MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners of the Dracut Housing Authority met at a regular scheduled meeting on September 19, 2016 at 971 Mammoth Road, Dracut, MA 01826. Chairman Russ Taylor opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and upon roll call those present were as follows:

PRESENT: Jesse Forcier

 George M. Nangle

 Matthew Sheehan

 Debra DeWitt Ahern

 F. Russell Taylor

ABSENT: None

IN ATTENDANCE: Kelley Szymanski

 Mary T. Karabatsos

**MINUTES:**

Commissioner Jesse Forcier made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2016 Board Meeting. Said motion was seconded by Matthew Sheehan and upon roll call vote passed with four votes with Chairman Taylor abstaining.

**BILLS & COMMUNICATIONS:**

Commissioner DeWitt Ahern made a motion to approve the August and September 2016 Warrant. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Sheehan and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

Commissioner DeWitt Ahern made a motion to put the June, July and August 2016 financials on file for audit. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Nangle and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

1. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT:**

**Presentation by Maura Camosse Tsongas from the Women’s Institute explaining the RFP process going forward.**

The Director introduced Maura Camosse Tsongas who was presenting on some of the most recent changes that have occurred in relation to the RFP process going forward on construction on the Richardson Property.

Ms. Tsongas stated that in the past there was some discussion about the housing authority having to partner with another entity in order to construct affordable housing. Ms. Tsongas explained that in August a conference call with DHCD was scheduled and the project was explained to DHCD. DHCD was supportive of the project but they stated that the housing authority would have to partner with another entity to construct. The project would not work if the housing authority were to develop on its own. Ms. Tsongas explained that there have been a lot of changes at DHCD in regards to housing authorities developing housing. It is difficult for housing authorities to partner with other entities because we have to go through an RFP process. Ms. Tsongas explained that because the development fee is small it is a project that would not be that attractive to a developer based on the risk.

The Director then explained that she had a conversation with Rita Farrell from Mass Housing Partnership and Ms. Farrell explained that the fact that the housing authority would be involved in development it would be very costly. If the housing authority would be involved with the development it would trigger Chapter 121B, public construction and procurement laws. Rita Farrell from Mass Housing stated that the housing authority would have to go through an RFP process which would require the housing authority disposing of the property to an entity that would then build on the property. The Director explained that the Housing Authority could negotiate with the entity that answers the RFP on some of the stipulations that the housing authority would like to see, for instance; 70% local preference, veterans, etc…

Chairman Taylor said that this is not the scenario that was brought to the taxpayers of Dracut and at this point it is not something that he is in favor of. The Director stated that she agreed with Chairman Taylor but unfortunately this is the process that DHCD wants to see. Previously, housing authorities were developing affordable housing but things have changed. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern asked what exactly did it mean by disposing of the property. The Director stated that it would mean putting out a RFP and someone would purchase the property and build affordable housing. The Director stated that she knows this is not the scenario that the housing authority or the Town wanted but unfortunately this is how these projects are now being developed.

Ms. Tsongas explained that it would still be senior housing and there are other stipulations that could be put into the RFP that the housing authority wants to see. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern asked about the deed restrictions and the Director stated that we can put that in the RFP and they would have to abide by those deed restrictions. It would be elderly housing with possibly project based, section 8 and other residents paying 80% or 60% of Area Median Income. Those stipulations can be put in to the RFP, this would mean that there would still be low and very low income individuals living in the development.

Chairman Taylor stated that we would basically just be giving the land away. Ms. Tsongas stated that the housing authority could receive a fee from the developer. Commissioner Forcier stated that when we went through the original scenarios and we were having conversations with CHOICE were these things in the works. Ms. Tsongas stated that CHOICE is also a housing authority so the same type of procurement rules applies to them too.

Commissioner Forcier said that we were never thinking about handing off town land. Ms. Tsongas stated that we would not be handing off town land, we would receive a fee from the developer and we would be housing low income individuals. The Director stated that through a tax credit program we would still have to dispose of the land. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern stated that we never anticipated having to dispose of the land and she understands that things change over the years but she does not believe it is acceptable to the Board and fairly confident that it would not be acceptable to the Town. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern stated that we should not make any rash decisions and we should discuss this. Commissioner Nangle stated that we should take a step back and think about all of this.

Ms. Tsongas explained that the rules have changed in regards to housing authorities developing affordable housing. Chairman Taylor stated that it appeared to him that DHCD and HUD do not want to be involved in the development of housing. The Director stated that things are shifting and changing and Ms. Tsongas stated that the Dracut Housing Authority is on the cusp of all of that. Ms. Tsongas said that DHCD is working on regulations; there has been some talk that regional housing authorities could possibly construct a nonprofit and build regional housing that way. There is currently a lot of discussion but there is nothing at this point that is concrete that DHCD wants to see. Commissioner Sheehan asked if we should reach out to our State House Delegation and see if there is anything that they could do. Commissioner Sheehan made a motion to have the Director reach out to the State Delegation and see what our next step should be. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Nangle and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

Ms. Tsongas stated that the environmental work has been done which is helpful and the survey is done which allowed us to know what parts of the property are buildable land. Ms. Tsongas stated that those are helpful pieces of information going forward. Preliminary site plans have also been completed and all of this is useful information to know what can be built there. We can ask through the RFP Process to see if we can be the property manager or if we could receive an annual fee or a fee up front. These are not things that they necessarily have to grant. The fact that the housing authority has done some of the preliminary work might be a factor. Commissioner Forcier stated that if this is the only way that we can build then at some point the development will have to come back to the housing authority.

The Director advised that the housing authority have Kurt James come back and explain some of these processes. He has spoken to the Board in the past and he is a Board Member that is well experienced in this field.

**A vote to approve putting out a Request for Proposal for partnering with a non-profit to develop the Richardson Property.**

Commissioner Forcier made a motion to table putting out an RFP at this time. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**The Dracut Housing Authority has received a waiver from DHCD for participation in the Regional Capital Assistance Team (RCAT). See attached correspondence.**

The Director informed the Board that the housing authority received the waiver from DHCD.

**A vote to approve the Certificate of Substantial Completion for work performed by Aden Construction, Inc. at 47 – 49 Hampson Street and 61 – 63 Hampson Street.**

Commissioner Sheehan made a motion to approve the Certificate of Substantial Completion. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**A vote to approve the application and certificate for payment for Aden Construction in the amount of $40,137.50.**

Commissioner Sheehan made a motion to approve the application and certificate for payment to Aden Construction. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Forcier and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**Approval by DHCD to allow the Dracut Housing Authority to install a fountain in the pond at 971 Mammoth Road.**

The Director informed the Board that the fountain was approved. The housing authority will implement this project in the spring. Conservation will be involved in the process.

**A vote to approve the 2017 State Capital Improvement Plan.**

The Director explained the work that has been done in the past twelve months. One of the projects is still underway. That is a paving project and the work is in design and will be done in the Spring of 2018. Commissioner DeWitt Ahern made a motion to approve the 2017 State Capital Plan. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Sheehan and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**A vote to approve the Certification of Compliance with Notification Procedures for Federal and State Lead Paint Laws.**

Commissioner Forcier made a motion to approve the Certification of Compliance with Federal and State Lead Laws. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Nangle and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

**Notification to the Board of Commissioners that the position of part-time Receptionist/Clerical position will be filled by Arlene Miles. Mrs. Miles will begin work on September 20, 2016.**

The Board was notified.

**Work Order Report**

The Board received the work order report.

**Vacancy Report**

The Board received the vacancy report.

**REAC Inspection – October 6, 2016**

The Board was notified of the REAC Inspection.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

* **Housing Sub Committee Report**

The update was given at the beginning of the meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Resident Cook out – October 14, 2016.

**RESIDENT & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

Commissioner DeWitt Ahern said that she would report back to the CPC on the update of

the project on Greenmont Avenue.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Commissioner Sheehan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner DeWitt Ahern and upon roll call vote passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned: 6:40 P.M.