MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners of the Dracut Housing Authority met at a regular meeting on October 20, 2014 at 971 Mammoth Road, Dracut, MA 01826. Chairman Russell Taylor opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and upon roll-call vote those present were as follows:

Present: Brian J. Bond

 Debra DeWitt Ahern

 Russell Taylor

 George M. Nangle

 Jesse Forcier

MINUTES

Commissioner Nangle made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 15, 2014 Board Meeting. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Forcier. Under discussion, Commissioner Bond stated that he had a few things that he would like adjusted in the minutes. Under the financial report , line 14 states “he stated that it is difficult to do when we did not have a meeting in July and August.” Commissioner Bond stated that he would like that changed because what he said was “It was 95 days between meetings”. Under Old Business, line 6, it states” Commissioner Bond stated that he has had several discussions with DHCD and they are saying that they are not going forward with this.” Commissioner Bond stated that he actually said “he has had several conversations with DHCD and they are not going anywhere with this”. Under New Business, line 3, it states ‘he thought that there were things that should have been done”. What Commissioner Bond actually said was that he believed they should be working on the housing and gas conversion projects”. Under Linda Kawa’s Letter, line one, it states that “this goes back to the Chairman’s letter that he (Commissioner Bond) believes was not truthful.” Commissioner Bond stated that what he actually said was that “it was a lie”. Upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

BILLS & COMMUNICATIONS

A motion was made by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern to accept the October 2014 warrant. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Nangle. Under discussion, Commissioner Bond asked if the bills were paid yet and the Director stated no. Commissioner Bond inquired about the lawn care at Mammoth Road and if Dillon Landscaping has finished their work. The Director stated that they finished up two weeks prior but you will probably see a bill at the next meeting. Commissioner Bond stated that he thought that the part time person that we hired in the past worked out great and he would like to see the comparison of what we paid the part time person and what we have paid the lawn care company. The Director stated that we hired someone about three years ago and he was exceptional. The Director stated that the cost of a lawn care company is definitely higher because he has to pay a crew. When we hired a part time person that was all they could do was cut grass and that is what he continually did all summer. Commissioner Nangle asked if there were any problems with Dillon Landscaping and the Director stated no. Commissioner Bond stated that he didn’t think there were any problems he was just trying to save money for the taxpayers. Commissioner Nangle stated that he has no issues with checking the prices he just wanted to make sure that we had no issues with the current company doing the landscaping. Commissioner Bond asked about the Watt saver Lights purchased for Phineas Street. He wanted to know if these were for the LED exterior lights. The Director stated that they were for the interior. Brian Martin stated that they are fluorescent light bulbs. Commissioner Bond thinks that we should be going towards LED lights in order to conserve energy. The Director stated that she thought it would be important for the Board to know that Kelley Szymanski renegotiated with Republic Services for trash removal and she brought the cost down by $1100 a month. Upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

FINANCIAL REPORT

A motion was made by Commissioner Forcier to accept the financial report. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern. Upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

Presentation by Jaime Smith and Jeffrey J. Macel from Lodestar Energy on a virtual Solar Program.

Jamie Smith presented the Virtual Solar Program to the Board. It is basically a virtual net metering program. The company finds a site and builds a solar farm. The electricity that they produce is pushed back in to the grid. This site will be constructed in Charleton.

They push the electricity back in to National Grid and then those credits are then given to the Dracut Housing Authority. They will appear monthly on our bill. They count how much electricity is used by DHA and then the credit is put on our bill. National Grid’s cost is .15 cents per kwh and Lodestar’s is .11 1/2 cents. Dracut Housing Authority will receive .4 credit per kwh. This is purely clean energy with no impact on housing authority property. Lodestar pays to build the system. No change to how we purchase electricity. This is guaranteed savings. Paul McPartland from DHCD has approved this contract. DHA uses about a million kwh a year. Lodestar’s recommendation is to do about 70% of that and they do not want to sell us more energy than we use.

Commissioner Bond asked “what if we drop below the 70%” and Mr. Smith stated that we would be buying more electricity but the system would also be producing less electricity. Commissioner Bond asked if we were to have a gas conversion at the housing authority how would this system impact that. Mr. Smith said that you would want to agree as a team to size this system accordingly, we would account for those kind of changes. If 70 is not the right number than it would change. Commissioner Bond asked if they could give us projections based on the savings if we were to have a gas conversion. The savings over twenty years would be just under 1 million dollars. He added a 1 ½ percent increase over the next few years. Lodestar has worked with many housing authorities, companies, and municipalities in Massachusetts. Lodestar plans on building in Spring 2015 with operation up in the summer of 2015. Commissioner Bond asked if there is any maintenance fee that goes along with this project. Mr. Smith said that we do not have a cost for maintenance. Commissioner Bond stated that he believes that an attorney should look at the contract. The Director told Mr. Bond that Paul McPartland from DHCD is an attorney and has approved this contract. Chairman Taylor asked how long the contract would be and Mr. Smith responded it would be for 20 years. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern asked if we had to do anything to our existing system and Mr. Smith said that there is nothing that has to be done. Commissioner Bond wanted to make sure that there would be no upfront cost for the housing authority. Mr. Smith stated that there is no cost. Commissioner Forcier made a motion to put this contract together and bring it back to the Board. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Nangle. Under discussion Commissioner Bond would like to see what the implications would be based on the gas conversion, electric to electric, etc… If we are looking to sign a 20 year contract he would like to see this done. Commissioner Bond stated that it appeared to be a good program. Upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

a. A vote to accept the 2015 Utility Allowance.

 A motion was made by Commissioner Bond and seconded by Commissioner Forcier to accept

 the 2015 Utility Allowance. Upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

b. A vote to accept the 2015 Fair Market Rents.

 A motion was made by Commissioner Forcier and seconded by Commissioner Nangle to accept

 the 2015 Fair Market Rents. Upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

c. A vote to change the utility allowance from actual bedroom size to the family unit size

 for which the voucher is issued.

 A motion was made by Commissioner Bond and seconded by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern

 to change the utility allowance from actual bedroom size to the family unit size for which

 the voucher is issued. Upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

d. Work Order Report.

 The Board received a copy of the work order report.

e. Vacancy Report.

 The Board received a copy of the vacancy report.

f. A vote to approve the Dracut Housing Authority’s 2015 Capital Improvement Plan.

 The Board received the 2015 Capital Improvement Plan (formula funding). The Director

 explained the capital plan and stated that these items are all funded from formula funding.

 A motion was made by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern to approve the Dracut Housing Authority’s

 2015 Capital Improvement Plan. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Nangle. Under

 discussion, Commissioner Bond inquired how the housing authority goes about picking these

 projects. The Executive Director stated that DHCD came in many years ago and prioritized the

 projects that need to be done. The Director stated that over the years Coventry Gardens as well

 as the scattered site homes have been neglected for many years due to a lack of funding. The

 Director stated that she tries to focus on these sites. The Director stated that DHCD has just

 recently sent a contractor out to go through all the sites once again and they will be issuing a list

 of needed projects in the near future. These projects are prioritized. The Director stated that

 we do not get capital money for 971 Mammoth Road; we actually use our reserves to do

 projects. Our federal site, 65 Phineas Street does receive capital funds and that is what we

 have been utilizing to install walk in showers. Upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Housing Sub Committee:

The Director stated that the minutes of the September 15, 2014 Sub Committee Meeting were in the Board’s packet. The Director updated the Board that the Town Manager would like to put an article on the warrant for November Town Meeting to request funding for a feasibility study on both the Richardson Property and the Spring Avenue Site. The Town Manager believes that the findings from this study will give us the information we need to determine the best site to build on.

The Town Manager has also applied for a PATH Grant (which only municipalities) are allowed to apply for. If we receive these funds they would also be put towards a feasibility study. We hope to get up to $50,000 from DHCD from this grant which would offset the monies we would be requesting from CPC. We will be requesting up to $100,000 from CPC. Commissioner Forcier stated that he requested that this be put on the agenda. Commissioner Forcier made a motion that this Board vote unanimously to support the Town Manager in this endeavor which will send a good message to the Town and CPC that this Board is fully united on this project. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Nangle. Under discussion, Commissioner DeWitt Ahern clarified that the site that we are talking about is the Spring Park Avenue Site which previously housed town offices. If we do this feasibility it will be conducted on the Spring Park Avenue Site and the Richardson Property Site. We will have all our answers and will be able to make an informed decision on which site to move forward on. Chairman Taylor stated that this is a great way to find out what the actual costs will be and this way we can move forward to building housing for the seniors. Commissioner Bond stated that he also supports the project and applauds the efforts by the Town Manager. Commissioner Forcier stated that whichever way this feasibility plays out he will support either site. Commissioner Forcier stated that he will be the first one out there with a shovel. He believes that this is the perfect non- political approach to getting senior housing built. The Director stated that there is a public hearing on this article at the CPC Meeting the following evening at 7:00 p.m. Upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Forcier and seconded by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2014 housing sub-committee meeting. Under discussion, Commissioner Bond stated that he did not believe that it was necessary for the Board to vote on the sub-committee minutes because they were not involved in the meeting. He stated that the sub-committee should vote on them. Upon roll call vote four members voted in favor and Commissioner Bond abstained from voting.

Heating Sub-Committee:

Commissioner Forcier stated that the minutes from October 8th heating sub-committee meeting are in the packet. Commissioner Nangle, Commissioner Forcier, and the Executive Director met. The Director stated that the solar program was discussed at the sub-committee meeting. It was decided at that meeting to have Lodestar Energy do a presentation to the Board. Also discussed was the electric to electric option that we requested BLW Engineers to review. The cost for an electric to electric heating option is $261,806. We have all four option prices now. The Director stated that she has had many conversations with DHCD and informed them that we do not have the monies to support any of these conversions except for the electric to electric. DHCD informed the Director that they do not condone an electric to gas conversion. They believe that it is not cost effective because of the upfront costs. They do like an air source heat pump conversion but unfortunately based on what we pay monthly for electricity we are not considered a priority. There are housing authorities that are paying $150 - $160 a month per unit for electricity. We are paying $108 a month per unit. We have a hefty reserve and we are capable of paying the cost of the electricity. The residents do not have to pay for the electricity. There are fifty housing authorities across the state that are priorities. Those agencies are getting $100,000 towards converting to air source heat pumps.

Commissioner DeWitt Ahern inquired that if we were to do the gas conversion, we would have to utilize our own funds, DHCD would not help us with any of those funds, is that correct? The Director stated yes. Commissioner De Witt Ahern said that everyone on this Board wants to save money on heating but we are not able to utilize the funds from DHCD. So realistically, the quickest way to save money for the housing authority right now would be to sign on to the Virtual Solar Program. Commissioner Bond asked how do we address that the current systems have out lived their life span. The Director stated that we should start looking at the air source heat pumps in the upcoming budget. The storage heaters are antiquated and they are old but they do work. We do not have a lot of calls that the storage heaters are not working properly. However, it is time to start looking at a new system. Any updating of our heating system will come out of our reserves.

Security Sub-Committee

The Director reported that the cost of the cameras at Phineas Street was $59,390 and the cost of the cameras at 971 Mammoth Road was $23,221.

Old Business

Update DHA By-Laws – Two copies of by- laws were given to the Board. The current by-laws are outdated. Commissioner Bond stated that he would like to see the by- laws updated because they are very old. Commissioner Forcier agrees stating that they are outdated and need to be changed. Each member should go through the by-laws and notate areas that need to be changed. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern stated that the by-laws need to be concurrent with the new social media outlets. The by-laws should explain what we should and should not be doing. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern stated that we need time to work on these by-laws. Commissioner Bond stated that this should be on the agenda every meeting so that we can have a discussion on it. Chairman Taylor said that he does not believe that it needs to be on the agenda of every meeting but rather we should gather additional by-laws and discuss and make changes down the road.

Attached Letter to Aaron Gornstein

The Director stated that we have not heard back from DHCD in regards to the letter sent to Aaron Gornstein on an update. The letter was sent October 6, 2014.

New Business

Commissioner Forcier stated that Patsy Perry was recognized for the Helen Connerton Volunteer of the Year Award. Commissioner Forcier wanted to congratulate Patsy Perry.

Commissioner Nangle asked if the housing authority had utilized the Middlesex Sherriff’s Department to do work at the developments. The Director stated yes that we have used them for quite a few different projects. Commissioner Nangle thought that we should probably utilize them in the spring to power wash the decks at 971 Mammoth Road. Commissioner Nangle stated that the decks look like they are very weathered.

The Director informed the Board that the Dracut Housing Authority has a new website. The address is dracuthousingauthority.org.

Resident and Public Participation

Jackie Cullum stated that it is a wonderful idea to go solar. She was very pleased. Winona Kelley asked if the Board could speak louder because it is difficult to hear.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Forcier. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern. Upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned: 7:06 p.m.