

January 5, 2021 Ipswich Housing Authority (IHA) Board of Directors (Board) Meeting Minutes

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held remotely pursuant to Open Meeting Law waiver/guidance contained in Governor Baker's 3/12/2020 Executive Order.

Roll Call

On a roll call, Board members Charles Allen, Chair; Richard Kallman, Vice Chair; Judith Butterly, Secretary; Jacqueline Hayward, Treasurer; and Glenn Gibbs all voted present.

Also present: Kate McGuire, IHA Executive Director (ED); Alex Russell, IHA Maintenance Director (MD); Jessica Sadoway, Assistant IHA Director/Finance Director; Julie Spencer, IHA Public Housing Manager; Kathryn Greenwood, IHA Receptionist; and architects Thaddeus Siemasko and Steffano Basso from SV Design.

Chair Allen brought the January 5, 2021 Board meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

Query Time

No queries.

Bills

Gibbs made a motion to approve payment of IHA bills, seconded by Butterly. Vote was 5 to 0 in favor.

SV Design RFS

Architects Thaddeus Siemasko and Stefano Basso of SV Design, the selected design team for the upcoming Agawam Village renovation project, were introduced to Board members. Siemasko's presentation to the Board included information pertaining to SV Design's background, specialization, and vision. He noted that the SV Design team was looking forward to receiving feedback from the community and Board, and said that a customized and collaborative design approach for the Agawam Village project will be the key to its success.

To illustrate SV Design's understanding of the overall projects goals, Siemasko reviewed them with the Board: meeting applicable codes/design standards for improved health and safety of residents; achieving sustainability/energy conservation; meeting budget and schedule; efficiently using funds to minimize long-term maintenance/repair costs; and enhance overall aesthetic quality of the Village to strengthen resident pride of place.

Siemasko then asked the Board for input. Allen said that wanted the project to stabilize the Agawam Village property and avoid the need to invest major capital reserves for at least 20 years. Siemasko agreed with that objective, noting that the design approach will be to address existing problems at Agawam Village with long-lasting solutions, then focus on the "nice to have" items. Siemasko said that their first step will be to conduct a site visit at Agawam Village so they can thoroughly assess its current condition and create a computer aided design (CAD) based plan. Allen also commented that one of the Village's strongest components is its new HVAC equipment, and that IHA has data it can share with SV Design.

MD introduced himself to Siemasko and Basso and explained that he has an original handicap unit that is currently vacant, which will allow the SV Design team to assess the unit along with its original work, design, and condition so they may expect the same from the other units. MD also stated that he has original blueprints for the IHA property along with various plans developed over the years as the property evolved over the years. Siemasko said that MD's extensive knowledge of the IHA property will be a great asset to the design team, and the opportunity to review the blue prints and his participation in the unit walk-through will be very helpful.

Allen mentioned that when IHA submits the loan application to HUD (Capital Needs Study) for the Agawam Village renovation project, the goal would be to be able to explain to the CN assessor what IHA intends to do.

Butterly expressed that she cannot visualize what the renovated Agawam Village will look like. ED responded that unit interiors will be refurbished to look fresher and brighter. MD added that new landscaping will substantially improve the Village's exterior appearance. Likewise, the use of proportions, color, and trim for the building exteriors will be important. Allen emphasized that the Board's goal is to improve the overall aesthetics of IHA's property, while Gibbs cited the Shaw's shopping plaza refurbishment as an example of how the use of a different color scheme during the project really modernized the look.

Basso remarked that the design approach for the project will be "low cost, high-impact," and that SV Design will use a cost estimator on the project. As IHA and SV refine the design, they will have a clearer idea of what can be done. Mr. Basso emphasized that they first need to eliminate risk and liability exposure before addressing aesthetics. The Board then thanked the architects for their time and presentation.

Minutes of 12/1/20 Board Meeting

Hayward made motion to accept the 12/1/20 meeting minutes, seconded by Butterly. Vote was 5 to 0 in favor.

Correspondence

Letter to Board from Fenton, Ewald & Associates, P.C. re Agency Wide Revenues and Expenses Analysis of Non-routine Expenditures and Credits as of November 30, 2020 for the eight months prior.

ED Report

ED reported on the following matters:

IHA A133 Audit FY2020

ED stated that all three LHA's (Ipswich, Salisbury, and Hamilton) received a "no findings" score. She specified that IHA's Federal Audit has been completed, while the IHA's State Audit is nearing completion.

Snow Removal Policy

Board members expressed their opinions re the draft Snow Removal Policy. Butterly asked where residents can put cleared snow if the policy prohibits its placement on walkways, roadways, or adjacent parking spots. It was suggested that there may be areas of green space that can accommodate snow without preventing vehicle use of parking spaces. Board members also discussed language on last page of the policy draft, which ED mentioned had been previously approved by DHCD counsel. MD and ED will refine the Board's feedback along with Gibbs's previously submitted editorial revisions to the snow removal policy. Butterly moved to accept the snow removal policy, as amended. Seconded by Gibbs. Vote was 5 to 0 in favor.

Contract for Financial Assistance #12 (CFA #12)

IHA will be receiving additional funds from DHCD to replace refrigerators at Southern Manor (\$4,408) and cover cost of asbestos abatement for the bathroom upgrade at Caroline Avenue (\$43,378). ED stated that CFA #12 will also cover the 2024 Formula Funding award in amount of \$216,230. Kallman made motion to approve CFA #12, seconded by Butterly. Vote was 5 to 0 in favor.

Budget Revision

ED stated that DHCD has allocated \$46,974 from the Cares Act Fund to reimburse IHA for COVID-related expenses. Butterly made a motion to approve the budget revision, seconded by Gibbs. Vote was 5 to 0 in favor.

Creative Placemaking Project

ED presented the Creative Placemaking Outdoor Communal Space (Concept 4) design plan layout and explained that the project space is designed to be intergenerational. Ensuing Board discussion focused on ways to improve the project, including possibility of adding a back support to the stump seating stools surrounding the amphitheatre stage and adding a third row so residents can bring their own chairs; and adding benches in the PlayRoom so adults can supervise their children as it may act as a barrier from the road. ED stated that the design plan will be sent out to the tenants with a survey for seeking their feedback. Gibbs offered assistance to help with the survey as well.

Kallman asked if the quality of the Creative Placemaking project could be better if the LHA were to receive donations from the community. Allen commented that there may be town organizations that would be willing to help out. ED asked Board if they could use their contacts to see if anyone would like to sponsor aspects of the project. Gibbs suggested memorial benches as one possible approach. Gibbs also offered his help with this effort.

When asked about the project timeline, ED said she was hoping for project completion by end of 2021.

Maintenance Report

MD told Board that one of the vacant apartments has been leased, while he and his team continue to refurbish the other vacant units, some of which need considerable work. MD also informed the Board that: (1) the ADA project at Caroline Avenue is moving along; (2) the MOD Phase at Southern Manor is 99% completed as the MD and his team are ironing out a few last items including a door for the laundry room; and (3) common areas within IHA continue to be sanitized and work orders are still being limited to emergency work only to avoid contact with residents.

Gibbs asked MD about the timeframe of some of the units listed on the MD's Maintenance Report. MD explained that many of the vacant units at Caroline Avenue require a lot of work to get them ready for leasing. ED also mentioned there are logistical issues during the leasing phase that lengthen the process for achieving occupancy. ED further explained the difference between State and Federal public housing programs at IHA, since each program has its own regulations and requirements.

Prior to adjournment, Kallman inquired about the summary of units (months leased) on the financial report. ED explained that IHA is struggling with delinquent accounts and is trying to work with people to bring them into compliance, but it has been difficult.

Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Board, a motion to adjourn was made by Gibbs, seconded by Butterly. Vote to adjourn passed unanimously, and meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Documents/Exhibits Used at Meeting

- IHA Vendor Accounting Check Register for Checks Dated 12/31/2020
- Financial Statement November 2020
- IHA Executive Director Report 1/05/2021
- Monthly Maintenance Report
- Snow Removal Policy (Draft)
- SV Design RFS
- IHA A133 Audit FY 2020
- Creative Placemaking Concept Design Phase