

**Holyoke Redevelopment Authority**  
**Meeting Minutes - October 27, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.**  
**Virtual Meeting via Zoom - Meeting ID: Meeting ID: 812 2494 2201**

**Members Present:**

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

**Staff Present:**

Aaron Vega, Executive Director  
John Dyjach, Assistant Director

**Others Present:** Sarah Meier-Zimbler and Janara Healy (Holyoke Housing Authority), Katie Talbot and Terry Gibson (Neighbor to Neighbor), Atty. Michael Bissonnette (Holyoke Law Dept.)

1. **Call to order:** Chairperson Thomas Creed called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. and stated that the meeting is 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 September 29, 2021:** A motion was made by John Whelihan and seconded by Daphne Board to approve the September 29, 2021 meeting minutes. A few corrections were noted, and all members approved.

3. **Project / Property Updates**

- a. **South Holyoke Homes Annual Report / Holyoke Housing Authority:** Sarah Meier-Zimbler presented the HHA's annual report to the HRA for South Holyoke Homes (copy attached). She noted that Phase 1 construction is underway and thanked those who were able to take part in the recent community celebration. Chairperson Creed thanked the HHA and noted the significant accomplishments. He asked if this report will be publicized to which Sarah Meier-Zimbler said it would be on-line and posted on social media.

There was then a brief update on Phase 2 with Sarah Meier-Zimbler saying that discussion with the City on permitting is underway. John Dyjach noted that, as a normal course of business, a license to enter agreement is being provided to the HHA for the HRA owned property on South East in order that they may begin site due diligence. He added that the sale agreements for the lots on Hamilton and South East Street were provided to the Greek Orthodox Church and that staff is in contact with the new owner of the former Holyoke Machine property. Aaron Vega noted that the Phase 2 work is being supported through ARPA funding awarded by Mayor Murphy.

- b. **Pine & Dwight Street Community Garden / Neighbor to Neighbor:** Chairperson Creed welcomed Katie Talbot and Terry Gibson of Neighbor to Neighbor for an update on the community garden. He noted this meeting is timely as the agreement between the HRA and Neighbor to Neighbor comes due next month. Terry Gibson, co-coordinator for the garden, explained that the garden has been a very positive experience and has evolved into a true community resource bringing together people of all ages. He described that the growing went well and they are contemplating adding a small greenhouse to be able to grow leafy greens throughout the cold weather months. Katie Talbot agreed that a community has grown with the garden in only a short period of time. She described that neighbors have volunteered at the space and made it work. She noted that a

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grant is being sought to hire a garden coordinator to expand programming and increase the variety of food grown. Chairperson Creed asked about day-to-day coordination. Terry Gibson replied that it has been a collective effort between Neighbor to Neighbor and community members that volunteer to maintain and harvest. He added that storage is now something they are looking into to keep produce fresh and available. Katie Talbot added that there are a few neighbors that have been more active in maintaining the space. Thomas Creed asked how success is defined for the space. Katie Talbot said the first thing that has happened is that community relationship building has occurred with neighbors including families that live nearby. Chairperson Creed asked about security at the site and if there have been any unforeseen issues. Terry Gibson said the biggest issue was the tent that was placed at the site for the last few weeks. He explained that it did not create a security issue but living at the site is not allowed and they along with members are trying to help the homeless person. Katie Talbot said that from her perspective there have been no issues with security or vandalism at the garden and that they try to have open lines of communication with neighbors. Aaron Vega acknowledged the challenges in the area that are trying to be addressed but the site cannot have a tent with a person living there and that there have been complaints. He asked about any data that can be provided for the participation at the garden and that Neighbor to Neighbor would need to provide a maintenance plan as well as their information on their capacity to own the site in the future. John Whelihan said it was the first that he's heard about the complaints and if a log was kept. Aaron Vega said the complaints have primarily come from a neighbor and the approach has been to work to resolve with Neighbor to Neighbor. He added that homelessness is a challenging issue, but this is a new concern at the garden that needs to be addressed. Katie Talbot explained that they are working on a maintenance plan but wanted to be clear that they want the space going forward. She added that it has only been a few months since they have been able to work in the garden but it has been a great project and great relationships are being built. She highlighted that moving on with the contract will allow them to make more progress. Terry Gibson said they have a list of 26 volunteers with about 8 to 10 core weekly volunteers. He said they estimate about one hundred pounds of food per week and noted that some of these are heavier vegetables such as cucumbers and eggplant. He added that about half of the food ends up being donated and the number of participants has also grown. Daphne Board said she often walks by the site and thinks it has been successful. In terms of neighborhood impact, she'd would like to hear from neighbors and maybe a survey would be helpful. Ms. Board commented that she's seen homeless living at other properties also and doesn't have an answer but cannot see how a person could live through the winter under those conditions. Thomas Creed credited Neighbor to Neighbor for tremendous progress over just a few months and appreciates their efforts. He said to clarify what Aaron said, the HRA does not want to own property and the goal is to transfer ownership to the right owner whether it be Neighbor to Neighbor or another group that can follow through on the intentions for the property. Mr. Creed said that it appears good progress was made but more time may be needed in the short term to keep the project viable going forward. He added that it was never intended for someone to be living at the property and as others have mentioned it is a very complicated issue with a solution probably being a collective effort. Aaron Vega said that next steps to consider is for an extension with Neighbor to Neighbor including maintenance over the winter. Thomas Creed suggested that the purpose for this meeting was for an update and thanked Terry and Katie. He suggested that next steps including a possible extension be considered at the November meeting.

- c. **123 Pine Street:** John Dyjach said that a draft of the Disposition Agreement with CAN Properties will be presented in the executive meeting. He noted that staff was informed that the City will be demolishing the garage at the rear of the property as it has been deemed unsalvageable.

**4. Other Business:**

- a. **Center City Liquor License:** Aaron Vega said the first Center City Liquor License was recently approved by the State for El Paraiso Columbiano. He then asked for the Board’s consideration of paying for the local license application from the \$10,000 fee that was paid. Mr. Vega asked if the Board would consider covering the 2021 license fee as well as 2022 given the end of year timing. Chairperson Creed said that covering the fee was previously discussed as a way to incentivize and help promote the program. He added that the Board may want to consider formalizing this and make it part of the program moving forward to help it be successful. John Whelihan concurred that there is support for moving this forward. Daphne Board made a motion for the HRA to pay the annual fee and renewal fee totaling \$2,000 for El Paraiso Columbiano from the \$10,000 fee already paid to the HRA by the business. John Whelihan seconded the motion. Thomas Creed summarized that the first-year fee is \$1,000 for 2021 and that the renewal fee of \$1,000 is for 2022. He added that in the near future the HRA will need to consider formalizing this policy. John Whelihan asked how the \$1,000 fee was determined. Aaron Vega explained it is the standard liquor license fee. Mr. Whelihan replied that maybe liquor license fees could be considered by the size of the business. Daphne Board commented on the recent Paper City Food Festival and that Mr. Uribe of El Paraiso Columbiano was an organizer. She said that it was a very good event that goes along with the HRA’s efforts to help spur a lively downtown. Ms. Board agreed that the HRA needs to codify the policy going forward on providing the license fee funding. With no further discussion a roll call vote on the motion followed:

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

- b. **Funding Concepts:** Aaron Vega informed the Board that the staff is following -up on the concept to utilize HRA’s funds to support specific redevelopment efforts such as helping to fund property repairs. He said that staff may reach out to the Board members individually to discuss ideas.

- 5. **Executive Meeting:** A motion was made at 6:05 p.m. by Daphne Board and seconded by John Whelihan to enter the Executive meeting. Chairperson Creed stated 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

- 6. **Regular Meeting Reconvened:** The Board reconvened from the Executive meeting at 6:27 p.m. Chairperson Creed reported that the 123 Pine Street Disposition Agreement with CAN Properties for 123 Pine Street was considered and that he would entertain a motion to approve the agreement and

to authorize the Chair to execute it on behalf of the HRA recognizing there may be some immaterial changes to the document. A motion was made by John Whelihan to approve the order as stated by the Chair. Said motion was seconded by Daphne Board. A roll call vote followed:

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

**7. Adjournment:**

At 6:30 p.m. a motion was made by John Whelihan and seconded by Daphne Board to adjourn the meeting and all members approved.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Thomas R. Creed, Chairperson  
Holyoke Redevelopment Authority