

Holyoke Redevelopment Authority
Meeting Minutes - May 26, 2021
Virtual Meeting via Zoom - Meeting ID: 891 6202 3615

Members Present:

Thomas Creed, Chairperson
Carl Eger, Vice-Chairperson
John Whelihan, Treasurer
Daphne Board, Member

Staff Present:

Aaron Vega, Executive Director
John Dyjach, Assistant Director
Benjamin Murphy, Development Specialist
Gabiella Klinakis, Head Clerk

Others Present: LS Feiber, resident

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
Carl Eger	X

2. **HRA Board Business**

- a. **Meeting Minutes of April 21, 2021:** A motion was made by Carl Eger and seconded by Daphne Board to approve the April 21, 2021 meeting minutes. All members present approved.

3. **Project / Property Updates**

a. **South Holyoke Homes**

John Dyjach shared that the closing on the sale of the Phase 1 property on South East Street is expected to occur in June. He said the next steps are to receive final approval from DHCD for the disposition agreement and then to coordinate the closing with the attorneys.

Aaron Vega said that staff received the completed appraisals for the lots in regard to the lots on Hamilton Street, staff are working on the next steps for this phase of South Holyoke Homes.

b. **Dwight Street Community Garden**

Ben Murphy reminded the Board that there were two applicants to operate the garden and that the Board decided to move forward with a license agreement with Neighbor to Neighbor for only this season. He said Neighbor to Neighbor wants to start soon and is only awaiting their insurance to be finalized. Mr. Murphy thanked Board member, Daphne Board, and other community members for taking the initiative to clean up the garden. Ms. Board noted that there is debris on the property including tires and a concrete block; and asked if it would be possible to request DPW's assistance to remove these. Thomas Creed asked about the next steps after Neighbor to Neighbor starts. Ben Murphy said that he anticipates that they will have people on site and planting as soon as possible. He will also contact the Water Department to turn on the water connection for the garden. Mr. Creed asked if the intention for this season is to continue to look for a more permanent occupant for the community garden from now until the end of the season. Mr. Murphy said that if Neighbor to

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Neighbor does well this season, their lease can be renewed or the HRA can revisit a sale.

c. 216 Appleton / Winn Development

Aaron Vega shared that WinnDevelopment met with the Planning Board twice since the last HRA meeting and the site plan was approved with several conditions. He said that there are on-going discussions between Winn and the Conservation Commission primarily about the buffer distance of the canal to the parking lot at 191 Appleton Street. Ms. Board noted that a representative of 101 Cabot Street stated concerns about debris at the building. Mr. Vega said that the intent is to address this with Winn and to arrange a meeting to discuss concerns with those residents as well as support for including 216 Appleton on the National Register of Historic Places.

d. Canal Row

Mr. Dyjach said that the Option Agreement for the sale of land for the Canal Row project comes due on June 30th. He said that the developers told staff that they intend to submit an extension request and that progress is being made on the building design and with financing. He said that staff was also informed that work has started to renovate the Armour Building at 130 Race Street which is adjacent to the planned Canal Row.

e. Freight Farms

Mr. Vega shared that progress is also being made on the relocation of the Freight Farms but that the License Agreement was coming due and that a request to extend to September was made although the expectation is that the move can occur sooner. He added that HCC, MassDevelopment and the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center are working to get this done and that a meeting with the Planning Board is scheduled for June 8th to amend the site plan for the new location. A motion was made by Carl Eger and Seconded by John Whelihan to authorize the Chair to execute an extension agreement out to September. A roll call followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Daphne Board	X
Tom Creed	X
Carl Eger	X
John Whelihan	X

f. 123 Pine Street

Mr. Vega said that the Option to Purchase with Valley Opportunity Council for 123 Pine St. expires but they are unable to proceed in the foreseeable future because funding wasn't received. Staff was recently contacted by other interested parties to purchase and redevelop the building and is recommending that new proposals be sought through a for sale notice. Mr. Vega said that VOC is committed to the agreement but will not stand in the way if another buyer is selected sooner than September. Ms. Board questioned if the plywood covering the windows should be plexiglass instead according to the city ordinance. Mr. Vega replied that he will look into what it would cost to change the window coverings and whose responsibility that is. A motion was made by Carl Eger and seconded by John Whelihan to allow staff to issue a sale notice. A roll call followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Daphne Board	X
Tom Creed	X

Carl Eger	X
John Whelihan	X

- Center City Liquor License Program:** Chairperson Thomas Creed said that staff made him aware that the cost for liquor licenses have become competitive in the region. Mr. Vega explained that it appears the up-front costs to obtain a liquor license in surrounding cities is less. He said that in an effort to address this, staff is suggesting the Board consider covering the cost of the first-year local liquor license fees up to \$1,000. Mr. Whelihan asked about covering more than \$1,000 to which Mr. Vega replied that the license board charges up to \$1,000 and it depends on the type of license being applied for. Mr. Whelihan asked if the Avalon Café was still pursuing a liquor license. Mr. Vega replied that they had starts and stops on the State licensing, but it is his understanding they are now making progress. Ms. Board proposed that the Board cover the first 2 years which would cover up to \$2,000 due to Covid and put an end date in the language. Mr. Creed said that this is a good point, we have to make sure that what the Board is proposing does not contradict the Legislation that granted these licenses to begin with. Mr. Vega said that there should be another conversation about this topic and whether the HRA should use their funds to promote the program. Mr. Creed said that the Board would like to see this language at the next meeting.
- Other Business:** Mr. Dyjach shared that staff is receiving inquiries about the possibility to sell City owned properties which are also in the Urban Renewal Plan including several on High and Main Street. He added that because there is private interest it might be appropriate for the City to solicit proposals but there is also the option for the HRA to do this. Thomas Creed said that this topic warrants a larger discussion with the HRA but since there is interest he thinks the most efficient process be followed at this time whether it's through the HRA or City. Board members briefly discussed and were in agreement about going the most efficient route. John Whelihan asked if the city council has to consider these properties surplus first. Mr. Vega replied that they do and also need to approve a transfer to the HRA but some of these currently in question already went through this process while others are to be considered at the June 14th DGR meeting.
- Adjournment:** With no other business, a motion was made at 6:08 p.m. by Carl Eger 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
Carl Eger	X
John Whelihan	X

Respectfully Submitted,


 Thomas R. Creed, Chairperson
 Holyoke Redevelopment Authority

Documents presented at meeting: Meeting Minutes of April 21, 2021