

WINOOSKI HOUSING AUTHORITY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING

4:15 P.M.
March 20, 2023

ZOOM Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8445637676>
Dial by your location
1 646 558 8656 US
Meeting ID: 844 563 7676

*For Dial In Instructions please call our office at (802) 655 2360
prior to noon on January 20, 2023.*

MINUTES

PRESENT: Diane Potvin, Chair; Pat Raymond, Vice Chair; Nicole Mace, Commissioner, Marnie Owen, Commissioner Abeer Al Zubaidy

OFFICERS: KR Decarreau, Executive Director

Meeting called to order at 4:15 pm

1. Public Comment

No public in attendance

2. Approve Agenda – No Changes Proposed by Staff

3. Approve Minutes of January 20, 2023

Motion to approve by Commissioner Raymond, Seconded by Commissioner Mace

MOTION CARRIES: 3-0¹

4. Present December Budget to Actual Report

See Board Notes

Commissioner Mace asked about the variance regarding rental income. Discrepancy. ED Decarreau explained that when looking at Rent, the HAP payment and the tenant rent should be looked at together as we cannot predict the actual percentage of each. Decarreau also noted that HUD will pay for two months of vacancy in apartments that are turned over. Noting that the one apartment that was damages was empty longer than expected.

Commissioner Mace asked about the Main Street rent. Decarreau noted that we are remediates a mold problem that required to take an apartment off line for a period of time. The deficit in Main Street operating included the recording of capital improvement as operating.

¹ Commissioner Al-Zubaidy joined in section 6

5. Present Proposed Annual Plan Update for FY 24

See Board Notes

ED Decarreau noted an issue getting the Resident Advisory Board group together due illnesses. This caused a delay in the approval process². Discussion about the process took place. ED Decarreau noted that if the Plan cannot be established formally, it will still be the plan.

ED Decarreau explained that the "safe, affordable, and decent" was inadequate for a customer service strategy. Decarreau wanted to change "decent" to "dignified".

Commissioner Mace asked whether the partnership with developers and the Zoning requirements were achievable. ED Decarreau noted that the Zoning was changed as needed and that a partnership was established to bid on St. Stephen's. And regular meetings with CHT and Evernorth.

Commissioner Owen asked about our role in the St. Stephen's property given the sale and the demolition of the Church building. ED Decarreau noted that the deal has not closed and should it fall apart. We will be available to bid if the deal falls through and we can talk to the new owner about a land lease should it go through.

ED Decarreau noted that the Armory property is also on the radar. Work is being done to try to keep the property available for development. Decarreau acknowledged that how the property is developed is important, including that working with the City's goals for mixed income housing, including the missing middle.

Commissioner Owen supported the change to dignified. Making sure that the staff goals are in position description and folks are held accountable. Development for new employees with intermittent raises based on accomplishments. Decarreau wants to extend that practice to other employees.

Commissioner Al-Zubaidy noted that the supervisors need more oversight to get better feedback about their performance. She noted the Managers need to oversee the work. Al-Zubaidy advised us to use the school to have meetings with tenants at Elm and Franklin Street. Commissioner Al-Zubaidy noted that families needs education about the services are available to them. Decarreau noted that we have connection with the Vermont Language Justice Project and can work on this video. Decarreau noted other videos are available.

ED Decarreau noted about the number of families who cannot pay rent after having other sources pay rent through the pandemic.

6. Approve FY 24 Budget with Discussion of post-Retirement Impact on Salaries and Wages for FY 25

Commissioner Mace moved that budget be amended such that the Executive Director compensation increase is equivalent to other staff at 5.5%. Commissioner Owen seconded.

Motion to approve as amended by Commissioner Owen, Seconded by Commissioner Raymond.

² This was unresolved as we had a death among the members and unable to establish a quorum.

MOTION CARRIES: 5-0

7. Discuss In-person Meetings for April

Attempt to move to a Monday meeting.

Other Business:

ED Decarreau attended a meeting at the school regarding homelessness among the families. Some families are losing housing for many reasons. Landlords are dropping out of Section 8 as there is more income available in the market-rate units. It is also true that some of our families are tough on units.

Commissioner Al-Zubaidy noted that many of the families impacted are large, so finding new housing is difficult. Al-Zubaidy also noted that the condition of apartments are old and tired, making it difficult for families to keep the units clean. Also noted was the settlement of families in housing that is sub-standard and in some cases, families are homeless more than once.

Decarreau noted that while the gold-standard for the Section 8 program was the voucher with its freedom to move, the safe place now is in permanently affordable housing where families are not displaced for economic reasons and has staff with the expertise to address issues as they arise. Decarreau noted that WHA will continue to work with the school on these issues.

Decarreau notes that when inspecting a property that is failing, either by the Housing Authority or by the City, enforcement may result in more homelessness.

Decarreau noted that ultimately, we need to build our way out of this issue. Decarreau and Al-Zubaidy both acknowledged that we cannot build fast enough. Decarreau also noted that buying these properties is a challenge because of their condition and that landlords are not willing to sell.

Commissioner Mace stated that we need to leverage the Housing Trust Fund and the Landlord Registry to force landlords to make repairs and to keep properties permanently affordable. Mace noted that it is difficult to solve the issue due to market-driven forces. Mace suggested a joint meeting with the City to start working on these issues once the new Housing staff member is hired.

Decarreau noted that families are arriving in the area to extremely high rent. Because jobs are plentiful, the families are getting a number of jobs per person to pay the rent. Then when they apply for a housing voucher, they do not qualify because they make too much money.

Commissioner Al-Zubaidy asked that WHA work with the Refugee Resettlement office on issues that are caused by the resettlement process and noted that it is unfair to families who are leasing sub-standard housing and find themselves caught between having a home and living in circumstances that meet minimum housing requirements.

8. Adjourn at 5:30

Motion to approve by Commissioner Raymond, Seconded by Commissioner Mace.

MOTION CARRIES: 5-0