

**Holyoke Redevelopment Authority**  
**Meeting Minutes – Wednesday February 15, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.**  
**Virtual Zoom only:**  
**Meeting ID: 862 7963 9871**

**Members Present:**

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

**Staff Present:**

Aaron Vega, Executive Director  
John Dyjach, Assistant Director  
Jennifer Keitt, Development Specialist

Others Present: Matthew Robayna, Winn Development; Sarah Meier-Zimbler, Holyoke Housing Authority; Janara Healy, Holyoke Housing Authority

1. **Call to order:** Daphne Board called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and announced that the meeting is being recorded and is being held both in person and virtually. Daphne Board then read the following disclaimer: “The meeting is being held both in person and remotely according to Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, extending the remote meeting provisions of Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020, executive order. The meeting notice contained a link to “GoToMeeting” providing the public with remote access.”

**A roll call followed:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Daphne Board	X	
Jorge Colon	X	
Thomas Creed	X	
Carl Eger Jr.	X	
John Whelihan	X	

All members attended the meeting via zoom.

2. **HRA Board Business**

- a. **Meeting Minutes of November 30, 2022**
- b. **Annual Meeting Minutes of November 30, 2022**

A motion to approve the meeting minutes of November 30, 2022, and the annual meeting minutes of November 30, 2022, was made by Carl Eger and seconded by John Whelihan:

**A roll call followed:**

John Whelihan	X
Carl Eger Jr.	X
Thomas Creed	X
Jorge Colon	X
Daphne Board	X

The motion passed unanimously.

- c. **Financial Report:** John Dyjach gave updates. Payment was received from Fame for their Center City Liquor license. The Board agreed to pay the first year of their Holyoke liquor license fee. A check will be cut in the future. Jackson Canal checks coming in regularly. Short delay in transferring the funds as official signers of the bank account needed to be updated. No action needed by the Board at this time.

3. **Property / Project Updates and Next Steps:**

- a. **216 Appleton Street (Appleton Mills Apartments / Winn Development):** The Chair introduced Matthew Robayna from Winn Development. John Dyjach gave a brief introduction and status update. Matthew Robayna detailed Winn's current status. The ground lease negotiating has been ongoing and is close to final form. Winn still needs their investor and the state sign off. Hoping for DHCD closing this spring, late May/early June. Construction could start shortly after closing. Winn received additional state tax credits which helped plug an existing construction gap. Winn has gotten sign offs from Mass Historic for the windows. The building permit application has been filed and is under review. They are feeling good about being able to begin construction soon. Carl Eger asked staff if there are any hangups. John Dyjach explains the main concern is that we are continuing to review the ground lease and will discuss further in executive session. There is an opportunity for Phase II to go through a Mass Development program to use the Underutilized Property Program for some of its funding which will be outlined further in the future. John Dyjach explains how Winn brought the Mass Development Underutilized Property Program to OPED/HRA's attention for this project. The HRA, being the owners of the property, must be the applicant. Matthew Robayna explains that Winn is familiar with this program. They had applied for and received money through this program for a different project. Winn is requesting the HRA open up the application for them and Winn will go in and prepare the application and obtain all the materials for submission. They are estimating they may ask for \$1M to help cover structural repairs on Phase II buildings including replacing beams and posts, floor decking, roof decking, and adding a temporary roof membrane to make the building watertight. They are hoping to time everything so that when they hear about any award approved, they will have the ability to deploy funds immediately and have contractors on site to shore up the Phase II side while working on the Phase I side. First step of the Underutilized Property Program is to submit an Expression of Interest which is due March 17th. Then, if asked, a full application would need to be completed by the June deadline. Chair had a question regarding reporting requirements should funds be approved. Mr. Robayna explains that they did research and there are no long term reporting requirements. Mr. Robayna also explains that the way in which they structure the ownership entities of these buildings doesn't allow for them to accept grants because it negatively impacts the low income tax credit they get from the state. They will need to work with John Dyjach and Aaron Vega to pre-structure something to address this. The Chair thanked Mr. Robayna for his attendance and update and then opened the floor for comments and questions. Thomas Creed asks if the HRA's ownership of the property allows them to apply for this funding. Aaron Vega answers yes and goes on to explain that HRA applying doesn't affect Winn's LIHTC credits. Mr. Creed asks if transferring the property will complicate that. Mr. Robayna answers no. Mass Development program contemplates that buildings will be redeveloped and public sector applicants won't always be the end actors. Chair again thanks Mr. Robayna for coming in.
- b. **South Holyoke Homes:** The Chair introduced Sarah Meier-Zimbler from Holyoke Housing Authority. Ms. Meier-Zimbler introduces Janara Healy who is also on the call for Holyoke Housing Authority. Ms. Meier-Zimbler states that they are anticipating Phase 1 standard completion on 3/27/23. They are hoping to have a ribbon cutting in April. They are currently processing applications and are very excited to get occupants in the building. Phase 2B project has progressed the most. Phase 2B is the 8 homeownership units which went out to bid this past summer. The bids that came back were very high. HHA is working hard to try to figure out how to bring costs down to make the project work. HHA has done extensive outreach to contractors to understand pricing and what they can do to bring that price down. A few things included in these bid documents that are different from the prior bids including the HHA board has approved a proprietary specification, called Bensonwood, it's a panelization project. Not fully modular but it is a product that can be made in a factory. All the walls, ceilings, floors can be done off site and then installed. It's an option if the general contractor wants to pursue it. HHA isn't telling them they have to but it's an available option. What they are finding is that their 8 unit project is too small for a big company but too large for a smaller company. So if the HHA is satisfied with the performance with the initial contractor, the board has approved they could award the 10 additional units to that same contractor. So contractors bidding know that if they perform well there is an opportunity for additional work in the hopes that it will entice larger developers to submit bids. Phase 2B is currently out to bid. Bids are coming back March 1st. HHA is hoping to have a contractor in place, approved by HHA board in March then go through financial closing. HHA anticipates closing late April/early May and will start construction very shortly afterwards. A very preliminary design on

the additional 10 units is being created - Phase 2A and Phase 2C. These will consist of 4 units on the lot formerly owned by the Greek Orthodox Church and 6 units just down from the Phase 1 site. They have designers on board and have done environmental investigation. Last week, HHA started a small remediation project. They are trying to push ahead to get the units permitted. Hoping to submit a planning board submission on the 10 additional units this Spring. If they like the general contractor doing the 8 units, it will be a faster initiation of construction on the 10 units. HHA submitted a Statement of Interest for ARPA funding back in the Fall 2022 and will be submitting an additional ARPA application this year for the 10 additional units. HHA will let us know if they need support at this stage. All things are moving ahead. Looking forward to 2024 in the hopes that all four corners of the park will be activated and occupied. The Chair thanks Ms. Meier-Zimbler for providing updates. Aaron Vega asks if Janara will be our contact while Ms. Meier-Zimbler is out on maternity leave. Janara confirms yes. Mr. Vega asks for clarification on choosing the same contractor for the 8 units to do the 10 unit project. Ms. Meier-Zimbler explains that yes they will be permitting at the time the 8 units are being built. Looking toward a Fall construction start and if they like the current general contractor, they can award him the additional project of 10 units. Ms. Meier-Zimbler and Ms. Healy were thanked for their attendance.

- c. **Dwight Street Community Garden/ Neighbor to Neighbor:** The Chair opened the floor to any updates from staff on the Community Garden. Jennifer Keitt provided an update. We are waiting to finalize all the paperwork. Neighbor to Neighbor doesn't have access to the site right now as the lease agreement had expired end of January. Neighbor to Neighbor stated that they will be getting the paperwork notarized within the next day or two. John Dyjach explains that we will need the Chair to sign the Deed hoping within the next week or so.
- d. **163 Sargeant Street (The Armory Building):** The Chair thanks Eric Taub for attending. Chair explains that the HRA will be discussing the RFP received in Executive Session tonight. Mr. Taub thanks the Board. The Chair explains to Mr. Taub that he will most likely be invited to a future meeting to discuss his Armory Building RFP submission.

#### 4. Other Business:

- a. **Update on HRA Funding Concept for a Code Upgrade Program:** The Chair recounts having meetings with Jennifer Keitt to discuss the funding concept. Most recently a productive meeting was had between the Chair, Jennifer Keitt, Aaron Vega and John Dyjach. Hoping to have something ready for the next meeting for everyone to review.
- b. **Quick discussion regarding the time of meetings.** The Chair solicits opinions from the other board members on the 5:00 pm start time of meetings. Mr. Creed confirms that historically meetings have been held at 5. But several have been held at 5:30 pm to accommodate staff. Mr. Creed is indifferent on which time 5pm or 5:30pm. He suggested we decide on one time and stick with it for continuity's sake. Mr. Eger asks if we are talking about virtual or live meetings. The Chair states that she would prefer we continue with the hybrid model as it provides more community participation. Mr. Whelihan states that we will need to wait for the Governor to make a decision on remote participation before moving forward. Mr. Eger suggested we stay with 5pm. Mr. Whelihan and the Chair agree. Chair asks for any additional comments prior to closing the regular meeting and going into executive session. No additional comments are made.

Discussion on whether or not the general session should be closed prior to going into executive session. Attorney Bissonnette explains that if a vote is going to happen then the general meeting should remain open for that vote to occur afterwards otherwise the vote will have to wait until the next meeting. A motion to keep the general meeting open but go into executive session, was made by Carl Eger and seconded by Thomas Creed. Point of order made by Jay Whelihan. Mr. Whelihan explains that we must state why we are going into executive session. Mr. Bissonnette explains that if the agenda only states Executive Session without a reason then the Chair or member making the motion has to state the reason for going into executive session. The Chair states that the Board is going into executive session to discuss the purchase and sale of real estate property in accordance with MGL CH 30 Section 21(a) as the Chair has

determined that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body and will be returning to regular session.

**A roll call followed:**

Carl Eger Jr. X  
Thomas Creed X  
Jorge Colon X  
Daphne Board X  
John Whelihan X

The motion passed unanimously.

**5. Executive Session**

A motion to approve the consensual and/or nonconsensual taking of the following 10 properties in downtown Holyoke: Parcel ID's 029-09-009, 029-09-010, 029-09-011, 029-09-013, 029-09-014, 029-09-015, 029-09-016, 029-09-017, 029-09-018 and 029-09-019, was made by Carl Eger and seconded by Thomas Creed:

**A roll call followed:**

John Whelihan X  
Carl Eger Jr. X  
Thomas Creed X  
Jorge Colon X  
Daphne Board X

The motion passed unanimously.

A motion to accept the Mass Development Site Readiness grant in the amount of \$100,000 and authorize the Chair to sign documents related to the grant, was made by Thomas Creed and seconded by Jay Whelihan:

**A roll call followed:**

Carl Eger Jr. X  
Thomas Creed X  
Jorge Colon X  
Daphne Board X  
John Whelihan X

The motion passed unanimously.

**6. Adjournment**

Having no other business, a motion to adjourn was made by Carl Eger and seconded by John Whelihan.

**A roll call followed:**

John Whelihan  
Carl Eger Jr.  
Thomas Creed  
Jorge Colon  
Daphne Board

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Daphne Board, Chairperson