

WINOOSKI HOUSING AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES OF APRIL 28, 2020 SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

A meeting of the Winooski Housing Authority Board of Commissioners was held electronically as allowed by special Vermont Statute due to COVID-19 requirements.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Potvin at 10:03 A.M. Upon roll call those present and absent were as follows:

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Potvin, Vice Chair and Commissioner Patricia Raymond, Commissioner Robert Arnell, Commissioner Nicole Mace

COMMISSIONER ABSENT: Commissioner Jay Lambert

OFFICERS PRESENT: Executive Director KR Decarreau

1. Update of Activities During COVID 19 Operations

Update according to the email attached.

Spending the week figuring out how to open for next stage.

Roof on 31 East Spring Street is underway.

Commissioner Raymond suggested using the Community Room for meetings to maintain social distance.

ED Decarreau discussed that there are new rules for everything, and it will be difficult to sort through how to proceed until more is known. All decisions will be difficult until there is clarity.

Commissioner Arnell – how is compliance going?

ED Decarreau explained that for the folks who speak English as a native language and are resistant to compliance due to a source of information that tells them this is not a true emergency. We have done our best. We are the landlord and cannot force people to social distance. There are just a few people in each building that will not comply.

For those who need information interpreted, we are working with all of our partners to provide information. We are working with the school and VRRP and AALV to try to make sure everyone understands the issues. We did work with the State to try to move this issue forward. We continue to try to communicate through all means. All sources are working together to address the issues in a coordinated manner.

Commissioner Arnell noted that the education will need to be done culturally.

ED Decarreau noted that we are calling everyone weekly to make sure that we understand the issues.

2. Hazard Pay Approval

ED Decarreau noted that rather than a percentage premium, we suggest a straight dollar method because the risk is the same, regardless of base pay.

Commissioner Raymond asked as to whether this covered anyone who was working. ED Decarreau noted it was just those that are exposed to a risk.

Commissioner Arnell asked about room in the budget and whether there were other funds available. ED Decarreau noted that there are funds from HUD that will cover this as well as other expenses we are absorbing.

Commissioner Mace noted that there were state bills addressing hazard pay and wanted to make sure the definitions were consistent. She noted that the fund from the CARES fund. ED Decarreau noted that we would stay tuned to the state bill.

MOTION by Commissioner Arnell: *I move that the Board Of Commissioners approve the Personnel Policy Amendment as submitted (or amended) and set the rate for Hazard Pay at \$3 per hour.*

Seconded by Commissioner Raymond

Motion Passes 4 - 0

### 3. Vermont Heating and Ventilating Contract Approval

#### a. Heating and Ventilating Project at 65 Barlow Street

ED Decarreau noted that there is a list of projects that must be done to comply with terms of the bond. The bid is \$100,000 over budget. We do not believe there is another way to bring this closer to the budgeted amount. We will look at other means of making up for the overage.

Commissioner Mace asked about why the bids were higher than the budget. ED Decarreau noted that the bid may not have been high, the estimates were likely low. This is consistent with the experience of other PHA administrators.

Commissioner Arnell noted that we need to carefully monitor progress carefully and pump the brakes if needed.

Commissioner Mace asked if there will be contingency costs. ED Decarreau noted that the contract is written to a solid cost unless there are other issues outside of the specs we issued. The question is what is found as the system is opened up.

MOTION by Commissioner Mace: *I move that we authorize the Chair of the Board of Commissioners to sign the contract with Vermont Heating and Ventilation for the project at The Terraces.*

Seconded by Commissioner Arnell

Motion Passes 4 - 0

### 4. HUD Waiver Initial Discussion

See Board Notes

HUD is issuing waivers that we can opt to adopt. Wendy Sweet is working with ED Decarreau to determine which make sense and do not cause a backlog of work that we could not meet.

Commissioner Arnell asked whether we would lose rent in the process. ED Decarreau noted that we get all of the rent, it is just a question of what HUD pays versus the tenant.

Commissioner Arnell noted that there has been a debate in the past as to who should perform inspections or whether the fire department should perform inspection. ED Decarreau noted that while WHA inspects other landlord where we have a voucher, Burlington Housing Authority inspects property we own. The fire department inspection that covers different items than our inspections.

ED Decarreau noted that we are looking at a way to improve our leasing process with follow up to make sure people who are new to the program understand how to interact with the WHA.

Commissioner Raymond asked whether we have translation services to help with the lease up process. ED Decarreau noted that while we could translate the documents well and it still presents a challenge to understand the implications.

Commissioner Mace noted that anyone can get lost when signing up for benefits. ED Decarreau noted that we have to slow down for everyone, and follow up to be sure folks understand the issues.

## 5. Other Business

There being no further business, Commissioner Mace moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Arnell. Vote 4 — O. The meeting was adjourned by Chair Potvin at 10:53 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

KR Decarreau

Secretary

UPDATE from email of April 21, 2020:

We are working our way through the issues involved in reopening. During our time we have:

- Switched software and are now working in the new system
  - The landlord payment had some issues that are now corrected
- We have changed our internal process to improve this process
- We can now work paperlessly, across functions, and from home for most functions.
  - We will issue our first checks out of the new software. Reports are improved

- We will continue training over the next few weeks as we integrate more features in the financial software
- We are working on procedures and instructions to support the new processes
- We are prepared to award the following contracts
  - Electrical upgrades at the family housing properties
  - HVAC system at the Terraces (65 Barlow)
- We have delayed the bid on the exterior work at the family properties until May 18 when we anticipate being able to hold a walkthrough
- We are on hold with the roof work at Spring Gardens (31 East Spring Street) until we get that clearance from the Governor. We anticipate May 15 at this point. We will still ask that workers not pass through the building as was previously planned.
- We are working on several bid packages to finish the work required by the bonds. I will have a more formal update at the next meeting.
- We are working on a plan to use some of our HCV (Section 8) vouchers as Project-based vouchers. This means agreeing to use a voucher for a particular new affordable unit where the voucher stays with the apartment, not the person. It is important to finance new units.
- We received waivers from HUD for particular regulations that cannot be fulfilled under the stay at home order. We are evaluating which we should use.
- We have organized calling tenants on a regular basis to stay in touch with their issues and make sure we can respond.
- We put our regular SASH newsletter out with lots of information
- We have continuously communicated new suggestions from the CDC and the Health Department.
- We are catching up with some training for folks that have been too busy to stop and take courses.
- We are working on a strategy for dealing with a case (or an outbreak) in a building.

#### Staffing:

- Staffing on Property:
  - One maintenance person working on emergencies (Hazard Pay Requested)
  - One maintenance person disinfecting all high touch areas daily and exceptionally high touch area twice daily (Hazard Pay Requested)
  - Two admin staff sharing front desk duties that involve managing packages and issuing keys to residents (Hazard Pay requested for hours in the office)
  - Finance staff working in the office two days a week on processing invoices
  - HCV staff working two days a week processing income changes for those folks who lost income, keeping voucher process in compliance (this relied on handling documents that cannot go home) and continue to issue vouchers.
- Staff Working at Home
  - Executive Director
  - Program Director
  - Maintenance Director
  - Leasing Agent
  - Property Manager
  - SASH Nurse
- Staff at Home
  - Custodial Supervisor and two part time staff
  - Four Maintenance staff

We continue to pay staff their full paychecks and are receiving funds from HUD (extra admin fees from Section 8 program) that will cover this cost.

We are working with the Post Office (through the Mayor) to be sure that if we have a case of COVID 19, they will continue to deliver mail. They have refused to deliver to other buildings until a process was negotiated (using the Congressional Delegation). This is unacceptable as we should not be handing personal mail and their proposed solution is to have the landlords pick up and distribute all mail.

We will start bringing maintenance staff back next week to do landscaping and to work on turning over vacant units so we can lease them as soon as possible.

We will start bringing cleaning staff back to “spring clean” the buildings as we have only done disinfecting and very limited cleaning.

We will allow two people in the office “pods” (offices sharing a common bathroom) next week. We will not require people to come back, but allow work to be done during regular hours. Up until now, we have had staff that need to go into the office work off hours so that only one person at a time was in the office.