

Holyoke Redevelopment Authority
Meeting Minutes – Wednesday September 21, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.
Conference room 403 or Virtual Zoom:
Meeting ID: 820 1045 2084

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

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

Others Present: Nathan C. (public), Sarah Meier-Zimble (HHA), Janara Healy (HHA)

1. Call to order:

Thomas Creed called the meeting to order at 5:02pm and announced that the meeting is being recorded.

A roll call followed:

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Present</u> |
|---------------|----------------|
| Daphne Board | X (Virtual) |
| Thomas Creed | X |
| Carl Eger | X |
| John Whelihan | X |
| Jorge Colon | Absent |

2. HRA Board Business

a. Meeting Minutes of July 20, 2022

Some minor grammatical changes were made and the board asked that the timelines mentioned for the One Holyoke lease agreement be verified. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Carl Eger and seconded by John Whelihan.

A roll call followed:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| John Whelihan | X |
| Carl Eger | X |
| Thomas Creed | X |
| Daphne Board | X |

The motion passed unanimously.

3. Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) – Introductions with Fellow Moforte. Kevin Moforte, the TDI fellow unfortunately was not able to attend, and this conversation was tabled for the next meeting.

4. Property/ Project Updates and Next Steps:

a. South Holyoke Homes- Holyoke Housing Authority: Thomas Creed thanked and welcomed Sarah Meier-Zimble and Janara Healy from the Holyoke Housing Authority for attending this meeting. Sarah Meier-Zimble thanked the board for their time and introduced Holyoke Housing staff Janara Healy who is joining her in providing project updates for the South Holyoke Homes project. Sarah began updates with Phase One of the project which is the 12 units of rental housing on the corner of South East Street and Hamilton, which is currently under construction. She went on to explain the project is going well and will be done either by the end of this year or the beginning of 2023. The Housing Authority has begun taking applications for these units which will be open for a period of sixty days, and this has included extensive

outreach to ensure as many people as possible can apply. The schedule currently plans for tenants to move in February of 2023. Phase Two which will be 8 units of affordable home ownership on the corner of Sargeant and Clemente. HHA put the project out to bid, expecting the construction to be around 4 million dollars. To great disappointment they only received one bid on the construction project which had a 7-million-dollar price estimate. The Housing Authority board voted to reject this bid as they feel this bid was not in line with the construction estimates they had completed and not within the budget for this project. They are going to put the project out to bid this winter and evaluate if they need to look at the scale of the project to make it more appealing to larger developers. They are looking into if the design of the project is affecting the lack of bids and reaching out to firms familiar with the type of work. In their outreach they have found that it is a difficult time for construction prices, but they are doing their due diligence and hoping that if all goes well they can begin construction in the spring. Aaron Vega mentioned that at the Reclaiming Vacant Properties conference in Chicago they had learned that it can be helpful to look for local developers connected to the neighborhood and for Holyoke this could mean a focus on minority run contractors. Sarah explained she appreciates the idea in theory, but smaller and newer developers often lack experience in public construction projects and this background is a requirement they cannot waiver on. Aaron mentioned they may also want to look into funding opportunities for renewable energy projects since these are all energy efficient projects. Chairperson Tom Creed then opened the discussion to receive comments from the board. Tom asked how the applications for Phase One are going; Sarah responded that they currently have 275 applicants for the 12 units. Tom commented that Phase II setbacks are unfortunately not surprising due to supply change issues but he expressed his concerns of the scale of the project being reduced. He hopes that when the project goes out for bid they will have better timing; he also offered the boards help for anything the HHA may need to assist in this process. John Whelihan echoed Toms comments and said similar issues have been seen in other municipalities as well and has led to a large need for fund raising efforts. John then asked for a break down of how the lottery process for Phase one units works. Sarah explained that there is a numerical ranking order of initial applicants and then the next stage is full applications that verify income and preferences for those that qualify based on the first steps. She added that there is a priority for Holyoke residents. Tom Creed asked if there were any updates concerning Phase III, Aaron Vega explained that the second appraisal is going forward and that there have been minimal responses from the property owner concerning the offer that the city presented. John Dyjach then explained there will be more formal communications to the owner explaining the cities plans for the property and that the offer provided to him was fair market value, but that eminent domain is on the table. Further, John added that one of the parcels has a different property owner and there has been some communication progress. Tom Creed noted that the neighborhood is improving and asked if there are any more infrastructure improvements through Mass Works to be done. Sarah stated that the contract with Mass Works will be closing but there is more work to be done before that and furthermore, all the streets in the neighborhood will be repaved for this project. Tom Creed then thanked the Holyoke Housing Authority for all the work they have done and again offered any support the Redevelopment Authority can provide.

- b. **216 Appleton (Appleton Mills Apartments/ Winn Development):** Tom Creed opened discussion for 216 Appleton mentioning there is a new draft of the ground lease agreement; he gave the floor to Aaron Vega for any updates. Aaron Vega said communications with Winn have been smooth and productive. Next month Winn will be having a neighborhood meeting with the residents of 101 Cabot. He noted the work being done with signage and the energy discussion with HG&E. The lease draft was provided by KP Law, and staff has been reviewing the agreement and will be meeting with KP Law soon to ensure that the HRA and the city will not be liable for the property once the agreement is signed. He added the city is also thinking of turning a focus to building one (abutting 101 Cabot) and the possibility of demolition due to safety concerns and damage, as well as the benefit of green space. John Dyjach then added that KP Law is very familiar with these types of lease agreements and the city will be relying on their expertise, but any concerns will be brought to the board after meeting with Winn and KP Law. He also noted that they can expect to see

construction lighting on site soon as Winn has worked with HG&E to get this up and running. Aaron mentioned this will be moving forward quickly now as this agreement is the final piece Winn needs for certain funding. Tom added that he is pleased that this project is moving along on track with the revised schedule. He added that it may be necessary to have an executive session with the legal team to review the final agreement before a vote from the board.

- c. **Dwight Street Community Garden/ Neighbor to Neighbor:** Tom Creed asked Jennifer Keitt for an update on the community garden. Jennifer explained she and John have been working on a property disposition agreement and that the agreement is very standard to the ones the board has used in the past. She added the couple things to note are the caveats, including that the property must be actively used as a community garden for at least five years; it includes a reverter deed, and there is a right of first refusal if they decide to sell the property. Finally, she noted that Neighbor to Neighbor is happy with the agreement. John Dyjach added that the agreement still needs to be approved by DHCD. Tom Creed asked for timing sake when the board would need to act, John responded that ideally during this meeting the board would allow staff to proceed or that the board would approve the agreement under the condition there would be no substantive changes. John Whelihan asked if this will be a tax paying property, John confirmed that yes, they will have standard taxes. Daphne Board then expressed concerns over the purchase price and if it would affect the assessed value of the property in the future, she asked for clarification on if the purchase price and the assessed value are the same or close to the same amount. She further expressed concern that if the purchase price was higher than the assessment it could unintentionally raise the taxes on the property. Aaron said that this can be a concern but that there will be communication with the Assessors office to clarify that this should not be allowed to affect it. John Whelihan added that assessors do code these types of agreements out and that the lot is unbuildable so there should be no cause for concern. Tom Creed asked for clarification about the five years as a garden requirement, asking if that began when the garden first opened or if it starts when the agreement is finalized. John Dyjach said that they felt the first full year as a garden previous to this agreement should go towards the five-year requirement, so for clarity's sake there will be four more years of this term.

A motion was made by Carl Eger to allow the Chair to act on behalf of the board to execute the document pending no substantive changes and was seconded by John Whelihan.

A roll call followed:

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|---------------|---|
| Carl Eger | X |
| Thomas Creed | X |
| Daphne Board | X |
| John Whelihan | X |

The motion passed unanimously.

Tom Creed then thanked staff and the board for all the work and patience on this project. Aaron Vega said they would send a copy of the agreement to Attorney Bissonnette and Neighbor to Neighbor.

- d. **Freight Farms:** Tom Creed asked staff for any updates on the Freight Farms. Aaron Vega said that this project was obviously not intended to be extended this long. They have also had obstacles to getting site plans completed and then further obstacles with building a trench. Next, he mentioned that they had had a deal to get a company to move the freight farms for HRA in kind. Unfortunately, there have been some differences between the company and computing center causing them to again be searching for someone to move the freight farms. They are now redesigning ways to move the freights and are hoping to keep it free or affordable. Tom Creed thanked Aaron for the updates but stated he still feels very strongly that the freights need to be removed from the parcel.
- e. **Canal Row:** Tom Creed asked staff for any updates on Canal Row. John Dyjach said that staff included this on the agenda in case they received any updates but there is none at this time. He added that the board will be kept updated but the option agreement still extends till June 30th, 2023 and staff will keep the board up to date on any progress. Should the Economic Development bill pass, which includes a refunding of HDIP there may be much more progress. Aaron Vega noted that almost all the housing development projects brought to the city at this time have a funding gap of roughly 7 million dollars. These gaps bring concern due to the housing crisis, noting the example of HHA receiving 275 applications for 12 units of housing. Daphne Board

echoed these concerns and mentioned it would be her hope for the board to look into more imaginative housing situations with owner-occupied housing or housing co-ops within Holyoke. Aaron Vega mentioned there is one housing co-op in Holyoke which is run by VOC which he will send her some information on. Tom Creed then said that he would be interested in a full report of metrics accomplished by the HRA so that they can lay out more concrete objectives for the HRA to achieve in relation to the housing crisis.

5. **Other Business:** Tom Creed asked staff to have updates for the board on 37 Appleton and 123 Pine projects ready for the next meeting. Staff said they will reach out for updates on these properties. Aaron Vega then noted that should the lease agreement with Winn development be ready sooner the board need to meet sooner than the next regularly scheduled meeting and staff will keep the board updated. Aaron then mentioned that staff has been working on and planning the code upgrade loan program that Daphne Board first proposed. He noted Jennifer Keitt will be the point person on this and should anyone on the board want to form a working committee for this program they should contact her. Daphne Board agreed to help with Jennifer and whoever else would be interested in joining.
6. **Executive Meeting (if necessary):** No executive business necessitated executive session.
7. **Adjournment.** Having no other business, Carl Eger motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by John Whelihan.

A roll call followed:

Daphne Board X
Thomas Creed X
Carl Eger X
John Whelihan X

The meeting adjourned at 6:26PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Thomas R. Creed, Chairperson