

Holyoke Redevelopment Authority
Meeting Minutes - Wednesday, March 30, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.

Conference room 403 or Virtual Zoom :
Meeting ID: 883 2720 1759 or call +1 929 205 6099 US

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Aaron Vega, Executive Director
John Dyjach, Assistant Director
Marie Brazeau, Head Clerk
Jennifer Keitt, Development Specialist
Attorney Bissonnette

Others Present: Councilor Jenny Rivera, Councilor Will Puello, Dianne Smith (Wayfinders), Michelle (Wayfinders), Richard Harris (Wayfinders), Delia Pagan

- 1. Call to order:** Chairperson Thomas Creed called the meeting to order at 5:05 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
Carl Eger	X
John Whelihan	X

- 2. HRA Board Business**

- a. Meeting minutes of February 16, 2022:**

Due to the Zoom error during the meeting of March 16, the board reaffirmed the approval of the minutes from February without any objection.

- b. Financial Report:** Chairperson Creed noted that the financial report was covered during the meeting on March 16th and that the board has reviewed the balance of the account. Having no comments or questions on this matter Chairperson Creed moved past this agenda item.

- 3. HRA welcome and discussion with City Councilors Jenny Rivera and Will Puello:** Chairperson Creed discussed the importance of the work being done in both Ward one and two and the need to inform the Councilors from both of the HRA's projects in those areas. Chairperson Creed greeted Councilor Puello who joined the meeting via Zoom and thanked the Councilor for taking the time to join. He then went on to inform him that everything the HRA is working on is part of the urban Renewal plan and that later on in this meeting they will provide updates on each project.
- 4. HRA welcome and discussion Way Finders, Inc. on Ongoing and Planned Development:** Chairperson Creed noted that right before the connection was lost in the Zoom meeting on March 16, Wayfinders was about to start their presentation. He then went on to introduce Dianne, Michelle and Richard and the great working partnership between Holyoke and Wayfinders. Aaron Vega then discussed the work done on community development with Wayfinders as a strong community partner. Vega then went on to mention the upcoming Wayfinders feasibility study of a larger project within Holyoke. Dianne Smith then thanked both Aaron Vega and the Board for inviting the Wayfinders team. Smith introduced Michelle Mcadaragh as well as Richard Harris who was recently brought on as a planning consultant. Smith reiterated Wayfinders commitment to improving housing in Holyoke with the Urban Renewal plan as a guiding document with the So-High district and any future

projects. She then went on to discuss the purpose of the feasibility study is to find what projects would be most effective in the five-block radius that Wayfinders is focusing. Michelle Mcadaragh mentioned Wayfinders also has interest in a few properties in the Churchill area. Aaron then recognized that Councilor Jenny Rivera was now on the call and that these projects will be relevant to her ward or abutting it. Richard Harris thanked everyone for their partnership and mentioned that his focus is to look at each project on a greater scale an to work closely with government to achieve their aims. Chairperson Creed then commented that this plan comes back to the gateways of Holyoke and that High Street has been a priority path into the city. John Whelihan then asked Wayfinders to clarify their funding sources as well as how they acquire their properties. Dianne Smith then answered that they acquire property through a variety of methods including city bids or private sales and that much of their funding is public funding sources. Daphne Board asked if the feasibility studies will include public comment from the community, Dianne Smith said they would be open to that after completing the physical feasibility study. Richard Harris confirmed that community outreach could be an important second phase in this study. Aaron Vega then mentioned that this will only be improved by the TDI grant funded fellow who will be focusing on this area of Holyoke. Thomas Creed then asked for any updates on the timeline of the TDI fellow, Vega then stated that they have not received the timeline from MassDevelopment yet but may expect the fellow to start work sometime in the fall and then it will be a three-year position. Councilor Puello thanked Wayfinders focus on low-income focused projects. Delia Pagan, a member of the public, then commented on her appreciation for the work Wayfinders does.

5. Project Updates:

- a. **Property / Project Updates and Next Steps: South Holyoke Homes:** Chairperson Creed mentioned that there are a variety of disposition agreements requiring votes by the Board for approval for Phase II. Firstly, the HRA transfer 60 Hamilton to the Greek Orthodox Church, secondly the Greek Orthodox Church transferring 163 Clemente Street to the HRA, thirdly the HRA transferring 163 Clemente Street to the Holyoke Housing Authority, and finally the HRA transferring the four parcels on the Clemente Street to the Housing Authority. Chairperson Creed then said he would entertain a motion for all four disposition agreements to be signed, Carl Eger moved and seconded by John Whelihan. A roll call vote followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Daphne Board	Yes
Thomas Creed	Yes
Carl Eger	Yes
John Whelihan	Yes

Aaron Vega then thanked John Dyjach for all the work on this project as well as the law department, specifically Attorney Bissonnette. Chairperson Creed then acknowledged the work in cooperation with the Greek Orthodox Church. Carl Eger stated the importance of this new infrastructure, Aaron Vega echoed this point and gave credit to the funding from Mass Works.

- b. **216 Appleton Street (Appleton Mills Apartments) / WinnDevelopment):** Chairperson Thomas Creed then mentioned that there had been a meeting with the Planning office and Winn to clarify closing details. Chairperson Creed then mentioned that Winn has provided a project timeline that shows they plan on closing in September. He then went on to emphasize that this timeline will require frequent meetings with Winn Development to keep on schedule.
- c. **123 Pine Street / CAN Properties:** Chairperson Creed noted that 123 Pine sale has been finalized and has no updates. Aaron Vega noted there is already work underway on the property, John Dyjach added that they will have updates from the property Developer within thirty days.
- d. **Pine & Dwight Street Community Garden / Neighbor to Neighbor:** Thomas Creed directed the board to the third extension to the community agreement in their packets which now includes a maintenance plan. The agreement extends the control of the property through November of 2022. Carl Eger moved to approve, and John Whelihan seconded. Daphne Board commented that she is not in favor of the wording in the agreement that states all suspicious behavior should be reported to the police due to the vague language. Aaron Vega thanked Daphne Board

for her comments and went on to clarify the logistical plans that have gone into this project. Vega went on to mention that should the community garden be sold to Neighbor to Neighbor, despite being a non-profit organization, they would still be required to pay taxes. Daphne Board then asked how quickly this property can sold. Vega responded that the timeline will be up to when Neighbor to Neighbor is ready. Councilor Puello then commented that while he understands Daphne Boards comments about the wording of the plan, he has received complaints from constituents about some activity at the garden. John Whelihan then asked about the mention of signage in the plan and that it is his preference that there will be signage. John Dyjach then responded that yes, the garden was receptive to including quality signage. Thomas Creed then called for a roll call vote to approve the agreement:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Vote</u>
John Whelihan	Yes
Thomas Creed	Yes
Carl Eger	Yes
Daphne Board	No

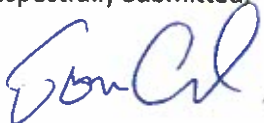
e. **Canal Row:** Chairperson Creed mentioned that due to not receiving the HDIP funding this project is stalled till other funding sources are available. Aaron Vega mentioned that he and Jennifer Keitt met with the developers to help them find alternatives.

6. **Other Business:** Thomas Creed asked if either the staff or the board had any other business to discuss. John Whelihan asked if there are any updates concerning the vacancy on the board. Aaron Vega responded that the nominee Jorge Colon was present via Zoom and would hopefully be through the Public Service committee before the next meeting. Daphne Board then mentioned that she attended the Parking advisory committee as the Redevelopment representative and that she is excited about the discussions to be had.

7. **Adjournment:** With no other business Thomas Creed called for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Carl Eger and seconded by John Whelihan. A roll call followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Daphne Board	Yes
Thomas Creed	Yes
Carl Eger	Yes
John Whelihan	Yes

Respectfully Submitted,



Thomas R. Creed, Chairperson