**PROVIDENCE HOUSING AUTHORITY**

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**REGULAR MEETING:**

**Thursday, April 30, 2020; 5:30 p.m.**

**Conference Call Phone Access Dial 888-788-0099 Code 871-0130-9631**

***In accordance with Executive Order 20-25, the meeting was held entirely by telephone conference call. Members and anyone else speaking identified themselves when speaking.***

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Nicolas Retsinas called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present: Absent:**

Nicolas Retsinas John Igliozzi

Thomas Ryan Eddie Peguero

Vivian Medina

Jessica Cigna

Lawrence D’Alfonso

Lonzie Doggett

Rochelle Lee

Mary Kay Harris

Roger Giraud

Nine members were present, constituting a quorum to conduct business.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Chairman Retsinas called for a motion to accept and approve the minutes of the April 1, 2020 meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Lee and was seconded by Commissioner Doggett. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

**Resident Comments:**

None

**Chairman’s Report:**

Chairman Retsinas elected to withhold his remarks & turn over to Executive Director.

**Executive Director Report:**

Director Sanzaro updated the Board on the following items:

1. **Fire at Dexter Manor:** 
   1. Last week, there was a fire in the laundry room at Dexter Manor. There were no injuries and minimal property damage. It was found that the vents to the dryers needed to be cleaned and the laundry vendor coordinated visits to all PHA laundry rooms to address issue immediately.
2. **Stabbing at Chad Brown:**
3. On April 28th, there was a double stabbing that took place at Chad Brown and is still under investigation. Neither were PHA residents and there were no fatalities.
4. **Unemployment Fraud:**
5. This week the PHA found out that some of the employees have been a victim of unemployment fraud where someone has filed unemployment claims in their name without their knowledge. Channel 10 recently aired that this is an issue with the number of unemployment claims. The PHA is following the Department of Labor & Training’s guidance and reported it to the Attorney General/RI State Police. Each effected employee has been provided instructions including filing a police report.
6. **Broad Waivers from HUD:**
   1. HUD released a broad waiver with flexibilities for some of the regulations that guide housing authority plans. The PHA team must meet in order to review and formally adopt some of the new adaptations to guidelines. In many cases, the PHA has made adjustments that made sense, and in some cases, the PHA continues with many of the everyday work like recertifications in addition to properly serving housing needs and the impacts of COVID. The PHA will submit a formal adoption with HUD and share with the Board of Commissioners at the next Board meeting.
7. **The HUD eviction moratorium was extended:** 
   1. HUD just released a FAQs on this topic and is encouraging Public Housing Authorities to market the eviction moratorium to residents and participants titled Temporary Suspension of Evictions for Nonpayment of Rent.
   2. As a reminder: Evictions for nonpayment of rent, and charges/fees for nonpayment of rent, have been temporarily suspended. This applies to all HUD-assisted participants from March 27, 2020 to July 24, 2020.
   3. If residents lost their job or had a significant loss of income, request an interim reexamination with the housing authority as soon as possible. Rents can be adjusted to reflect the change in income, or they may be eligible for a financial hardship exemption.
   4. HUD reminds residents that rent is still due during this time period and will accumulate if unpaid.
8. **Communications for COVID-19 response:**
   1. There have been various communications with the public health officials and federal, state and local leaders regarding COVID-19.
   2. HUD and PHARI continue to meet weekly to share the most up to date HUD notices and guidance. Housing Authorities discuss and share different approaches to the virus. The group connected with the Department of Health and the State’s Office of Health Aging last week where they were able to share their challenges. The main concern for the PHAs is they are unable to obtain information about positive cases.
   3. The PHA called various departments in the Boston Housing Authority to discuss approaches and procedures adopted to respond to COVID-19.
   4. The PHA continues to speak with the state offices about Public Housing successes and challenges such as Commerce RI. The State’s Office of Commerce did release a notice about essential workers and as the PHA and the rest of state anticipated a potential state shut down, the PHA studied the information and determined this employee to be essential in alignment with the RI Department of Health’s document “Identifying Critical Infrastructure Employees” dated April 7, 2020.
   5. (https://health.ri.gov/publications/guidelines/Identifying-Essential-Critical-Infrastructure-Workers.pdf), as the employees are performing essential functions in several categories. The PHA provided all employees with a letter in case that shut down did take place.

* Workers who support food, shelter, and social services, and other necessities of life for vulnerable groups and individuals, including in-need populations and COVID-19 responders.
* Workers responsible for the property management and maintenance, leasing of residential properties to provide individuals and families with ready access to available housing.
* Security staff who maintain building access control and physical security measures.
  1. Recently, the PHA connected with the Department of Health’s Office of Minority Health to discuss trends, challenges, Department of Health’s Infectious Disease team assigned to congregate communities which the PHA is NOT as they are CONDENSED COMMUNITIES. There were three positive cases in a building and without providing any information, they reviewed the PHAs approaches to limit the visitors to the high-rises and disinfecting the high touch surfaces along with the messaging and phase 1 and phase 2 planning documents.

The PHA provided a list of the high-rise’s addresses, the number of units to place our communities on their radar and opened an important line of communications. The PHA is also talking to public health officials and HEZ partners about the potential benefit of hosting a testing site.

* 1. The PHA is in constant communications with a variety of food partners and resources such as the RI Community Food Bank who is working with the PHA to continue the programs they used to have, Meals on Wheels. City of Providence who recently provided state resource of 300 frozen meals, Sodexo who set up shop to feed families twice a week at 50 Laurel Hill Ave, and YMCA is looking to set up a meal site at Chad Brown-in addition to the current food pantry located next door to the Chad Brown management office.

1. **Emergency & Relief Funding:** 
   1. FEMA:

The PHA has submitted their first request for public assistance to RI FEMA and attended the briefing on April 24th to gather more information/eligible expenditures and now awaiting more guidance for documentation scheduled for release on May 1st. The pending documents should allow the PHA to further the progress and understanding of how the process will work. The Finance Department has been carefully tracking the PHAs expenditures related to COVID-19 and the PHA is preparing to complete the necessary RI EMA form/project worksheets.

* 1. CDBG (resolution):

The PHA is currently working on applications for CDBG funds due on May 1st for new funding in three categories in the amount of approx. $160K for Employment & Financial Counseling, Domestic Violence case management & assistance, and Food resources.

* 1. HUD additional Operating Subsidies and Housing Choice Voucher administrative fees:

The first guidance calls on Friday, May 1st.

1. **The main points of Phase Two:** 
   1. Communications:

* Public Relations: The PHA has prepared a second public statement announcing PHASE 2 with more emphasis on the concerns with the elderly. Disabled high-rise buildings. This pubic statement will be paired with a memo requesting support from the Governor, Nicole-Alexander Smith and Mayor Elorza in our efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19.
* Resident Communications Plan: 1) The PHA took the approach after learning about 1 or 2 cases to send a postcard to residents stating that (1) there are positive cases of COVID-19 in all of the communities and NOW more than ever you must be vigilant-reminding them of the orders. 2) The PHA selected a ROBO calling service which will be operational in about 2 weeks.
  1. COVID-19 LINE On this postcard, also established a PHA COVID-19 hotline for any residents if they or anyone in their household that test positive so that they would self-report and the PHA could either assist or connect them with resources. Resident Services and Property Management handle the incoming calls.
  2. Emergency Resident Outreach Log has evolved and proven to be a great vehicle to work to serve the PHAs multiplying resident needs. The most recent wave connecting with residents who work in the medical field, those that need to register for Summer Camp with Providence.
  3. PHA Closed all Playground and basketball courts in the family developments and posted permanent signage.
  4. Employee temperature taking to ensure safety of staff and residents, many businesses are taking employee temperatures before they enter the workplace. The PHA as three stations where all employees who are reporting to work must take a health screening self-certification survey and take their temperatures. If they are exhibiting any signs of illness, they are sent home.
  5. The vendor services for security and disinfecting services were extended until June. The PHA added a fogging vendor to begin weekly disinfecting services for the ten administrative spaces for staff safety. The PHA then researched The current fogging equipment and found that they could fog smaller spaces such as employee vans and vacant units. The PHA established a safe space task force to do regular cleaning of those spaces and keeping them stocked with cleaning supplies.
  6. In the event an employee must work in the office, office protocols are very strict and limited to three hours or less and employees cannot come to work without clearance so that the PHA can limit their exposure to each other.
  7. The PHA was forced to create standard operating procedure for contact tracking.
  8. The PHA had done very well with acquiring PPE for the PHA staff.
  9. The PHA established low risk and high-risk tasks during the pandemic: Safe spaces include office space, grounds, vacant units and anything that does not include social interaction. Emergency work orders, entering the high-rises, and food service delivery are considered high-risk.
  10. Unions: After tracking the Over Time cost in the last month, which averaged about $55-$60K per week, the PHA worked closely with the unions to work out flexibilities to pay OT only when the staff is doing high-risk tasks in order to curb expenditures and better position the PHA to be able to stabilize and preserve the PHA’s ranks and fiscal position. The union agreed to this proposal for now as the PHA heads toward the uncertainties of the upcoming peak and agreed to work together for the long-term to face the unprecedented challenges ahead.

1. **Report:** 
   1. The PHA will send honorable member the next COVID-19 Report for April – May. Key high lights will be added which are being collected currently.

**RESOLUTIONS:**

**Resolution #** **4294 Approval of PHA’s Community Development Block Grant Disaster Relief Funding applications to the City of Providence**

**Status;** Commissioner D’Alfonso made a motion and Commissioner Lee seconded the motion. Commissioner Harris abstained from voting.

**Votes in favor: Chairman Retsinas, Vice Chairman Ryan, Commissioner Cigna, D’Alfonso, Doggett, Medina, Lee, Giraud, (8)**

**Votes opposed: none**

**Abstentions: Harris (1)**

**Resident Services Sub-Committee**:

Commissioner Cigna reported on the following updates relating to Resident Services:

**Program Updates / Discussion:**

* RAB members were being contacted individually twice per week to provide critical information and support to them. This outreach has evolved into several groups calls each week and individual calls. She asked Commissioners who are residents and also RAB members how this outreach is working for them; Commissioners Doggett and Medina reported the outreach is going well and RAB members are receiving useful information and support.
* The PHA finds it a bit difficult to serve her residents by phone and although working by phone is difficult, she continues to be able to assist residents with questions about rent payment and interim recertifications. She reported that residents are scared and worried in this crisis period. She related that residents are very thankful for food boxes provided by PHA. She related that PHA’s installation of rent drop-boxes have been very helpful to residents who were worried how to pay rent without PHA offices open.
* The that PHA has outreached to residents via phone calls and outreach letters. She reported that PHA has been able to successfully connect with 86% of the people we serve with phone calls. She noted that her staff encounters a range of situations during outreach calls, including one Section 8 participant who expressed an intent at self-harm; the Resident Service Coordinator addressed the situation and secured assistance for the Section 8 participant.
* The Department’s efforts to prepare residents for the upcoming end of the JPP HUD grant on 9/30/20. They reported that work began in January to assist residents to prepare for the end of the JPEID and work included outreach meetings with residents to offer planning support, including budgeting and financial literacy training.

**Capital Improvements Sub-Committee:**

Commissioner D’Alfonso provided the following summary of Capital Improvements Projects:

* A low bidder has been identified to replace the roof at 335 Hartford H-rise; a contract will be signed shortly.
* The Authority has awarded contracts to vinyl side 4 bldgs at Hartford and 6 duplexes at Scattered Sites; construction to begin shortly.
* A low bidder has been identified to install panic bar hardware on all common stairwell doors at Dexter I and II; funding will be CDBG from the City of Prov. and CFP funds.
* A contract has been awarded to replace porches and h-cap ramps at 3 Scattered Site duplexes; construction should start in May.
* The Authority has procured a roof consultant to assess the roof conditions all bldgs. at Chad and Hartford; a full report is expected shortly.
* The Authority will be applying for CDBG money with the COP to replace the sliding doors at Dexter, Parenti and Kilmartin; CFP funds will be needed to supplement the project.
* The Kilmartin elevator modernization project has begun and is in progress; this project is on hold due to COVID-19.
* A contract has been awarded to replace the apt. entrance door locks at Manton; construction date is scheduled for June due to COVID-19.
* The fire alarm/sprinkler installation project at 335 Hartford is approximately 98% complete; completion of this project is expected to be extended due to COVID-19.
* A bid package was awarded to install automatic sprinklers and fire alarm upgrades to Carroll Towers, Parenti Villa and Dexter Manor; construction may be postponed due to COVID-19.
* Councilman Narducci has presented a check for $33,000 to the Authority towards the young adult fitness park to be built at Chad Brown; CDBG and CFP funds will be used to supplement funding.
* Construction will be starting shortly to build the new tot lot at Hartford Park; this was funded through CDBG and CFP funds.
* The Lead Consultant has reviewed all the lead test results and is currently creating the scope of work. This project will be funded through a $975,000 lead grant awarded by HUD for Hartford, Chad/Ad/Sun and Manton; CFP funds will also be used for this project.

**Budget & Finance Sub-Committee:**

Allan Pacific updated the board on the following:

**Financial Overview**

* AMPS: March 31 bottom line reflects a YTD *operating* surplus of $ 2,445,772
* COCC: showing an operating surplus of $ 116,485
* Section 8 Admin: showing an operating surplus of approximately $ 438,613
* Section 8 HAP: has booked $ 119,840 as unspent for the 2020 YTD.

**New Funding Sources Related to COVID 19**

* $75,000 Grant through Strategy and Development to fund food distribution during the crisis
* 2 months of Operating subsidy ($3,000,000)– Available the first week of May
* 2 months of Section 8 Administrative Fee ($400,000) – Funding will be in the beginning of May

**Contract Updates**

* Delta Mechanical – Fire Protection System @ Hartford Tower – 335 Hartford Ave - $1,653,900. Funding Source is the 2017 Bond Proceeds. **Payments processed: $1,512,067.49 to date**
* Otis Elevator – Elevator Modernization @ Kilmartin Plaza. Funding Source is Bond. Contract total: $485,000 plus Change Order $120,025.25 = $605025.25. **Payments processed: $00.00 total to date**
* Otis Elevator – Elevator Modernization @ Dexter Manor. Funding Source is Bond. Contract total: $831,000 **Payments processed: $00.00 total to date**
* Ahlborg Construction- HP Exterior Renovations - Funding Source CFP 50118. Contract total is $339,000. **Payments processed: $00.00 total to date**
* Martone Construction – Scattered Sites Exterior Renovations – Funding Source CFP 50118. Contract total is $364570. **Payments processed: $00.00 total to date**
* Focus Technology – Managed IT Services – Funding Source is OPS/COCC. Contract total is $143,964. **Payments processed: $00.00 total to date**
* Sole Source Construction – Scattered Sites Porch Rebuilt @ 3 Duplexes. Funding source is CFP 50118. Contract total is $144,400. **Payments processed: $00.00 total to date**
* Northeast Security- Additional Security for High Rises due to COVID. Contract total is for $111,540. Funding source is Ops. Payments processed: **Payments processed: $00.00 total to date**
* PuroClean – COVID related cleaning of high touch common areas in high rises. Funding Source is Ops. Contract total is for $202,800. **Payments processed: $00.00 total to date**

**CONTRACT FOR APPROVAL: Remove and Replace Roof at Hartford Park Tower by Commercial Roofing with Contracting, Inc using Capital Fund Program funding in the amount of $523,000**

**Status;** Commissioner Giraud made a motion and Commissioner D’Alfonso seconded the motion.

**Votes in favor: Chairman Retsinas, Vice Chairman Ryan, Commissioner Cigna, D’Alfonso, Doggett, Medina, Lee, Giraud, Harris (9)**

**Votes opposed: none**

**Adjournment:**

Commissioner Harris made a motion that the meeting be adjourned at 6:43pm, seconded by Commissioner D’Alfonso. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

**Minutes Submitted and Approved By:**

Taisha Capo Melissa Sanzaro

Recording Secretary Executive Director