

**Holyoke Redevelopment Authority**  
**Meeting Minutes - Wednesday April 12, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.**  
City Hall Annex Conference Room 403  
Or via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83647025884>  
Meeting ID: 836 4702 5884

**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, Senior Project Manager

**Others Present:** Attorney Jane Mantolesky, Assistant City Solicitor

**1. Call to Order**

Chairperson Daphne Board called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. and announced that the meeting is being recorded and is being held both in person and virtually. The Chair 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 Healey's March 29, 2023, 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 (via Zoom)	
Thomas Creed	X	
Carl Eger	X	
John Whelihan	X	

**2. HRA Board Business**

**a. HRA Meeting Minutes of March 15, 2023**

A motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 15, 2023, was made by Carl Eger and seconded by John Whelihan. A roll call vote followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
John Whelihan	X	
Carl Eger	X	
Thomas Creed	X	
Jorge Colon	X	
Daphne Board	X	

**b. Financial Update**

John Dyjach provided a financial update and noted the following:

- HRA received a \$100,000 reimbursement from MassDevelopment for the South Holyoke Homes parcels. \$101,748.69 was paid to the landowner Antonio Alberrici for the consensual taking and all outstanding property taxes were collected at closing.
- HRA paid the \$1,000 liquor license annual fee for Fame.
- All annual insurance payments have been made.

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

**a. 216 Appleton Street (Appleton Mills Apartments / WinnDevelopment):**

The Chair provided a quick update. All documents reviewed at the last meeting are with the lenders. They're expecting to finalize everything mid-June/July. The option agreement has been put on hold and a purchase and sale agreement is being drafted. HRA received a draft letter of support for the project which will be reviewed and edited by the Chair. Winn did approve an additional \$10K for additional legal fees. Winn is going forward with the Underutilized Property Program (UPP) application for Phase 2. John Whelihan asks if Winn has applied for CPA funding. Per Aaron Vega, not that we are aware of. Mr. Whelihan suggests that Winn may want to consider applying in the future. John Dyjach noted that Winn's site plan that was approved by the Planning Board expires at the end of May, so Winn is working on getting building permits issued so that they can avoid requesting an extension. Winn may request property access prior to closing but no request has come forward as of yet.

Aaron Vega discussed the request for letters of support for the ARPA funding applications expected to be submitted by WinnDevelopment as well as the Holyoke Housing Authority. A motion was made by Thomas Creed to provide the support letters. Said motion was seconded by John Whelihan and a roll call followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
John Whelihan	X	
Carl Eger	X	
Thomas Creed	X	
Jorge Colon	X	
Daphne Board	X	

**b. South Holyoke Homes:**

The Chair received an email update from Matthew Mainville, Executive Director, of the Holyoke Housing Authority. Phase II is changing from 8 to 7 stand-alone units due to budgetary constraints. Further discussion will be had in the Executive Session.

**4. Proposal for 163 Sargeant Street (The Armory Building)**

The Chair introduces Eric Taub of The Axxion Company. Mr. Taub submitted a proposal to renovate the Armory property into 4 residential units which would include 2 stand-alone duplexes. Mr. Taub thanks the Board and explains that his first step would be to check out the building, clean it out, and then analyze it for the best fit. He's thinking of either a 2 family or a 4 family with commercial space on the first floor. Mr. Taub can't really determine the final use until he's able to go in to look around. He's definitely planning on building 2 duplexes behind the existing building and maybe 2 or 4 more units at the Armory building itself. The Chair asks for clarification regarding new construction. It is confirmed that new construction will be what is in the proposal submitted. Commissioner Creed asks about the process in identifying this property and what specifically about the property interested him. Mr. Taub explains that he has experience with commercial and residential buildings. He knows that the land is flat and doesn't believe that a larger building would work as well in this area. Mr. Taub comments that duplexes and a smaller number of units would be ideal in this area as a continuation of the Pine Street area. The Chair comments about the historical feel in the area and the need for high density housing. The Chair goes on to explain that the HRA is looking for something that centers the historic Armory building in the plan as a showpiece. The Chair explains that we will recraft our Notice of Property for Sale further specifying our wants for the Armory property. Mr. Taub explains that he went through the Notice of Property Sale from 2020, he wants to develop the area, he doesn't believe that a high-density development is right for that area. He's happy to discuss possibilities for the property and goes on to state that he wants to keep the Armory as historically intact as possible. Aaron Vega acknowledges that the Notice of Property for Sale has been out for a long time and there has been some interest. He expresses appreciation for Mr. Taub's development and open communication, keeping it local. Mr.

Vega goes on to explain that the City has been reworking all RFP's and processes around sales of property with our Law and Purchasing Departments. None of the newer language or processes were built into the open Notice of Property for Sale. There are best practices that we want to include in all our processes for clarity. A new Notice of Property for Sale is almost ready for release and that Staff can present the updated at the next meeting and have it go out shortly thereafter. Mr. Vega points out that past practice has included an open house so that possible developers would have access to the property to create an adequate proposal supporting Mr. Taub's point that until he gets in there, he doesn't know what he can do with the property. Mr. Taub adds that he believes this property has been out for bid and had an open house in the past and he is really interested in developing this property. He's willing to create whatever the HRA wants to see. The Chair explains that staff will be reworking the sale notice, putting the specifics in place so that we can identify what it is we want to see, and get it out asap. Mr. Taub is invited to submit a proposal at that time. Carl Eger thanks Mr. Taub for his entrepreneurial spirit. John Whelihan thanks Mr. Taub for submitting a proposal and concurs that there was an open house previously, but the building isn't very accessible for a full open house. Mr. Vega explains that people have been in the building fairly recently and periodically the office receives calls from people asking for access to assess possible development. John Whelihan is confident that the duplexes would be built quickly but his concern is that the duplexes go up and the Armory sits for another 10 years further deteriorating. The Chair thanks Mr. Taub for the proposal.

**5. Other Business:**

- a. Report on March 27<sup>th</sup> meeting with Mayor Garcia – Chair Daphne Board and Thomas Creed were in attendance along with Tessa Murphy-Romboletti and Mark Cutting of HEDIC. Mayor wanted to hear what would help HRA be more active and to further the Urban Renewal Plan (URP) goals. The HRA made it clear that they do not want to be in competition with their other projects. Pending HRA projects take precedence. The HRA will request money for a code upgrade grant program and an equity fund that the HRA could draw from when needed. Mr. Vega confirms that all ARPA monies must be spent by June 2026, and he believes the concept of a code upgrade grant program is getting traction from the Mayor to possibly be replicated elsewhere. Jennifer Keitt shares that the ARPA application will be for \$500k for an equity fund investment and \$250k for a code upgrade grant program. Tom Creed understands this to be a placeholder acknowledging that parameters will still need to be put in place. He feels this would allow time to purchase property in the future. He would be supportive of the ARPA application for those uses recognizing further work needs to be done and reiterates that the current projects take precedence over the HRA ARPA asks. Brief discussion on parameters needed for programs going forward. Commissioner Whelihan asks if Wayfinders has been in touch. Per Aaron Vega, we don't know if they are applying or not; but, if they do, it would be most likely for Library Commons. He noted that Wayfinders is working to acquire 394 - 400 High Street from the City. There is a meeting scheduled April 25<sup>th</sup> with Wayfinders and they are focusing on the Library Commons project and the Newton Street area. Staff to provide update. John Dyjach shares information about the Newton Street walk a few weeks ago that included 20+ people from various organizations including Holyoke Housing Authority, Valley Opportunity Council, Wayfinders, City employees, and Boys & Girls Club. There are 2 properties to go on the market soon. There are other projects moving forward in the general area with MassDevelopment and the Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) fellow. There is a lot of work to be done on Newton Street. Approximately a handful of the properties are in the URP. Some are privately owned, and some are city owned. It was very beneficial to get everyone out there and engaged; getting people on the ground and discussing next steps moving forward.
- b. One Holyoke request for license extension tiny house - 60 days. Carl Eger moved to extend the license and was seconded by Commissioner Creed. A brief discussion was had that this is a straightforward request with an end date. A roll-call followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
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Daphne Board	X
Jorge Colon	X
Thomas Creed	X
Carl Eger	X
John Whelihan	X

c. John Dyjach noted some upcoming meeting agenda topics include:

- Denis and Marco Luzuriaga will be asked to provide the Board with an update on the Canal Row project as their Option to Purchase expires June 30.
- A representative from American Environmental will be invited to an upcoming meeting to provide an update on the work at 37 Appleton Street.
- 123 Pine Street will be invited in to provide an update; and
- TDI Fellow Kevin Moforte and Mayor Garcia will each be invited to the May or June meeting.

**6. Executive Session and Adjournment.**

The Chair states that the HRA will enter Executive Session. With no other business, a motion was made at 6:05 p.m. by Thomas Creed and seconded by Carl Eger to adjourn the Regular meeting. A roll-call followed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
John Whelihan	X	
Carl Eger	X	
Thomas Creed	X	
Jorge Colon	X	
Daphne Board	X	

Respectfully Submitted,



Daphne Board, Chairperson