

**MINUTES OF MEETING
OF THE
PROACTIVE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

September 19, 2024

A Meeting of the Proactive Development Committee of the Board of Directors of the Rhode Island Housing Development Corporation was held on Thursday, September 19, 2024, at 11:30 a.m. The meeting was held at the main office of the Corporation, 44 Washington Street, Providence, RI 02903, 3rd Floor Conference Library, and via telephone conference call.

Carol Ventura, Executive Director, opened the meeting and introduced Val Lingasami, Assistant Director of Information Technology, who summarized the parameters of the meeting.

Ms. Lingasami stated that (i) this meeting would be recorded and available for review on the RIHousing website within 3-5 business days after the meeting and (ii) except for specific RIHousing staff participating telephonically in the meeting, all callers would be muted during the meeting. Ms. Lingasami also asked that to prevent any feedback or background noise, telephone participants to please mute their telephone if not speaking. Additionally, Ms. Lingasami announced that if during the meeting anyone had technical difficulties with audio or accessing the call, they should call (401) 429-1430.

Corinne Myers, General Counsel, then provided additional guidance for the meeting. Ms. Myers stated that the meeting was being held in a hybrid fashion with all members of the Proactive Development Committee appearing in person and specific RIHousing staff participating via teleconference. Members of the public were invited to access the meeting in person or via teleconference according to their preference. Furthermore, members of the public could visit the RIHousing website to view the agenda and information on the actions being taken and in the event the teleconference was interrupted, staff would stop the meeting until audio was restored.

Ms. Myers stated that Chairman Pryor, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Development Corporation Proactive Development Committee would preside over the meeting and requested that any Director or staff wishing to comment state their name prior to speaking and telephone participants to mute their phones when not speaking. Ms. Myers also said that Committee members are Chairman Pryor; Director Womer and Carol Ventura. She noted that there were no items expected for vote.

Ms. Myers then invited Chairman Pryor to call the meeting to order.

A quorum being present, Chairman Pryor introduced himself and officially called the meeting to order at approximately 11:44 a.m. The Chairman then invited Ms. Ventura to proceed with the roll call of Commissioners in attendance.

Ms. Ventura conducted a roll call vote of the Proactive Committee members participating in the meeting. Committee members participating were: Stefan Pryor; Jonathan Womer, Director of the Department of Administration; and Carol Ventura.

RIHousing staff participating were: James Comer, Deputy Executive Director; Kara Lachapelle, Chief Financial Officer; Benjamin Frost, President of Proactive Development; Christine Hunsinger, Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer; Kara Lachapelle, Chief Financial Officer; Brett Pelletier, Chief

Administrative Officer; Corinne Myers, General Counsel; and Val Lingasami, Assistant Director of Information Technology.

Daniel Connors, Interim Secretary of Housing, Robert Stolzman, Counsel for the Department of Housing; Melina Lodge, Executive Director of The Housing Network; Kate Pirraglia, Senior Advisor to the Office of the Governor; Alexa Gagosz and members of the public were also present.

1. **Recap of Proactive Development Program (Board actions to date)**

Chairman Pryor provided a brief recap of the Proactive Development Committee directive. He also explained the need for the initiative and the process approved by the Rhode Island Housing Development Board of Directors on January 11, 2024. The Chairman said that the Committee is charged with planning and guiding such proactive development activities as may effectuate the purposes described in the State of Rhode Island FY 2024 budget and may otherwise be determined from time to time. The Committee was empowered to select vendors and engage in transactions in keeping with guidelines and budgets approved by the Board of Directors.

Continuing, Chairman Pryor welcomed Benjamin Frost, President of the Proactive Development Committee, and announced that he would be spearheading the activities of the Committee. The primary goal of the Committee is to ensure that the leaders of RIHousing work closely with developers and municipalities to ensure that they have assistance in navigating processes and assembling the capital stack to further housing development. Essentially the Committee will be in the field working hand in hand with the developers and municipalities to expedite the process. The Committee members and the Commissioners will help guide the President of the Proactive Development in the initiative.

Chairman Pryor mentioned that Ben Frost was previously the Deputy Executive Director/Chief Legal Officer for the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority and brings extensive HFA expertise, knowledge, and development experience to his new position at RIHousing. He then invited Mr. Frost to say a few words.

Mr. Frost began by saying that it was a pleasure to be at the meeting. He stated that it was an exciting opportunity to promote housing development in Rhode Island. Mr. Frost declared that he brings to the position a planner's and an attorney's viewpoint. He mentioned that he has spent several decades working in the municipal field and working with developers to get projects identified and completed. His focus was on community engagement, which Mr. Frost felt was a critical element for proactive development. He thanked the Committee for the opportunity and acknowledged that to be successful, he required the assistance of all the members of the Committee, Commissioners, staff, and partners because the task was huge.

Finally, Mr. Frost said that the appointment was a real adventure and a new chapter in his life. He will need aid in understanding Rhode Island geography and politics, prioritizing issues, and that he appreciates the team's support.

Chairman Pryor thanked Mr. Frost for his expertise and enthusiasm throughout the process. The Chairman then referred the Committee to the document provided citing the 10 functions the Proactive Development President is charged with implementing. The purposes were laid out but included leeway for prioritizing matters.

Chairman Pryor then asked attorney Robert Stolzman to provide a summary of the actions taken to establish the Proactive Development function.

Mr. Stolzman then gave a succinct highlight of the process for establishing the Committee. Data indicated that Rhode Island was lacking in focused staffing and grouping for proactive development activities. The information showed that assistance was needed in locating sites and assisting developers in identifying those sites. Instead of creating a new quasi-public entity, it made sense to utilize the existing subsidiary of the RIHousing Development Corporation as the infrastructure was already in place to adhere to the Open Meetings Act (OMA).

Next, Mr. Stolzman explained the procedure for creating the committee, from amending the by-laws of the Development Corporation on January 11, 2024, to initiating the activity. Once that was achieved, the Directors created the office of the President to focus on the mandate and established the Proactive Development Committee. Those by-laws and preliminary resolutions were officially adopted on January 11, 2024. Mr. Stolzman cited that the first nine activities were programmatic, and the tenth was an implementation matter identifying FY2024 State Budget funding to commence the proactive activities. Finally, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed by RIHousing and Interim Secretary Connors creating a contractual relationship between RIHousing and the Department of Housing.

Mr. Stolzman further explained that the Directors can change the proactive development activities identified to amend and revise to prioritize matters. Additionally, he next defined that the resolutions anticipated that the President of Proactive Development under the guidance of the Proactive Committee would implement the resolutions in accordance with budgets or guidelines as approved by the Board of Directors.

In closing, Mr. Stolzman reiterated that the Board of Directors amended the by-laws, adopted preliminary resolutions, drafted the guidelines, and employed the President. Staff was ready to proceed with the endeavor.

Chairman Pryor then asked if Interim Secretary Connors or anyone had any questions.

Interim Secretary Connors did not have any questions. He stated that he was grateful for the opportunity to work with Ms. Ventura and RIHousing and is excited that Mr. Frost is on board. He graciously offered his assistance if needed. Interim Secretary Connors stated that it's a good time for this undertaking.

Mr. Frost concurred that it was an opportune time in Rhode Island and noted that the income targeting guidelines are generous. He inquired what the Committee wants as a formal role, regarding meeting regularly or on an as-needed basis.

Director Womer speculated that some level of meetings should be held, such as quarterly or twice a year. Ms. Ventura concurred, saying that staff and the Committee can collaborate to determine what is best. Chairman Pryor agreed, noting that in the beginning, the Committee might meet more frequently. He acknowledged the Governor, Speaker Shekarchi, and Senate President Ruggiero for allocating \$1.4 million in ARPA funds for the program. He mentioned that if a meeting was required to establish a budget, a meeting would be scheduled to accommodate that issue. Furthermore, the Chair recognized that the ARPA funds are time-sensitive and finite. The Committee will need to look

to the future for income and philanthropic opportunities. Chairman Pryor mentioned that the Committee could assist in that task.

Director Womer informed the Committee that the Planning Division of the Department of Administration has been tasked with creating a report due in January on how certain GIS data layers surrounding housing might help developments in the future, including data tools that would be helpful to Mr. Frost. He kindly offered to connect RIHousing with the appropriate person at the Department of Planning. Ms. Ventura thanked Director Womer for the information and mentioned that Amy Rainone, Director of Government Relations and Policy would be the contact person for RIHousing.

Chairman Pryor stated that the Department of Housing has been compiling a list of the cities and towns in the context of a Statewide Housing Plan process that is almost complete. Individual meetings were held with each city and town, and from that process, information has emerged on parcels that are viable for development, where municipal leadership wishes to see affordable housing developed, who really wants to get started, and so forth. The Housing Department has a feel for which towns are ready to get started. The Chairman recommended Mr. Frost engage in that conversation with the Department of Housing staff.

Mr. Frost asked what the timeline was for the completion of the Plan. Interim Secretary Connors said that there isn't a hard deadline set, but if it's not done prior to the Division of Planning issuing their Statewide Plan, then that information does not roll up into the town's comprehensive plan. Therefore, staff is moving quickly to achieve that goal. The Interim Secretary said that following the meeting, he was scheduled to be at an Advisory meeting to review progress. The Department of Housing is hopeful that the Plan will be finalized in the new year.

Mr. Frost then asked about the zoning apps and mentioned those would be a great tool for the Proactive Development activities.

No other questions were presented.

No votes were taken on this item.

2. Discussion of Process and Next Steps (additional Board and committee actions contemplated, plans for Proactive Development operations, staffing and activities)

Chairman Pryor noted that the Committee had just discussed the process and next steps and asked if anyone had any other questions.

None were presented and no votes were taken on this item.

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman Pryor requested a motion to adjourn the Proactive Development Committee of the Rhode Island Housing Development Corporation. A motion was duly made by Commissioner Ventura and seconded by Mr. Womer to adjourn the meeting.

Corinne Myers, General Counsel, then conducted a voice vote of the Commissioners. The Commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

Ms. Myers then announced that the motion to adjourn was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 12:11 p.m.

Chairman Pryor then thanked everyone for participating in the Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Ventura
Secretary and Executive Director