

**Holyoke Redevelopment Authority  
Meeting Minutes - January 20, 2021  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom - Meeting ID: 845 8287 7824**

**Members Present:**

Thomas Creed, Chairperson  
John Whelihan, Treasurer  
Daphne Board, Member

**Staff Present:**

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

**Others Present:** Aaron Vega, Sarah Meier-Zimblar, Janara Healey and Matthew Mainville

1. **Call to order:** Chairperson Thomas Creed called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. and stated that the meeting was being held virtually per the Governor's March 12, 2020 executive order and being recorded via a zoom video conference. A roll call followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Present</u>
Daphne Board	X
Thomas Creed	X
John Whelihan	X

2. **HRA Board Business**

- a. **Meeting Minutes of December 16, 2020:** A motion was made by Daphne Board and seconded by John Whelihan to approve the December 16, 2020 meeting minutes. All members present approved.
3. **South Holyoke Homes:** Matthew Mainville reported that Phase 1 construction specifications are being finalized and should be out for bids very soon. He also noted that HHA's Home Rule Petition that will help streamline the bidding process received all approvals and that it will potentially help reduce costs for this and future project phases. Mr. Mainville also noted that the HHA hired a consultant that has expertise with the Mass Docs grant closing process. Sarah Meier-Zimblar added that they are having discussions with MassHousing in regard to Phase 2 but the priority now is Phase I construction. She added that an update on Phase 1 will also be provided soon to the Planning Board as part of the Phase 1 Site Plan Review process. Thomas Creed asked about the status of the infrastructure work. Sarah Meier-Zimblar said she is participating in regular project meetings with the contractor and City Engineer but due to the winter season, some of the work has slowed. Overall, she said that very good progress was made and is on schedule. Thomas Creed then asked about the project outreach, especially to the South Holyoke neighborhood. Sarah Meier-Zimblar explained that the HHA continues to work on publicizing the project with Nueva Esperanza and the South Holyoke Safe Neighborhood Initiative. She noted that Nueva Esperanza helped by including project flyers with their food distribution. She said that the website and other marketing will be ramped up as Phase 2 gets underway. Matthew Mainville said they are considering other creative outreach such as neighborhood cookouts that can be done responsibly when the weather turns. There was some discussion on the Phase 1 property transfer. Matthew Mainville described some of the legal process involved with MassHousing that will take some time. Sarah Meier-Zimblar estimated that it could occur in April. John Dyjach said that staff will work with HHA to prepare the required Disposition Agreement.
4. **Urban Renewal Plan Amendment - Update and Next Steps:** John Dyjach described some of the DHCD procedural requirements for a plan amendment that staff is working to submit. He added that the staff also initiated the process with the City Council to transfer the properties at 55 and 60 Hamilton Street to the HRA per the plan. There was discussion about the future

use of 55 Hamilton and Marcos Marrero said that will need to be determined as the South Holyoke project evolves and he noted the mural in the vicinity is important to the area.

**5. Project / Property Updates:**

- a. **216 Appleton Street:** Thomas Creed noted the recent Historic Tax Credit Award of \$300,000 which brought the total amount of credits to \$2.9M. He asked about the status of the transformer removal that was discussed at the last meeting. Marcos Marrero said that work is pending but expects it to be done soon. Mr. Marrero noted that with the tax credits reaching \$2.9M it gets WinnDevelopment to the threshold where they can start applying for low income housing tax credits. John Whelihan asked if it was known when the next tax credits would be awarded. Benjamin Murphy estimated that we would hear around late April about the next round of awards. Thomas Creed asked if the Board was interested in asking WinnDevelopment to join the HRA at a future meeting to discuss the status of the project. He also stated the importance to continue to monitor the condition of the building. Aaron Vega said this is a high priority going forward and he intends to reach out to them right away and discuss next steps.
- b. **Canal Row:** John Dyjach noted that the Disposition Agreement for Race St. Lot 15 was signed by the buyer. He said that staff will contact the Luzuriagas to discuss the status of Canal Row as that option agreement expires on June 30<sup>th</sup>. On a related matter, John Dyjach said that staff is having discussions with Freight Farms on an extension and their relocation. Marcos Marrero said the relocation is focused on land at the Computing Center property and all parties are working on the specifics for this to happen there.
- c. **Armory Building:** John Dyjach noted that staff provided information and the proposal application to an interested developer but that nothing has been submitted to date.
- d. **Neighborhood Hubs Technical Assistance Grant:** Marcos Marrero described the grant program that is being pursued to help further plan for future development in South Holyoke. He said that the planning will especially address the property vacancy in the area. Mr. Marrero said the second purpose of the grant is to understand the affordability restrictions that are in place on a good amount of housing inventory in South Holyoke and the Flats. The grant would fund consultant services and is proposed to be overseen by the HRA. Thomas Creed asked if the grant would be to the HRA. Marcos Marrero said that still needs to be determined but may be the best path. John Whelihan suggested a survey of vacancies of viable apartments especially on Main Street. Marcos Marrero agreed and said it would not likely get to the point of a pro forma on individual properties but it would give an order of magnitude and options for chronically vacant buildings. Daphne Board asked if the OneHolyoke properties in the area with affordability restrictions are for rental properties or home ownership. Marcos Marrero replied that it was his understanding it would be for the rental properties and was unsure at this point if it also pertained to owner occupied properties.

**6. Other Business:**

Thomas Creed said the resignation of Board Member Gladys Lebrón-Martinez is now official and that it is his understanding the Mayor is considering a new appointment.

Thomas Creed then recognized Marcos Marrero for his many accomplishments during his tenure and that he can take pride in those as well as his hand in the HRA's efforts going forward. On behalf of the Board, Thomas Creed expressed thanks and congratulations.

7. **Adjournment:** With no other business, a motion was made at 6:01 p.m. by John Whelihan and seconded by Daphne Board to adjourn the meeting. Chairperson Creed then said that in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 30 Section 21(a) of the Open Meeting Law, the Holyoke Redevelopment Authority will enter Executive Session at this time to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real

estate, if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body. A roll call followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Daphne Board	X
Thomas Creed	X
John Whelihan	X

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Thomas R. Creed, Chairperson  
Holyoke Redevelopment Authority

Documents presented at meeting:  
Meeting Minutes of December 20, 2020