**MINUTES**

The Board of Commissioners of the Dracut Housing Authority met at a regular scheduled meeting on March 19, 2018 at 65 Phineas Street, Dracut, MA 01826. Chairman Russ Taylor opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and upon roll call vote those present were as follows:

PRESENT: Matthew Sheehan

F. Russell Taylor

Debra DeWitt Ahern

Jesse Forcier

George Nangle

ABSENT: None

IN

ATTENDANCE: Mary T. Karabatsos

Kelley Szymanski

**Chairman Taylor announced that the Board Meeting is being recorded.**

**MINUTES:**

Commissioner Sheehan made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2018 Board Meeting. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Nangle and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**BILLS & COMMUNICATIONS:**

Commissioner DeWitt Ahern made a motion to approve the March 2018 warrant. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Forcier and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

Commissioner Forcier made a motion to put the January 2018 Financials on file for audit. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

Commissioner Forcier made a motion to put the February 2018 Financials on file for audit. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Sheehan and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT:**

**A vote to approve the Dracut Housing Authority’s 2018 Budget.**

Jenna Milne, Fee Accountant was at the meeting to present the 2018 Operating Budget. Jenna stated that housing authorities received budget guidelines very late and that we are already into the fifth month of the budget. Jenna stated that a few things that are new to this year’s budget is the new Executive Director Salary Calculation, Jenna stated that this new calculation effects new directors. Also, DHCD is giving each housing authority $10,000 one-time tech grant to make sure that websites are up to date, new software, iPad for Maintenance, etc.…. DHCD also increased non-utility line items by 10% which is surprising because normally we only get an average of 3%. They are also addressing housing authority’s that are below a certain level in reserves. DHCD will be giving an amount of money to local housing authorities if needed. Jenna stated that Dracut would probably be eligible for these funds. This is just on the Consolidated Program which is always a difficult program based on funding. We will not know what that amount is until DHCD reviews our budget.

Jenna Milne, Accountant went over the budget which included 3% salary increases for Administrative Staff with the Deputy Director receiving a 7% increase to bring her in line with other Deputy Directors. The Director informed Ms. Milne that the housing authority received the new maintenance wage rates this past Friday. The maintenance salaries are dictated by the Department of Labor. Currently we have three Maintenance Laborers, the budget shows the salary of a Maintenance Supervisor position. Commissioner Nangle suggested that we budget for that position even though we may not utilize the funding. Ms. Milne also discussed the amount of funds that housing authorities are now spending on audits. At this point in time we are budgeting $3600 for the AUP Audit and $2300 for the Federal Single Audit. The audits are an additional cost to local housing authorities. Ms. Milne went over the insurance and employee benefit costs which are also a large chunk of the budget but are mandatory.

Ms. Milne stated that most of our programs are in really good shape. The budget that has always been the issue is the State Consolidated budget. Ms. Milne stated that industry wide this is the same issue everywhere. Historically, the state has not given us the capital funds that we have needed to take care of the buildings. Because our reserve is lower we will probably get a bump from the State. At that point we will only be able to utilize the reserves for health and safety issues.

Chairman Taylor asked when was the last time that the State gave out money for new elderly housing.

Jenna stated that it has been about 30 years. There has not been new public housing in a long time. Now the state is focused on maintaining the existing stock of public housing and they barely have enough money to do that. The Director stated that the last round of public housing that was constructed was back in the early nineties. At that time Perron Lane, Parker Avenue and 901 Mammoth Road were constructed. The Solar Program is helping boost the reserves. The DHA has been on this program for about a year and we are starting to see the impact. Commissioner Sheehan stated that we have $67,000 in reserves on our state program. He wanted to clarify that there is only $67,000 in our state program and that it cannot be put towards additional housing. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern wanted to clarify and said that the reserves cannot be used to build new housing. Ms. Milne said that reserves cannot be used to build new housing. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern also wanted clarification that the reserves should only be used for health, safety, and emergency issues. Ms. Milne said that the reserves in both the federal program and 971 Mammoth Road are in great shape. Those reserves can only be used at those two sites and cannot be used to build additional housing.

Chairman Taylor asked the Director what year it was that a previous board turned back 2.9 million to the state. The Director stated that it was back in 2008 – 2009. The Director informed the Board that as we move forward with the formula funding projects our state reserves will start to creep up a bit because we will be using a different pool of money for capital projects. Chairman Taylor asked if there is any money from the federal government/HUD to build additional housing. Ms. Milne said no there is not, the only program available is the LIHTC (low income tax credit program). Chairman Taylor asked if it would be fair to say that public housing is getting out of the real estate business and Ms. Milne agreed.

Commissioner Forcier made a motion to approve the 2018 Dracut Housing Authority Operating Budget. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Nangle. Under discussion, Commissioner DeWitt Ahern wanted to be clear that the line item for the salary of the Maintenance Supervisor position would stay but the housing authority is actually paying three Maintenance Laborers. Ms. Milne said yes, the position will be budgeted but the position is not currently filled. Upon roll call vote all were in favor of the budget.

**A vote to approve the Dracut Housing Authority’s EIV (Enterprise Income Verification) System Policy and Procedures Policy.**

The Director explained that the EIV SYSTEM Policy is an updated policy which is dictated by HUD. The system is utilized when applicants are in the process of receiving housing. It is a system that allows the housing authority to verify applicant’s income. Commissioner Debbie DeWitt Ahern asked if this a check and balance system to ensure that applicants are reporting all their income to the housing authority. The Director stated that is exactly what the system is intended to do. Commissioner Sheehan made a motion to approve the Dracut Housing Authority’s EIV (Enterprise Income Verification) System Policy and Procedures Policy. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Nangle and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**A vote to approve the Dracut Housing Authority’s EIV System Security Policy.**

The Director informed the Board that this program has to do with a system security program that employees that utilize the EIV program must go through on an annual basis. The Director informed the Board that Lynn Flynn and the Director are the only two employees who have access to this system. The Director informed the Board that the policy outlines guidelines that we must utilize on tenant move ins and annual recertification. Chairman Taylor asked what type of crimes do we screen for. The Director stated that we do a Criminal Background Check on all applicants before offering housing. The Director stated that we have a policy in place that we refer to for CORI checks. The Director stated that applicants who are a danger to themselves or someone else are not allowed tenancy and those that are sex offenders are also not allowed tenancy. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern made a motion to approve the Dracut Housing Authority’s EIV System Security Policy. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Forcier and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**A vote to approve the Dracut Housing Authority’s Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy for Federal Public Housing Programs.**

The Director informed the Board that the Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy has been updated to reflect HUD’s newest guidelines. The housing authority must update all policies when new regulations are outlined by HUD. Chairman Taylor asked if the housing authority could add to changes to this policy and the Director stated that as long as it is in accordance with HUD then that would be fine. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern made a motion to approve the Dracut Housing Authority’s Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Nangle and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**A vote to accept HUD’s Resident Rights & Responsibilities brochure.**

The Director informed the Board that a vote is needed to accept HUD’s new Resident Rights & Responsibilities brochure. This is given out to new residents upon move in. Commissioner Forcier made a motion to accept the new brochure. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**Work Order Report:**

The Board received the work order report. There were four deferred work orders and one vacant.

**Vacancy Report:**

The Board received the vacancy report.

**MassNAHRO Annual Conference – May 20 – 23:**

The Director informed the Board that the annual conference is May 20th at Sea Crest in Falmouth.

**Department of Labor – 2018 Maintenance Wage Rates.**

The Department of Labor Maintenance Wage Rates were issued to all housing authorities. Massachusetts Maintenance Salaries are dictated by these wage rates. The wage rates increased just under 3% and they will be effective April 1, 2018. Commissioner Forcier made a motion to accept the maintenance wage rates. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Commissioner Sheehan reported that the CPC met a few weeks back and they are requesting an update from the Housing Authority on what we plan on doing with the Greenmont Avenue property. Commissioner Sheehan informed the CPC that he would get back to CPC after the housing authority meeting. Chairman Taylor said that we are looking for options. Commissioner Sheehan said that our main objective is to take seniors off of our housing waiting list. Commissioner Forcier stated that our plan is to actively seek financing to build housing for our seniors. Commissioner Forcier said that we are open to any means of funding and keeping the property to build senior housing. Commissioner Forcier stated that we are interested in holding on to the property as well as the seed money for future use and actively looking to build more housing. Commissioner Sheehan also stated that the would like the land and the funds to stay in the control of the housing authority. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern said that it is a matter of finding a viable option that meets the goals of building housing that takes a lot of seniors off the waiting list. Commissioner Nangle agreed with Commissioner Sheehan.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Phineas Street Generator – The Director informed the Board that she will start working on the generator for the Phineas Street Community Room. She stated that she is in the process of hiring an engineer to start the process. The project will then be put out to bid. This will hopefully be installed by next winter.

Commissioner Nangle said that in the mean-time it might be a good idea to have an electrician come in to set up for a portable generator if we were to lose power. Commissioner Sheehan stated that it might be a good idea to reach out to Greater Lowell Tech to see if the electrical department could take it on as a project. The housing authority could buy the generator and the electrical department could install.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None.

**RESIDENT & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

Jackie Cullum from 971 Mammoth Road thanked Kelley and Mary for the pizza, coffee and doughnuts that they brought to the community rooms during the electrical outage.

Pauline Gagne, 65 Phineas Street also thanked the office for offering a hotel room to her and her husband.

Gloria Eno, Phineas Street asked when the rugs and furniture will be installed at the Phineas Street Community Room. The Director stated that both have been ordered and should be installed shortly.

Helen Goad, 971 Mammoth Road inquired as to when the walk-in showers will be installed. The Director informed her that we are waiting for DHCD to allow us to move to the second bidder. There were too many conflicts with the low bidder. The project should be starting in May.

Miriam Walton, 65 Phineas Street requested to have the interior doors that were installed at Phineas Street to be painted. Commissioner Sheehan said that might be something that Greater Lowell Tech could also do.

Fred Spicer, 51 Farm Pond Road, Dracut, MA candidate for Dracut Housing Authority. Mr. Spicer asked for clarification on the agenda. Ms. Milne the Fee Accountant answered his question. Mr. Spicer also asked how many units are in the 400-1 sites. The Director stated 89. Chairman Taylor informed Mr. Spicer that if he has questions he should meet with the Director and she can answer his questions.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Commissioner Forcier made a motion to adjourn. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Sheehan and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned 6:58 p.m.