

MINUTES
 REGULAR MEETING
 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
 PORTSMOUTH HOUSING AUTHORITY
 February 10, 2021 - 2:00 p.m.
 Conference Call

Chair Ferrini called the meeting to order.

I. ROLL CALL

PRESENT	LATE ARRIVAL	ABSENT
Commissioner Leith		Commissioner Jewett
Commissioner Main		
Commissioner Pickering		
Commissioner Rodenhizer		
Chair Ferrini		
Secretary Craig Welch		

Members were present via conference call due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also present via Conference Call: Finance Director Valerie Labrie, Executive Assistant Mary Kelliher, Attorney John Bosen.

Chair Ferrini declared a quorum present.

II. READING OF MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Rodenhizer motioned to waive the reading of the minutes dated January 13, 2021 and accept as presented. Commissioner Leith seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:

AYES	NAYS	ABSTENTIONS
Commissioner Leith		
Commissioner Main		
Commissioner Pickering		
Commissioner Rodenhizer		
Chair Ferrini		

The motion passed.

III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Court Street Update

Two and one half of the foundation walls are in. The next to be installed will be the foundation along Court Street. The only recent surprise with the project was unsuitable soils that had a high enough level of arsenic and lead that they will need to be disposed of at the Rochester Landfill. This will be a change order. We hit a water pipe that serviced the Fire Department, which was not on anyone’s plans. That is being addressed.

Commissioner Rodenhizer asked if there is a plan to address soil costs. Mr. Welch said there is an owner contingency in the budget. The soils cost is something that the contingency is for. We are protective of it, as we’d rather it not be used.

Funding Update

We now have a gap of \$66,000. We would be grateful for any connections that Commissioners could help with. Mr. Welch has been working hard on closing the gap, with help from some Board members and Attorney Bosen. Anyone who has tax liability in NH gets a credit on their taxes; it’s not just a charitable donation.

Vaccinations

We have been working with the Portsmouth Fire Department. We have helped provide vaccines equitably in that we have many residents in our buildings. The Fire Department has been administering the vaccine right in residents' homes. We've administered 280 vaccines so far. We're at 72% vaccination rate for residents. We were successful at removing the pre-registration portion, which helped get as many of our residents vaccinated as possible.

Commissioner Rodenhizer asked if there is a plan to check in on elderly individuals after the 2nd dose of the vaccine. Mr. Welch reported that we do not have a plan for that as of yet, but that is a good suggestion.

Resident Commissioner Pickering reported on her positive experience in receiving the vaccine. She commends Tammy Joslyn and the Portsmouth Fire Department.

HCV Voucher Program

The new owner at Portsmouth Place Apartments has turned over 15 apartments so far. He has raised the rents, rendering those apartments ineligible for Section 8 vouchers.

We have a contract with HUD where we can administer as many as 406 vouchers. The average of our voucher utilization at the end of 2020 was 91.3% or 370 vouchers. We pay 2/3rds of the rent of a voucher holder directly to their landlord; these are called HAP payments. If a tenant starts earning less money, the HAP payment ends up going up. In addition to having an allocation of vouchers, we are also allocated a specific amount of money that we need to stick to.

One hundred thirty-seven of our vouchers are currently used in Portsmouth, spread throughout 27 different landlords. Seventy-three vouchers are being used at Osprey Landing.

Commissioner Rodenhizer asked what advocacy we have done for new construction or new buildings to be affordable for voucher utilization. Mr. Welch reported that we advocate for small market rents in our national organization. The national organization attempted to get a bill passed to disallow discrimination against Section 8 vouchers; that bill failed. Additionally, as a part of the first big CARES Act that was passed in May 2020, one of the allowed uses of the funds was for additional landlord incentives for new or existing landlords. We have not yet created a program to increase incentives for landlords. We have outsourced the management of our Section 8 Program; it is managed by the current Deputy Director of the Newmarket Housing Authority, which is partly why we have not been able to innovate too much. Mr. Welch said he and Ms. Labrie have discussed ways we could use funds to incentivize landlords, but no structure has yet been placed around that.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Welch reported that one of our residents, Ray Goulet, had his 98th birthday on January 14th. Police, a veterans' group, friends, and family showed up outside to celebrate. Ray received around 5,000 birthday cards from all over the world. He stormed the beaches of Normandy in the D-Day invasion. Thank you to Property Manager Jeramie Whipple and staff for organizing this.

V. OLD BUSINESS

There was no discussion.

VI. OPERATIONAL REPORTS

A. ORGANIZATION CHART

There was no discussion.

B. WAIT LIST

There was no discussion.

C. VACANCY REPORT

There was no discussion.

D. LANDLORD-TENANT

Attorney Bosen reported that the Supreme Court brief for the bed bug case has been filed.

E. FINANCIAL REPORTS

Chair Ferrini referred to AMP 1 operating income of \$370,000 which is 154% over budget, and asked Ms. Labrie to explain the reasoning behind that. Ms. Labrie reported that we received additional money from the CARES Act from COVID relief for AMP 1 and AMP 2. We drew down in the month of November, then for the operating funds that we didn't yet use in prior months, we drew those down in December.

Chair Ferrini asked if there is a point at which we are too cash rich in respect to reserves and if there is a point at which we need to spend money in our reserves as a result. Ms. Labrie said that there's nothing at this time that she know of that says we have too much. She knows of instances in the past where HUD has recouped money from housing authorities and there is currently a lawsuit out relating to that. It is recommended that we have four months of expenses in reserves at any given point. We are beyond four months at this point.

Chair Ferrini asked if Mr. Welch could speak to the new budget draw template and what could be expected to be seen going forward. Mr. Welch said this template, put together by Ms. Labrie, shows the draws relative to the budget while we're proceeding with the project. He said when we do a monthly requisition with Eckman and the bill is paid, those are drawn and we keep track of those expenses relative to what the total budget is.

Commissioner Main asked when auditors show up. Ms. Labrie said there is a pre-audit in May or June. The full audit is done in September. We have 4 audits currently going on at the Managed Properties; those are due by the end of February and March.

Commissioner Rodenhizer motioned to approve the operational reports, as presented. Commissioner Pickering seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:

AYES	NAYS	ABSTENTIONS
Commissioner Leith		
Commissioner Main		
Commissioner Pickering		
Commissioner Rodenhizer		
Chair Ferrini		

The motion passed.

VII. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

There was no discussion.

VIII. NONPUBLIC SESSION

Commissioner Rodenhizer motioned to enter Nonpublic Session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3,II(a) for the purpose of discussing an employee matter. Commissioner Leith seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:

AYES	NAYS	ABSTENTIONS
Commissioner Leith		
Commissioner Main		
Commissioner Pickering		
Commissioner Rodenhizer		
Chair Ferrini		

The motion passed.

Commissioner Rodenhizer motioned to exit Nonpublic session and reenter the public portion of the meeting. Commissioner Leith seconded the motion. The votes were as follows:

AYES	NAYS	ABSTENTIONS
Commissioner Leith		
Commissioner Main		
Commissioner Pickering		
Commissioner Rodenhizer		
Chair Ferrini		

The motion passed.

The Commissioners completed the annual review of Executive Director Craig Welch.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Main motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Rodenhizer seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The votes were as follows:

AYES	NAYS	ABSTENTIONS
Commissioner Leith		
Commissioner Main		
Commissioner Pickering		
Commissioner Rodenhizer		
Chair Ferrini		

The motion passed and the meeting adjourned.