO is doing fundraising to raise the acquisition funds.

Jay shared that the Washington Gardens Project SAC Section 18 application was approved by HUD which may set a precedence in the subsequent applications being filed. Finance resources are lined up and financing looking good for the project. Application for tenant protection vouchers is being submitted. Closing is expected to be completed in late March. The next step is to prepare residents for relocation within the development, making use of the current vacancies in place. Construction is expected to take about 18 months to complete.

On 100 State Street, an easement has been requested for the assisted living facility going next door, as part of the Mercy Redevelopment Project. Jay showed a drawing to illustrate the area for the easement. That property has very little parking and Jay is proposing for 100 State Street to be compensated for landscaping changes, for the developer to pay for the driveway changes,

and to upgrade the transformer and move underground. Meetings are ongoing in the process of negotiating terms. Proposal will be presented to the Finance Committee for review and will be brought to the Board for approval when ready.

A. Approval of Riverton Park Project Summary

Jay reviewed the Riverton Park opportunity analysis. The proposed possibilities are being reviewed to provide connectivity, recreational and economic opportunities. The goal is to integrate the project into the community with more connectivity and better presence on Forest Avenue. Mr. Waterman presented the updated project summary for the project as a result of the opportunity analysis. He explained the memo presented to the Finance Committee detailing the four possible scenarios for the project. Community and Maintenance buildings are included in all the scenarios. The pros and cons were summarized for each scenario. Ultimately, scenario 2 came ahead. It addresses our goals while minimizing delays and being feasible as one project with a financial package at 4% tax credit. It includes the redevelopment of Circle 1 and unit renovations. Once project design is completed, it will need to go through the planning board process. There is potential of emergency egress from Circle 4 by adding a roadway and creating more green areas with the addition of walking trails. There have been conversations with Metro concerning bus transportation, the addition of a bus shelter, and other transportation needs. The decision not to make addition on Circle 2 or Circle 4 has to do with construction timeline would add one or two years to the project. The added density (potentially 24 new units) would be conveniently closer to Forest Avenue than Walden Way. Jay showed some of the old rendering as a reminder of the project details. A facelift at the main entrance would be desirable with better landscaping and replacing the chain link fence. It will improve the look when the lot in front lot is redeveloped soon.

The recommendation from the Finance Committee was to proceed with scenario 2 and this has been incorporated into the updated RP Project Summary. Next step will be to meet with residents and having neighborhood meeting but will need to be creative in this age of COVID. The staff suggests a survey may be more productive than a long ZOOM meeting. Input was asked from Monique who is a resident of Riverton Park. She likes the image change this project will bring to the neighborhood. She agrees with the new building going into Circle 1, close to the community center. It would showcase the best view from Riverton Drive. The residents fear is being moved out of the neighborhood and relocation should be kept within Riverton Park. She agrees that a survey would be good but keep it simple and clear. Jay noted that large families may be the difficult ones to relocate within the neighborhood. Luisa suggested keeping the survey as a one-pager and be clear on the purpose of the survey. Commissioner MilNeil, who first called for a reexamination of the opportunities for this development, fully endorsed the plan and thanked the staff for all work.

Resolution #3070

Be it resolved by the Commissioners of the Portland Housing Authority that the Riverton Park Project Summary, incorporating scenario 2 as discussed and recommended, be and hereby are approved.

The above resolution was moved by Christian MilNeil, Commissioner, and second by Monique Mutumwinka, Commissioner, and upon roll call, the ayes and nays were as follows:

<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>
Robyn Tucker, Chair	None
Kristin Blum, Vice-Chair	
Luisa Deprez, Commissioner	
Christian MilNeil, Commissioner	
Monique Mutumwinka, Commissioner	
Shirley Peterson, Commissioner	
Tom Valleau, Commissioner	

Chairperson declared said motion carried and said resolution adopted.

B. Approval to file SAC Application for Scattered

Mr. Waterman read and reviewed the resolution to be approved by the Board. He mentioned that they had approved the resolution before, but had to be redone at HUD’s request, as they needed to wait for a letter from the City of Portland, signed by the mayor, prior to submitting their approval.

Resolution #3071

Be it resolved by the Commissioners of the Portland Housing Authority that the filing of the SAC application for the Scattered Sites, be and hereby are approved.

The above resolution was moved by Christian MilNeil, Commissioner, and second by Monique Mutumwinka, Commissioner, and upon roll call, the ayes and nays were as follows:

<u>AYES</u>	<u>NAYS</u>
Robyn Tucker, Chair	None
Kristin Blum, Vice-Chair	
Luisa Deprez, Commissioner	
Christian MilNeil, Commissioner	
Monique Mutumwinka, Commissioner	
Shirley Peterson, Commissioner	
Tom Valleau, Commissioner	

Chairperson declared said motion carried and said resolution adopted.

C. Approval to file SAC Application for the disposition of 37 Illsley Street (condo unit).

Mr. Waterman read and reviewed the Resolution to be approved by the Board. The plan is to sell unit at market value and use proceeds to redevelop the scattered sites.

Resolution #3072

Be it resolved by the Commissioners of the Portland Housing Authority that the filing of the SAC application for the disposition of 37 Illsley Street, be and hereby are approved.

The above resolution was moved by Tom Valleau, Commissioner, and second by Kristin Blum, Vice-Chair, and upon roll call, the ayes and nays were as follows:

AYES

NAYS

Robyn Tucker, Chair
Kristin Blum, Vice-Chair
Luisa Deprez, Commissioner
Christian MilNeil, Commissioner
Monique Mutumwinka, Commissioner
Shirley Peterson, Commissioner
Tom Valleau, Commissioner

None

Chairperson declared said motion carried and said resolution adopted.

5. Adjournment

With no other business on the agenda, Commissioner Christian MilNeil moved to adjourn the meeting and was second by Vice-Chair Kristin Blum.

Meeting adjourned at 7:25 PM