

Holyoke Redevelopment Authority
Executive Meeting Minutes – October 21, 2020 at 5:00 pm
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

John Whelihan, Chairperson
Gladys Lebrón-Martinez, Vice Chairperson
Thomas Creed, Treasurer
Patricia Duffy, Asst. Treasurer
Carl Eger, Jr., Member

Staff Present:

Marcos Marrero, Executive Director
John Dyjach, Assistant Director
Benjamin Murphy, Development Specialist

Others Present: Sarah Meier-Zimbler, Janara Healey and Matthew Mainville (Holyoke Housing Authority)

- 1. Call to Order:** Chairperson called the Executive Meeting to order at 5:38 pm and stated that the meeting was being recorded via a Zoom video conference. He also requested confirmation that no one else was present since the meeting was being done remotely. All confirmed.
- 2. South Holyoke Homes:** Matthew Mainville informed the Board that South Holyoke Homes was awarded \$2M in funding from the Community Scale Housing Initiative. He said this award will help with bank financing and with funding from the Federal Home Loan Bank. Mr. Mainville said this could not be stated in the regular meeting because the disbursement of funds is still being formulated. Sarah Meier-Zimbler said that the feedback on the application from MassHousing was very positive especially since they saw this as a transformative project for the neighborhood. Matthew Mainville added that an important next step is to have the HHA's home rule petition approved and that Representative Vega and Patricia Duffy are working to get this done. Mr. Mainville then said the Greek Orthodox Church land now being considered in the URP Amendment is being contemplated for development of a model home. Gladys Lebrón-Martinez commented on the importance of parking in the area. Marcos Marrero said the properties in South Holyoke are the core reason why the plan amendment is being pursued. He said there have been discussions with the church but no agreement is in place. He said that the concept for the vacant lot was for housing and that a swap of city parking lot is being considered as is the lot at the corner of Race and Hamilton Streets to help Nueva Esperanza with parking. Mathew Mainville said this has started to come to the forefront now because they think that like the Churchill Homes development, a self-funded model home would be very important to help with marketing to buyers as well as with potential funders. Sarah Meier-Zimbler added that they are contemplating row houses for Phase 2 and going this route would deliver the density they are seeking. She added that a model home would also help them to understand the potential absorption rate of how these could sell. Mr. Mainville said the purpose of discussing this now is to get it on the HRA's radar. Thomas Creed said he appreciated the creative thinking and that work is happening on two nearby corners. He added that the home ownership aspect is very important as is that this would be self-funded. Mr. Mainville thanked the HRA for its partnership which he said goes a long way in impressing potential funders. Marcos Marrero thanked the HHA for their great commitment to the project.

3. **Canal Row:** John Dyjach reviewed the HRA's disposition agreement with Canal Row which he said was already reviewed by DHCD to be in good form. He explained that two items are being questioned by Canal Row. These are in Section 7 of the agreement with the first issue being the payment to HRA if a resale ever occurred and that the second related to the requirement that the property remain tax paying by any owner. He said Canal Row is asking these requirements be capped at five years. Thomas Creed asked if there is any precedence with modifying these requirements and how these are calculated. John Dyjach replied that he is not aware these requirements were ever modified in other agreements and that the resale percentage would be on the difference between the price paid to the HRA and the amount of a future sale. He said these future numbers could be difficult to calculate because this is for the land only not on any improvements. Marcos Marrero said this stipulation is based on a Boston Redevelopment Authority practice and which could provide future revenues to the HRA. He noted that after six months this stipulation would reduce from 4% to 2% of the resale difference. Mr. Marrero said it may help if the language is clarified to clearly state this is only for the resale value of parcel 15. Carl Eger noted that the taxes especially as values increase are very important. Patricia Duffy asked if this was a deal breaker. John Dyjach replied that he did not think so but it is important to them as it relates to their other developments. John Whelihan questioned whether the HRA has the authority to mandate that taxes are paid. Marcos Marrero explained that the thinking is that by putting this as a term in the deed the buyer is consensually accepting the requirement. He said to his knowledge this has not been tested in the courts but it is the approach that is also used by the city. Patricia Duffy understands the importance of this but if the buyer's eventually sold then they are likely getting what they want out of the project. She recommended that it remain but would reconsider if it was a deal breaker. Marcos Marrero commented that his sense is that the 2% would not be a big factor if the wording is clarified and secondly that the non-profit issue may just be related to one potentially tenant. Thomas Creed said that he is not interested in setting precedent especially if this is what's used by the city and is leaning to keeping it as is. With no further discussion, John Dyjach said that a motion would be required to accept the agreement as written and to authorize the Chair to execute. Thomas Creed then made said motion which was seconded by Patricia Duffy. A roll call followed:

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Yes</u> |
|----------------|------------|
| Thomas Creed | X |
| Patricia Duffy | X |
| Carl Eger, Jr. | X |
| John Whelihan | X |

4. **Urban Renewal Plan Amendments:** Marcos Marrero referred the Board to the updated list which shows properties to be removed. He said this reflects feedback from councilors and from property owners that have requested their properties be removed from inclusion in the proposed plan. Mr. Marrero then reviewed the properties individually and said there was outreach to most property owners with some being responsive. He noted that the outreach could continue but would take a long time and his concern is that the focus on South Holyoke will be delayed. Thomas Creed said that he is aware there has been discussions with councilors and understands what is needed to move this forward now. Patricia Duffy said she heard the train station come up several times and asked if there was a lot of discussion about removing it. Marcos Marrero recalled that the property owner made it known early in the process about not wanting to be in the plan. He said there were other owners who understood why properties were being included and did not object. He concluded the review by saying that although there was a reason to include all the properties it is important to move

forward with a consensus for the plan change. Thomas Creed agreed that it is best to proceed now and that if called for we could revisit the other properties in the future. He made a motion to accept the revised amendment to the plan with the properties removed from the list. Said motion was seconded by Patricia Duffy. Benjamin Murphy said one property not crossed off but needs consideration to remove is Lawrence School. John Whelihan asked about the Windsor Realty property on Elm and Appleton Street. Marcos Marrero said he was fine leaving it in and noted it has some challenges. Thomas Creed then amended the motion to include taking out the Lawrence School property and to omit the removal of 173 Elm Street and to keep it in the plan. The amended motion was seconded by Patricia Duffy. A roll call followed:

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Yes</u> |
|----------------|------------|
| Thomas Creed | X |
| Patricia Duffy | X |
| Carl Eger, Jr. | X |
| John Whelihan | X |

Chairperson Whelihan thanked the Board for their efforts throughout this process and for reaching out to councilors. Carl Eger noted that the Chamber of Commerce Governmental Affairs Committee is supportive of this plan and added that a concern he heard from a councilor is the HRA's power of eminent domain. The Board then discussed the presentation to the Council and Marcos Marrero offered to write the Council about the changes in advance of the public hearing. John Dyjach suggested that letters be sent at the appropriate time to the owners of the properties that were removed. The Board agreed to this approach.

5. **Adjournment:** With no other business, a motion was made at 6:55 pm by Carl Eger and seconded by Thomas Creed to adjourn the executive meeting. A roll call followed:

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Yes</u> |
|------------------------|------------|
| Thomas Creed | X |
| Carl Eger, Jr. | X |
| Gladys Lebrón-Martinez | X |
| John Whelihan | X |

Respectfully submitted,



John Whelihan, Chairperson
Holyoke Redevelopment Authority

Documents presented at meeting:

Executive Meetings Minutes of August 26, 2020
Canal Row Draft Disposition Agreement
Revised Property List for Urban Renewal Plan Amendment