

AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY
AGENDA REGULAR MEETING/ MINUTES
Monday January 9, 2017
ANN WHALEN COMMUNITY ROOM, AMHERST, MA

Members of the Amherst Housing Authority met on **Monday January 9, 2017**

In the fifth floor community room of Ann Whalen Apartments, 33 Kellogg Ave., Amherst, MA. Board Chair, Laura Quinn called the meeting to order at **10:05** a.m.

PRESENT: Commissioners: **L. Quinn, S. Jefferson, P. Jessop, C. Kruger, T.Boutilier** arrived at 10:30 a.m.

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT: Pam Parmakian, Interim Director of Housing Programs- *members of the general public (all did not sign-in but sheet on file)

AGENDA ADOPTION/CHANGES: Adopt or Change: Board Interview Schedule

“Call to Order; Meeting of the Board of Commissioners to interview **Sandra Desrosiers, a candidate for Executive Director of the AHA;**

Motion made by: C. Kruger

Second: S. Jefferson

Unanimous

Introductions – Laura gave a review of schedule

1. **Question- asked by:** C. Kruger asked Ms. Desrosiers for a few words and background

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers – In housing for 2 decades. She has passion for housing. She had an opportunity to build an accreditation program which establishes standards for policies and procedures for the Authority. She is interested in Amherst as an opportunity to partner with other agencies and schools. Contract is now done with accredited.

2. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop asked how long she was with Windsor and Bloomfield

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers answered that she was with Bloomfield from 2005-2012 and with Ansonia and East Windsor from 2012 to 2014. Bloomfield has 250-258 vouchers 17 units for the federal housing. There was no upkeep. Ansonia had 400 public housing units – 1200 vouchers.

3. **Question – asked by:** L. Quinn asked – how did you fix the Bloomfield Housing Authority?

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers answered that communication is always important and she hired staff for maintenance.

4. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop asked about staff sizes that were at the Housing Authorities she worked for

ANSWER:

Windsor & Bloomfield – had a staff of 8

Ansonia – had a staff of 28 – with some on union (3 unions)

East Windsor – had a staff of 4 people

5. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop and C. Kruger asked about her experience with Capital improvement and projects.

ANSWER:

At Ansonia she worked on a relocation – the next phase of relocation was to show 3 units. She would recommend support to tenants. Connie asked her again about her capital planning experience and Sandra answered that she worked with capital improvements and procurement.

6. **Question- asked by:** S. Jefferson asked about her experience with L.I.H.T.C.

ANSWER:

She worked with LIHTC- described a scenario where if someone goes over income they have to move Laura followed up – with LIHTC possibly not being available. Do you have any other development funding ideas? Sandra answered that she has a strong rolodex – TAG in Boston and other possibilities

7. **Question- asked by:** C. Kruger asked: we have 15 units of Federal Housing – most of our relationship is with DHCD – with that said “do you see a smaller agency actually being competitive for tax credit?”

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers answered 9% not likely but maybe 4%

8. **Question- asked by:** L. Quinn- there is a shortage of housing in Amherst so what other relationships in the area do you see with landlords due to high costs of rents for vouchers.

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers – the answer is in Boston where Universities are. The city has put pressure on the schools to provide housing. She is not a fan of the inspection models – many want to take a look at admin fees to help landlords with services for the landlord. She is wondering how to leverage our tenants to be more attractive to the landlords. San Francisco is going to a model where they pay a higher rent and rent and spending the HUD dollars not taking into regard the number of vouchers.

9. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop asked her about her involvement in development in other positions.

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers answered that she contracted a developer but left before they were developed.

10. **Question- asked by:** L. Quinn – asked Sandra about her opinion regarding staff relations

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers answered that she oversees until she trusts them and then lets them fly with the job. She says that staff loves her.

11. **Question- asked by:** C. Kruger asked Ms. Desrosiers about working with the Town Boards and staff. Coming in not familiar with Amherst how is she going to create those relationships.

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers stated the importance of communication. In Ansonia worked closely with the mayor’s office. Worked with the Police department to create partnerships.

Steve asked – how often do you plan to meet with tenants?

Ms. Desrosiers – often – she also expects the staff to meet with them

12. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop asked Ms. Desrosiers about the size of the budgets she worked with

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers answered that Ansonia had a 2 million budget, Windsor 6-8 million and East Windsor less than 1 million.

13. **Question- asked by:** T. Boutilier asked about the two most positive aspect regarding diversity and how she works with her staff

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers said that she has zero tolerance for discrimination and no tolerance for treating people badly. At Macy’s she works with grey mannequins. She also said that if we are working with professionals this should be a non-issue. If it

is it has been very identifiable and would try to coach them. She has been all over the country and housing authorities are doing it right – we house others that are hard to house.

14. **Question- asked by: C. Kruger** Ms. Desrosiers how she would support the Board

ANSWER:

The Director works on the Day to Day issues and the Board sets the policies. She described situations of agencies that have had tenants call Board members.

L. Quinn follow up and asked If you had an idea and wanted to let them know (the Board) ASPA how would you approach this.

Ms. Desrosiers answered that she would get it on the next agenda

15. **Question- asked by: P. Jessop** asked her How she deals with difficult tenants

ANSWER:

It was a stabbing over drugs and domestic violence – offered consoling – added cameras. With difficult clients – I am only a landlord would evict.

16. **Question- asked by: C. Kruger** asked the question of how she would deal with hoarding.

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers said that this is what inspections are for – if it interferes with daily routine then call Social services but also enforce the lease.

17. **Question- asked by: S. Jefferson** asked her what she would do what if she doesn't agree with the Board Sandra answered that the Board is her boss – so she would present why she would oppose their view.

Steve asked her to sight an example

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers said that At Ansonia the Board did not want to put the housing back. She ultimately left the position.

18. **Question- asked by: P. Jessop** asked her to follow up with Massachusetts stuff

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers said that she is not well versed beyond their similarities and not really familiar with Massachusetts regulations.

19. **Question- asked by: L. Quinn** asked Sandra her one year 5 year plan thoughts and ideas.

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers said that she has been in roles where there are not options to provide more housing – she thinks it should be in the form of a budget.

20. **Question – asked by: T. Boutillier** asked her how she would encourage participation because AHA has experienced challenges recruiting RAP and tenant organizations

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers answered that RAB is a requirement – present it as the expectations that are required. Hold meetings when people are available.

21. **Question - asked by: C. Kruger** what does she envision the biggest challenge for the next 3-5 years

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers said that she would look at the ranges for eligibility – who is on the waiting list – look at product offering look at development maybe look at what we have.

C. Kruger follow up – Financial sustainability moving forward – you are saying to provide housing for higher incomes?

Sandra said that she would be looking at needs of the community.

22. **Question- asked by: L. Quinn** said that our waiting lists are devastating. How would she deal with this?

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers said that she would look at waiting lists and since last time that were purged.

23. **Question- asked by:** T. Boutilier asked her whether she finds value in list priorities.

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers said that ultimately it is unfair but with that said if someone is homeless- there is no good answer.

24. **Question- asked by:** T. Boutilier asked her about past and present housing programs and the best ones to fulfill the mission

ANSWER:

Ms. Desrosiers best would be to create income streams and creative ways to find revenue streams. If she could bring one program it would be FSS. Homeownership is a good partnership

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at **11:40** am

Motion made by: **P. Jessop**

Second: **C. Kruger**

Passed Unanimous

Next meeting date: **January 11, 2017**

*** Materials Included**

Resume and cover letter by Sandra Desrosiers

Executive Director job profile