

VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

May 27, 2020

1. Roll Call

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Vermont State Housing Authority, held via ZOOM, was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Chair Caprice Hover, and upon roll call, the following Commissioners were present: Mary Miller, Vice Chair; Cory Richardson, Caryn Feinberg and Alex Farrell. Jo Ann Troiano was expected.

Staff personnel present: Richard Williams, Secretary/Executive Director; Kathleen Berk, Director of Housing Program Administration; Kelly Pembroke, Director of Finance and Information Systems; Arlene Shorten-Goodrich, Director of Human Resources and Administration; Susan Kuegel, Director of Property and Asset Management; Tyson Leno, Director of Maintenance; Tyler Maas, Program Director, ADU program.

2. Meeting Agenda

There were no changes to the Agenda.

3. Public Participation

No Public participation

4. Minutes - Regular Meeting-March 25, 2020

Minutes were moved by Miller, seconded by Feinberg. Hover called for any changes and there being none, called for a vote and all voted in favor.

Jo Ann Troiano joined the meeting at 11:04 a.m. by ZOOM phone.

5. Secretary's Report-April/May 2020

Williams discussed stimulus money and how the Governor has stated that half the money is spent already. The Legislature will determine how the other half is to be spent. Monies must be spent by December 30, 2020. Williams discussed state and federal COVID-19 updates and the HEROES ACT. There have been lots of meetings with various groups on homeless funding proposals. Williams has attended several meetings with landlord associations, legal aid and what other states are doing. There has been discussion if the VSHA would be the administrators for the Vermont Rental Housing Stabilization Fund Program to provide funding to a statewide and regional housing partner organizations who will administer the distribution of funds to tenants and landlords in need of rental arrearage assistance. This is part of Governor Scott's proposed a \$400 million-dollar economic relief fund. The spending package will need approval by the Vermont Legislature.

Williams mentioned the State of Vermont has 500 Housing Choice Vouchers that are unfunded. Berk and Williams are in discussions with Representative Welch, Senators Leahy and Sanders regarding changing the Section 8 Housing Choice language that would provide full funding for the total Annual Contributions Contract baseline units.

Hover mentioned that Vermont may be purchasing some motels in the Rutland area for folks that are general assistance eligible. The Agency of Human Services has not provided much guidance.

Williams said most staff are working remotely, and that a plan to transition staff on a rotational basis back to the office is being developed as the coronavirus cases continue to decline. New Equipment will be required, and office workspace are being altered to accommodate for adequate physical distancing.

There being no further updates, Hover called for a motion. Motion to accept the Secretary's Report made by Miller, seconded by Troiano. Upon call for a vote, all voted in favor.

6. Financial Report - April 30,2020

Pembroke mentioned voucher funding has an increase for 2020.

For the first 600 vouchers it went from \$93.98 to \$98.31 and vouchers over the first 600 went from \$87.82 to \$91.76. This was prorated at 79% however it is expected to go up to 81%. We received more than what we budgeted or planned for.

We have been given money from the CARES ACT which equals two months of Administrative fees. There are reporting requirements, but we do not know what those are yet. Not a lot of guidance on what we can use these funds for; however, they must be used by December 31, 2020.

Pembroke mentioned salary and benefit line items show a savings as there are several vacant positions. We are over in general with the purchase of equipment and Section 8 new software. Overall shows a \$636,000 gain in the general reserve. The financials at the end of June will show a different picture when various items currently in general have been booked to the appropriate line items.

Troiano moved the Financials, seconded by Richardson and upon call for a vote, all voted in favor.

7. COVID-19 Safety and Health Plan

Williams mentioned that the policy was adopted from Vermont Leagues of Cities and Towns. Shorten-Goodrich tweaked the plan to fit VSHA. This is a fluid document and we are working on additional safety measures for those working in the field in Section 8 and in Property and Asset Management.

Goodrich mentioned that the various risk categories for positions was established by using the OSHA standards.

COVID-19 Safety and Health plan was moved by Miller, seconded by Feinberg and all voted in favor.

8. Retirement Plans – Mass Mutual

Goodrich mentioned that under the CARES ACT, Plan Administrators can allow some withdrawals for COVID-19 reasons without penalties. Additionally, loan payments may be deferred. Employees can take out loans from their Defined Contribution Plan and we made an amendment for them to take out a second loan. The Deferred Compensation Plan will also allow loans. Goodrich mentioned that no employee has come forward to take advantage of these options.

Goodrich requested the Board retroactively approve the changes made under the CARES ACT and for the amendments to both plans for the loan provisions.

The following resolutions were presented:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) maintains the Vermont State Housing Authority Profit Sharing Plan – 401(a) ["Plan"], a qualified retirement plan, for the benefit of its eligible employees; and

WHEREAS, VSHA has decided to amend the Vermont State Housing Authority Profit Sharing Plan Adoption Agreement; and

WHEREAS Section 14.01(b) of the Plan authorizes VSHA to amend the selections under the Adoption Agreement; and

WHEREAS this amendment to the Plan allows employees the option of taking a second loan under the provisions of the Participant Loan Program; and

WHEREAS, VSHA has reviewed and evaluated the proposed amendments to the Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Vermont State Housing Authority Board of Commissioners hereby approves the Amendment to Vermont State Housing Authority Profit Sharing Plan, to be effective on May 1, 2020; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that the Vermont State Housing Authority Board of Commissioners authorizes the Executive Director or his designee to execute the Plan amendment and authorizes the performance of any other actions necessary to implement the Plan amendment; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, if the Plan amendment modified the provisions of the Summary Plan Description, Plan participants will receive a Summary of Material Modifications summarizing the changes under the amendment.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) maintains the Vermont State Housing Authority Deferred Compensation Plan - 457(b) ["Plan"] to provide VSHA employees with voluntary retirement benefits; and

WHEREAS VSHA does hereby declare the intention to continue the Plan but has decided to amend the Plan to allow employees the option of taking a loan under the terms of the Participant Loan Program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Vermont State Housing Authority Board of Commissioners hereby approves the Amendment to the Vermont State Housing Authority Deferred Compensation Plan, to be effective on May 1, 2020; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that the Vermont State Housing Authority Board of Commissioners authorizes the Executive Director or his designee to execute the Plan amendment and the performance of any other actions necessary to implement the Plan amendment.

Farrell moved to retroactively approve the changes made under the CARES ACT and the two resolutions allowing loan provisions. Motion seconded by Richardson. Hover called for a vote and all voted in favor.

9. Property and Asset Management - Brightwood House Budget

Kuegel presented the budget and mentioned that if there is going to be a rent increase it needs to be in USDA hands by July 1st. The budget is close to being finalized. There are some changes being made to the Maintenance staff portfolios. The increase that we asked for of \$15 will be less based on those changes. Kuegel requested permission from the Board to submit the budget.

Brightwood House Budget was moved by Richardson, seconded by Farrell, all voted in favor.

At 11:45 Melanie Goodman of Youth Catalytics joined the meeting.

10. Housing Program Administration

Berk provided most of her updates with the Secretary Report and mentioned the voucher budget projections. Berk stated this is a tight budget; however, she feels comfortable that she can manage especially with the CARES ACT monies.

Some board members requested that they meet with Berk later to get a better understanding of the spread sheets.

VSHA recently received 24 mainstream vouchers as part of the CARES ACT funding along with Rutland and Burlington Housing Authorities. Previously, VSHA received 50 811 Mainstream Vouchers for Non-elderly disabled homeless, for individuals under the age of 62 with a disability or has a household member with a disability. VSHA would like to target these 74 vouchers, in conjunction with Agency of Human Services to assist homeless households exiting hotels/motels in early July.

11. Other Business

Williams requested to sign on to a letter with other housing providers to the Governor, House Speaker and Senate Pro Tem regarding the Coronavirus relief funds for housing homeless Vermonters.

Farrell motioned for Williams to sign this letter, seconded by Richardson and all voted in favor.

12. VSHA Visioning Action Plan

Hover gave a brief introduction of Melanie Goodman from Youth Catalytics as a Facilitator. Williams advised that he will be retiring on July 31, 2021 and is looking for a smooth exit and transition plan. This is a chance to look at VSHA current operations and to create new opportunities.

Goodman said that her firm is a national training and research organization and has been a virtual organization since 2000. They are largely supported by Federal grants and work with all kinds of groups.

Goodman mentioned focusing on strategic goals and continuing to seek hidden opportunities. Opportunities to strengthen the workforce team and to build the need for transparency. Goodman designs conversations to achieve goals and to make sure all voices are heard. VSHA must be open to new ways to operate, the need to collaborate and figure out systems and polices. Where does VSHA wish to put its energies?

The Board discussed timing and commitment. Farrell recognized that staff should not be overloaded but postponing may not be an option as things could change quickly.

The Board discussed looking for guidance on how to manage a leadership transition. VSHA needs to relook at our vision and core values. Goodman suggested considering how to improve right now and secondly to put in place a leadership transition. The Board should be unified.

Discussions continued regarding the timing of the process and are looking to July/August to get everyone on the same page. Williams would like to do some predevelopment work with the Board.

The Board thanked Goodman for her presentation, and she left the meeting at 12:48 p.m.

Troiano left the meeting at 12:49 p.m.

At 12:49 p.m. Richardson motioned to enter Executive Session to receive information and deliberate regarding an employment issue under the provisions of Title 1, Section 313(a)(3) of the Vermont Statutes. Seconded by Miller. All voted in favor.

Pembroke, Goodrich, Kuegel, Berk, Leno, and Maas left the meeting.
Williams left the Executive Session at 12:55 p.m.

At 1:06 p.m. Farrell motioned to leave Executive Session, seconded by Miller. All voted in favor.

There was no action taken during Executive Session.

At 1:07 p.m. Hover adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,



Richard M. Williams
Executive Director/Secretary

