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MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING

September 24, 2026

The SHA met in open session that included virtual access at 3:05 p.m. Those present: Chair: T. Vivitsky; Vice Chair: A. Lepak; Treasurer: F. Riepe; Assistant Treasurer: S. Cline; Member: C. Howe; Executive Director: S. Cusolito

NEW BUSINESS

Executive Director Position, Advertising

Executive Director S. Cusolito announced her retirement, concluding nearly 15 years of total service to the Housing Authority, including 13.5 as Executive Director.

A motion was made by S. Cline, seconded by F. Riepe, and unanimously voted, to extend appreciation to S. Cusolito for her service to the Sudbury Housing Authority.

Commissioner C. Howe noted S. Cusolito's suggestion that the Board consider a management agreement with another housing authority, in addition to considering a dedicated executive director. The process for each option is outlined by EOHLC. Ms. Howe suggested a single advertisement listing both options be published immediately, while simultaneously exploring options for a development consultant and an interim director/experienced staff person to transfer some ongoing ED tasks.

Ms. Howe suggested the Board could utilize an agency as one option to oversee the advertising and hiring process. She contacted Mass NAHRO, which offers such services. S. Cusolito interjected that SHA will need a development consultant for the currently proposed redevelopment project, but that this role is separate from the need for an executive director. Ms. Howe noted that Mass NAHRO also maintains lists of housing professionals that might serve in interim capacities. The number of EOHLC-specified requirements for hiring an executive director, including review of unit count, salary schedule, and advertisement content, was noted.

Ms. Howe suggested some modifications to a standard advertisement approved by EOHLC: a statement reflecting current redevelopment efforts; and for managing agent proposals, a noted preference for local candidate housing authorities that could provide on-site presence and supervision. Commissioner S. Cline noted her interest in better understanding how management agreements work, particularly in terms of on-site presence and financial impact, suggesting SHA talk with housing authorities that operate under such agreements. Commissioner Howe recounted her experience as ED of Needham Housing Authority, which became the managing agent of Wellesley, involving hiring and sharing all staff. She noted that Wellesley eventually became independent and is now searching for a managing agent for director level administrative functions, suggesting some flexibility in the specifics of management agreements.

S. Cusolito stated a management agreement would not necessarily involve replacing existing staff, but could augment or reconfigure it, given that most SHA staff is part-time. C. Howe commented on the value of also advertising for a dedicated executive director, anticipating a prospective pool of experienced deputy directors or an executive director from a larger agency who desires to "cut back". Commissioner Riepe highlighted the restriction to hire only a part-time executive director, whose job responsibilities extend

beyond a part-time schedule. S. Cusolito stated that the SHA has at times, including the last two years, budgeted for two additional full-time positions, one administrative and the other in maintenance, explaining that her salary, its pro-ration, and her number of required hours are all restricted; whereas, all other positions have some flexibility that can be supported by SHA's budgets. She reemphasized the necessity of focusing on the ED position at this time, rather than other staff. Commissioner Howe commented that it would be up to the incoming ED to assess staffing needs. She also commented that under a management agreement, there would be staff to cover temporary absences as needed, though there would also be some loss of local presence.

S. Cusolito reemphasized that the search for a development consultant should be separate from that for the ED or managing agent, reiterating that CHA offered to assist with the procurement of its replacement.

A motion made by F. Riepe, seconded by S. Cline to hire Mass NAHRO to oversee the search for an executive director was withdrawn by Commissioner Riepe.

A motion was made by S. Cline, seconded by C. Howe, and unanimously voted, to retain Mass NAHRO to oversee the advertising and recruitment of either an executive director or managing agent per the basic scope of services, at a base cost of $5,500 as presented.

To her earlier expressed additions to the standard advertising language, Commissioner Howe added text that outlined a deadline, while also listing the position as open until filled. S. Cusolito suggested broadening the language around interest in expanding SHA's portfolio to reflect the Board's ongoing interest in such.

Commissioner Howe mentioned that the Board could participate via a subcommittee review and recommendation process, or by having a Board-level review of all applicants. S. Cusolito noted that during the 2025 ED contract discussions, which included a forecast of her retirement, a personnel subcommittee was formed, comprised of Members T. Vitvitsky and A. Lepak, to address succession planning. Given that Mass NAHRO will pre-screen applicants and that the field of interest is likely to be small, Commissioners agreed by consensus to review all referred applicants at the Board level. It was noted that the 667 MVTO must be given the opportunity to participate in the hiring process. There is no such representation for families, but S. Cusolito suggested she could engage all residents via the monthly newsletter, which will circulate next week. She will also communicate directly with the LTO. S. Cusolito will work with Commissioner Howe on the salary schedule, which must be included in the advertisement.

Commissioners returned to a discussion of having a dedicated ED, ultimately recognizing that decision-making around an ED *vs*. a managing agent will largely be determined by the applicant pool. S. Cusolito stated her interest was in having the Board *consider* a management agreement, noting that Sudbury was singular in the lead-up to the 2014 Chapter 235 regulatory changes in opposing both the State's and Mass NAHRO's proposals for such agreements. She noted that at a small housing authority there is still a significant gap between what the administrative assistant does and what the ED is responsible for, even with the evolution of the administrative assistant position to a full-time, expanded role. She also stated that in addition to the restricted hours, the salary, which is also restricted, is not competitive. She underscored her own inability to continue living in Sudbury after she was hired by SHA and the breadth of job functions that require an experienced individual at the helm. Commissioner F. Riepe asked her to name the two most consuming job functions. Ms. Cusolito responded that there have been shifts over time, but that redevelopment or acquisition is not a basic ED job function and that the Board subsequently acknowledged the mistake in assigning acquisition and development of a new program (Willis Lake LIP) as one of her first undertakings, particularly against the backdrop of significant regulatory change. Even given the years of intervening experience, redevelopment remains a time-consuming undertaking, as is capital project

management. She stated that her vision initially was grounded in a belief in the mission and the focus on tenants. Regulatory changes have largely dictated a lamentable shift away from the interpersonal connection to tenants, limiting her involvement to when there is an issue.

MEMBERS' FORUM

No comments.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by S. Cline, seconded by F. Riepe, and unanimously voted, to adjourn the September 24, 2026 Special Session. The time was 4:20 p.m.

Yes: S. Cline
Yes: C. Howe
Yes: A. Lepak
Yes: F. Riepe
Yes: T. Vitvitsky