

# SUDBURY HOUSING AUTHORITY

55 HUDSON ROAD  
SUDBURY, MASSACHUSETTS 01776  
director@sudburyha.org

PHONE: 978-443-5112  
FAX: 978-443-5113

SHEILA M. CUSOLITO  
Executive Director

## MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

February 8, 2022

The SHA met by remote participation open session at 7:00 p.m. Those present were: Chair: S. Cline; Vice Chair: S. Swanger; Treasurer: T. Vitvitsky; Assistant Treasurer: J. Cowan; Member: A. Lepak; Executive Director: S. Cusolito

Also present: Fee Accountant J. Milne

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Director's Report/Consent Agenda:** No items removed for discussion.

**FYE23 Budget, Fee Accountant J. Milne:** The state is allowing a 4% increase over FYE22 on the ANUEL, but because the SHA does not receive an operating subsidy, it can set its budget higher if indicated. Ms. Milne reviewed the four administrative salaries, which are generally prorated across each program. Although the newly created CHAMP position was included in the FYE22 budget, it went unfilled for most of the budget year. Both the pay rate and the number of hours have been increased to better reflect the expertise and time needed to perform the job functions. The pay rate for the Bookkeeper/Occupancy Specialist was maintained at the FYE22 rate. That position also remained vacant for more than half of FYE22. The pay rate for the Resident Services Coordinator, which is a grant-funded position currently assigned only to the State budget, was increased, with hours maintained at 18. Last week, the DHCD published PHN 2022-02, Executive Director Salary and Qualifications Schedule, which allows up to a 5% increase. SHA's ED salary has been frozen by DHCD for four years, as it exceeded the allowable limit of the previously salary schedules. The DHCD has required the salary be split over two budget lines, with the additional compensation on the second line prorated across all programs. Ms. Milne suggested retaining this line at the FYE22 level to allow for a 4.2% increase in the ED salary, notwithstanding that the current salary exceeds the newly calculated salary by \$364. Ms. Milne sought guidance from DHCD on this approach, but received no response. She suggested submitting the budget as recommended to show that the SHA can support the increase, though it might not be approved. Maintenance pay rates are set by the Department of Labor & Industry, typically increasing 2.5-3% annually, with the notification typically received in March. The overtime budget line includes a cushion to absorb the anticipated increase, as DHCD does not permit an estimate on the standard wage lines.

The budget reflects a \$3,000 recommended allocation for legal services as the DHCD transitions some LHAs, including SHA, to a newly configured regional legal services program. S. Cusolito noted that the costs will likely exceed the budget, as the previous program included DHCD- paid and assigned attorneys solely focused on state public housing and immediately available for all inquiries; whereas, this new program involves hiring DHCD-approved private firms on a case-by-case basis with little accommodation for day-to-day inquiries. It was noted that the Regional Attorney program was one of the early examples of successful regionalization, but it has proven difficult to sustain through retirements and departures for other professional opportunities.

Insurance and employee benefits costs represent the bulk of expenses. Property insurance is bid out by the State for a state-wide contract, which keeps costs competitive. While costs rose, the increase is not the largest experienced in recent years. Pension and GIC costs include retiree costs, in addition to those for current employees.

The reduction in rental income reflects an overall reduction in rents across the state programs and the SHALIP vacancy. The administrative salary line increase reflects full-year accounting for both the RSC and the bookkeeping/occupancy positions. Net income was inflated in FYE22, in part due to receipt of the COVID/CARES Act subsidy. Ms. Milne explained that the operating budget is always a positive net; however, projected spending that includes reserves will appear as a negative. Commissioners expressed concern that SHA reserves, while still healthy, are reduced. Ms. Milne explained that the maintenance equipment acquisition budget reflects a one-time purchase that won't appear next year. As well, unit turnover costs have increased significantly, as have employee wage and benefits costs. Typically, SHA over-budgets for non-routine maintenance. Historically, these expenses were not a part of the reserves calculation. Finally, the reserves calculation furthermore omits the \$250,000 the SHA has previously voted to restrict for extraordinary costs beyond those outlined in the budget, effectively halving the reserves on hand that are reflected in the budget percentage.

A motion was made by T. Vitvitsky, seconded by A. Lepak, and unanimously voted, to approve the FYE23 budget as presented, including an ED annual salary of \$62,141 plus the previously Board-voted additional salary of \$2,990.

**Painting Policy:** A motion was made by J. Cowan, seconded by S. Swanger, and unanimously voted, to increase the residency requirement from five to ten years for unit painting requests initiated by tenants.

S. Cusolito reported that most painting is now outsourced at dramatically increased cost and that the five-year term is impractical. She noted that requests are approved at SHA's discretion and that currently, such requests cannot be honored. She also noted that many LHAs charge tenants for such costs, as well as those for other services, repairs, and parts. Commissioners were not in favor of passing all or part of painting costs to tenants.

**Capital Projects Administrative Fees:** Tabled.

**Public Housing Administration Notices:** S. Cusolito provided a link to those Notices published since the January 18, 2022 Regular Session, including PHN 2022-02, the ED Salary & Qualifications guideline.

**Liaison Reports:** 67-73 Nobscot Road Feasibility: Beals & Thomas submitted three plans, all with greater than 40 bedrooms, but differing in the distribution of single- and multi-family units. Neither the cost of saving the existing buildings, nor the overall financial plan, have been addressed. The final bedroom count is expected to be about half that illustrated. Only one of the three plans includes the one-bedroom units that are of interest to SHA. A final report is expected.

**ERAP:** S. Cusolito reported that SHA is aware of four households that applied for rental assistance through this SHT-sponsored program, but that it isn't clear all will qualify. There were more applicants than funds allotted, resulting in the need for a lottery.

**CPC:** S. Swanger will be present at the joint meeting of the Select Board, Finance Committee, and Capital Improvement Advisory Committee scheduled for February 15.

## **OPEN FORUM**

No comments.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**COVID Vaccination Policy:** A motion was made by J. Cowan, seconded by S. Swanger, and unanimously voted, to approve the revision to the COVID Vaccination policy as presented.

Commissioners opted to accept medical waivers only, with weekly testing. For current employees, the policy is effective immediately, with documentation due by February 28, 2022. For new employees, documentation is due prior to the start of employment.

**ED Contract:** A motion was made by A. Lepak, seconded by S. Swanger, and unanimously voted, to approve the executive director salary to match the DHCD-approved salary of \$62,141 and retain the additional compensation of \$2,990, voted and approved by DHCD as part of the FYE22 budget, as amended.

The salary matches the previously discussed and voted FYE23 budget. This vote supersedes that taken at the January 18, 2022 Regular Session.

A motion was made by S. Swanger, seconded by J. Cowan, and unanimously voted, to approve the executive director contract for employment between the Sudbury Housing Authority and Shcila M. Cusolito for a three-year term, at a DHCD-approved salary of \$62,141 and additional compensation of \$2,990 at 26 hours per week; to match the DHCD-approved vacation carryover; and to retain the additional year carryover, as amended.

DHCD returned the contract voted at the January 18, 2022 Regular Session. The Department requested removal of all Rider 1 items, as well as the SHA Personnel Policy; however, the SHA voted the contract removing only the Rider 1 entry related to additional compensation. The two Rider 1 entries related to compensation, previously requested by DHCD, were retained with updated language. Clarifying language was added to the Rider 1 entry related to vacation carryover. This vote and contract supersedes that taken and approved at the January 18, 2022 Regular Session.

**SHA Feasibility Study Update:** The role of the DHCD-assigned architect will be determined as a follow-up to the February 5, 2022 Special Meeting, where Hancock project manager Jacob Lemiux offered to provide contacts for structural engineers that can assess the integrity of SHA's existing units. S. Cusolito reported that two of the basements recently flooded with the extraordinary weather conditions. The SHA has a site improvement project on its five-year capital plan and requested ARPA funds to augment the limited Formula Funding budget. S. Swanger suggested alerting Hancock to the flooding, in case it plays into considerations for redevelopment vs. re-use.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT/CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by S. Swanger, seconded by T. Vitvitsky, and unanimously voted, to approve the Director's Report/Consent Agenda as presented.

The Consent Agenda included the following resolutions:

- Approve the minutes of the January 18, 2022 Regular Session
- Approve the minutes of the January 18, 2022 Executive Session
- Approve the checks written in January 2022

J. Cowan will draft the minutes of the May 26, 2021 meeting of the Sudbury Foundation Feasibility Study Subcommittee.

### **MEMBERS' FORUM**

A site visit is scheduled for March 15, 9:00 a.m. S. Swanger wondered about familiarizing the Town Manager with our properties, but agreed that it should be separate from the Board's site visit.

S. Cusolito reported that a 705 resident who vacated in 2020 just sent the final payment on back rent owed. She noted that it is unusual for tenants to continue making payments after they leave. The Board asked that a letter of thanks be sent.

### **ADJOURN**

A motion was made by S. Swanger, seconded by A. Lepak, and unanimously voted, to adjourn the February 8, 2022 Regular Session and adjourn to Executive Session to discuss a Housing Court matter and litigation, for to do so in open session would compromise the position of the Housing Authority, not to return to open session. The time was 9:04 p.m.

Yes: S. Cline

Yes: J. Cowan

Yes: A. Lepak

Yes: S. Swanger

Yes: T. Vitvitsky