



# Fitchburg Housing Authority

## Minutes of FHA Regular Board Meeting, September 28, 2022 Community Room, 54 Wallace Ave, Fitchburg, MA

A Regular Meeting of the Fitchburg Housing Authority was called to order by Chair, Linda Byrne at 8:35 AM on Wednesday, September 28, 2022, in the Community Room at 54 Wallace Avenue in the City of Fitchburg, Massachusetts.

### **Present:**

FHA Board Members:

Linda Byrne, Chair  
Adam Goodwin, Vice Chair  
David Rousseau, Treasurer  
David Basilio, Assistant Treasurer  
Thomas Hughes, Member (Arrived at 8:49 am)

FHA Staff:

Douglas M. Bushman, Executive Director, FHA Board Secretary  
Andrew Skoog, Deputy Director  
Kim Hergert, Director of Finance/HR  
Marc Cunningham, Assistant Foreman-Elderly  
Erica Shorts, Director of Elderly Housing  
Liz Resto, Assistant Housing Manager-Elderly  
Genesis Ruiz, Director of Family Housing

FHA Tenants:

Wallace Tower- June Sears, Richard Avant  
Daniels Heights- Janice Spellane  
Canton Valley- Kathy Deery

### **Absent:**

### **Quorum: Yes (Quorum Requirement: Three FHA Board Members)**

#### **1. Motion to Open Meeting**

Chair, Linda Byrne opened the meeting at 8:35am

**Move: David Rousseau**

**Second: David Basilio All in favor**

#### **2. Motion to Open Public Comments.**

**Move: David Rousseau**

**Second: David Basilio All in favor**

Linda Byrne, FHA Chair, noted that when people speak during the public comments, they should not be referencing individuals. They should be specific about the issue and not use insults. Douglas Bushman, Executive Director, stated that he went to view the properties after the previous board meeting. He did not see the problems that the tenants spoke about. He did see debris from the ongoing construction project at Canton Valley. Kathy Deery, Canton Valley Resident, stated that the construction workers are not going into the community room. She said that the reason she brought that up at the last board meeting is because the FHA is short staffed on maintenance employees and they need more help. The Executive Director also stated that 2 weeks ago he was in a meeting at the Canton Valley Community Room and debris rained down on them because the new roof was being installed. Linda Byrne suggested that the community room be closed during the construction and notices be posted in the laundry area so residents will still be able to see the notices that are normally posted in the community room. All agreed and the community room will be closed until the construction is completed. The Chair stated that she would also go to Canton Valley on her own to see how dirty the community room is. Kathy also stated that there is a case that HUD is involved in and HUD stepped in because the FHA receives federal funds. The Executive Director also stated that on October 2, 2022 a second meeting will be held with the Canton Valley tenants to discuss the ongoing construction and the Family Resident Service Coordinator, Felix Velazquez, will be there.

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3. **Motion to Close Public Comments.**  
**Move:** Adam Goodwin                      **Second:** David Basilio                      All in favor

4. **Motion to Approve Minutes of Regular Session Meeting held on August 31, 2022**  
**Move:** David Rousseau                      **Second:** Adam Goodwin                      All in favor

5. **Motion to Approve Minutes of Executive Meeting held on August 31, 2022**  
**Move:** David Rousseau                      **Second:** Adam Goodwin                      All in favor

6. **Motion to Approve FHA Payables for July-August FY 2022 (Attachment A)**  
**Move:** Adam Goodwin                      **Second:** David Basilio                      All in favor

7. **Motion to Approve January- August Financials FY 2022 (Attachment B)**  
**Move:** Adam Goodwin                      **Second:** David Basilio                      All in favor  
The Executive Director noted that the reserves are increasing. He also informed the board that the budget guidelines are out for next year and it increased by 9% and the salary budget increased by 5%. He is happy about this and is hoping to be submitting the budget in November.

8. **Motion to Accept Amendment #26 DHCD Contract for Financial Assistance for \$101,310.91 (Attachment E)**  
**Move:** Adam Goodwin                      **Second:** David Basilio                      All in favor  
The Executive Director noted that these funds are being returned to the FHA for project 097161 for 76 Mechanic St. These funds were the sales proceeds from the sale of 132 Pleasant St and 16 Prospect St. The total sales proceeds are \$252,339.91 but DHCD stated that the amendment only reflects a portion of that amount due to their own internal accounting rules and, once the amendment is approved, the total sales proceeds will be forwarded to the FHA for this project.

9. **Director's Report**  
The Executive Director informed the board that the FHA Master Reporting Sheet will be updated by November. He also discussed the Vacancy Fees. DHCD will possibly be reducing the housing authority's subsidies to recoup the vacancy fees that have built up over the years. The FHA owes \$251,155.77 in fees including 2016 through what has accrued in 2022. If they did this our reserves would be drastically reduced. Adam Goodwin, Vice Chair, noted that he wondered if this is an attempt of the outgoing administration to recoup money. The Executive Director stated that DHCD thinks that housing authorities are flush with cash. The employee appreciation event, Union negotiation meeting and YMCA parking were all discussed.

Andrew Skoog, Deputy Director, discussed the evictions. There are currently 25-14-day notices and 14-30-day notices that have been served and more are coming. Genesis Ruiz, Director of Family Housing, had to leave the board meeting because an eviction was being conducted during the meeting. Tom Hughes, Board Member, was asking if these tenants were offered any assistance. David Rousseau, Treasurer, told him that there were numerous notices and calls about the SHERA and RAFT assistance programs. Tom Hughes, Member, stated some tenants may be too embarrassed to ask for assistance.

The Executive Director informed the board that the Reasonable Accommodation Policy should be updated by the next board meeting. He also noted that he and Yajaira Aldrich, Director of Customer & Application Services, presented information at the Fitchburg Disability Commission meeting last week and The Director of Customer & Application Services did a phenomenal job. The FHA has a much better system for following up with Reasonable Accommodation requests now. The Executive Director discussed the MAHAMS convention and how our maintenance employees are working toward their certifications.

The Deputy Director discussed the vacancies. They have increased and the majority are due to deaths, nursing home transfers, and transfers within the housing authority. The Executive Director noted this is a big problem. There are so many families that need housing. The FHA is going to slow down on the internal transfer requests to try to reduce the number of vacancies. Most of the transfers are due to water in the basement. Because of the high number of vacant units and the decrease in maintenance staff The Executive Director has mandated overtime for the maintenance employees as per the union agreement. They are each required to work 14 hours per week overtime and this will be reassessed in two weeks. Even when the units are ready to occupy it takes longer to house a family

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because of the CHAMP system. The FHA has pulled 3 lists so far for one of our Water St units and we still have not been able to house a family.

**10. Motion to Approve submittal of the Resident Service Coordinator Grant Renewal (Attachment J)**

**Move: Thomas Hughes**

**Second: Adam Goodwin**

**All in favor**

**11. DHCD Capital Improvement Plan**

The Executive Director noted the CIP Plan is not approved yet.

**12. Massachusetts ARPA Fund for DHCD Public Housing-waiting for FISH#.**

**13. Canton Valley Master Meter**

The Deputy Director discussed the Canton Valley Master Meter issue. The Executive Director added provision on the agreement. The FHA signed agreement letter and mailed back.

**Construction Update**

- **FISH 097076 GA Basement Project** -The state came up with additional money to do a prototype building to see if they can stop the water from coming in the basements.
- **FISH097124 Canton Valley CSI project -Reminder: November 15 at 2pm**  
**Rededication ceremony at Canton Valley.**
- **FISH097127 AUI Durkin** -Early October there will be a meeting with the tenants to discuss the relocation plan.
- **FISH097132 Wallace Tower MOD-PHASE**  
The FHA is waiting for DHCD to sign off then we can go out to bid.
- **FISH097147 Green Acres Boiler Project**  
The FHA received the funds from this project. Kim Hergert did a great job.
- **FISH097153 GA Admin Building** -The Executive Director discussed redoing the drawings to increase the size of the admin building to 14,000 square feet. A special building committee will be created working with Fitchburg State University. Linda Byrne will chair this committee and they will work on trying to find alternative ways to increase the funding for this project. 6 ADA buildings will be added and the facades of some buildings will be updated.
- **FISH097156 Creative Place Making**
- **3 Pyramids Building**-The Executive Director stated that FSU wants to sell the 3 Pyramids Building to FHA for \$250,000.00 but he wants to buy it for less than that.
- **174 Milk St Construction Project**-The bid was released but it has been decided that the FHA will rebid this as a complete renovation and release the bid in December. Kim Hergert, Director of Finance & HR, has done a phenomenal job for the Federal Property Conversions.

**14. Motion to Submit the HUD Family Self Sufficiency Grant**

**Move: Adam Goodwin**

**Second: Thomas Hughes**

**All in favor**

Dave Rousseau, Treasurer, noted that the Durkin Building was the only one who still had a Tenant Association. He also informed the board that Marguerite will be coming to talk with the Daniels Heights tenants about starting a Tenant Association.

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**15. Motion to Adjourn Regular Meeting (10:11 am)**

**Move: Adam Goodwin**

**Second: Thomas Hughes**

**All in favor**

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