

April 29, 2019

## **Statement on Brookline Housing Authority Properties and Performance**

**by Michael H. Jacobs, Chair, Board of Commissioners  
and Patrick Dober, Executive Director**

*The Brookline Housing Authority (BHA) is an independent public agency governed by five Commissioners. It is the largest provider of affordable housing in Brookline. It owns and manages 924 apartments at 13 sites for families, senior citizens, and people with differing abilities and administers more than 900 Section 8 vouchers. In 2015, the BHA completed construction of 86 Dummer Street, the largest new construction of affordable housing in Brookline in more than 30 years. The Housing Authority contributes significantly to the diversity of the Town's population – about 45% of BHA residents are racial/ethnic minorities. And, the majority of people on the BHA's own staff are racial/ethnic minorities.*

**Statements and photographs circulated by a candidate for BHA Commissioner over the past two weeks indicated repairs needed at a few BHA apartments. The BHA welcomes any and all inquiries and concerns. We strive to respond promptly whenever alerted to a repair need. All the repairs that the BHA could identify from the photos were made immediately. They included: A crack in a window, a missing window screen, a missing wire cover, a curling property address decal, some mold/mildew, and a snow plow bucket that was outside of its shed.**

**The statements and photos included some inaccurate facts and some mischaracterizations of BHA property conditions and performance. For example, one of the photos was of a property that the BHA does not own or manage. Another photo showed a well-maintained, safe dumpster with a routine amount of trash in it.**

**Following are applicable facts and information.**

- To start, it is worth noting that Brookline Public Housing and all Public Housing nationwide have been grossly under-funded for decades by both state and federal government. This under-investment creates an extraordinary management challenge for Public Housing Authorities everywhere. But here in Brookline, we are meeting the challenge well. The BHA maintains its properties as safe, decent community assets.
- The properties and operations are regularly inspected and closely regulated by state government (DHCD) and federal government (HUD). The BHA also closely collaborates with the Town Health Department and other departments. BHA properties and operations consistently receive strong grades from all regulators. In the most recent round of HUD inspections, BHA properties exceeded HUD standards. The BHA maintains a vacancy rate of less than 2% - a key metric of effective management and efficient use of taxpayer funds.

- Residents are routinely and strongly encouraged to report maintenance needs. “Work orders” are created for every resident call to the BHA’s Maintenance Department. Each Work Order is tracked until completion. Instructions on how to report work orders is regularly circulated with translations in Spanish, Mandarin, and Russian.
- Beyond property repairs, residents participate extensively in BHA policy discussions. Notices for all BHA Commissioners Meetings are posted at all properties and residents are always in attendance. The location of Board meetings rotates between all BHA properties to facilitate resident involvement. BHA also offers a broad range of other meetings and mechanisms for resident involvement.
- Capital needs at the properties are addressed with a focused, annual repairs program. The Town of Brookline supplements the BHA’s resources with annual funding from the Community Development Block Grant. Recent improvements include new and upgraded:
  - Playgrounds and landscaping at the Egmont St. and High St. Veterans properties.
  - A community room and resident services offices at Trustman Apartments.
  - Energy efficient utility components at multiple properties.
  - Security cameras at all properties.
  - Refurbished elevators at five properties.
  - Road and sidewalk repairs at multiple properties, and many more.
  - Projects underway or upcoming include: Outside stairway and landscaping upgrades at High St. Veterans; bathroom exhaust fans at Egmont St.; and new exterior entry doors at both High St. Veterans and Egmont St., among others.
- Furthermore, the top priority in BHA’s Strategic Plan is total rehabilitation of all the properties. The first major renovation is scheduled to start this year at the senior citizens property at 61 Park St. BHA has hired additional staff and secured allocations of state bond financing to enable this critical work.
- BHA is committed to providing healthy living environments. All the apartments at the family properties have certificates of compliance with lead-based paint regulations. Brookline was one of the first Housing Authorities in the state to adopt a smoke-free housing policy and we received the 2014 Friends of Brookline Public Health Award for this achievement. Construction and repair projects are supervised by professionals with the applicable credentials to ensure that no environmental risks are created. While surface mold and mildew appear from time to time, the BHA has never had an instance reported of toxic mold and the BHA repairs any water leaks that could allow mold and mildew to grow. Trash and recycling are picked-up at least twice per week by the BHA’s trash company. Proper recycling practices are strongly encouraged.

- In addition to safe, decent housing, the BHA provides extensive resident services ranging from English language and financial literacy classes, to free tax preparation, an on-site Brookline Food Pantry, and service coordination for seniors to support aging in place. The BHA is one of three partners in the comprehensive Steps to Success support program for students from low income households attending Brookline schools. Per our most recent quarterly report, the BHA delivered more than 1,400 instances of social services to our residents and served 66 residents for the first time. This level of resident services is above and beyond the level provided by most other Housing Authorities.

The **BHA's Mission Statement**, adopted along with the 2015 Strategic Plan follows. It was developed in consultation with Board, staff, residents, and community partners.

*The Brookline Housing Authority provides low-income families, seniors, and people of all abilities with safe, decent, accessible and affordable places to live in a community rich with opportunities. The BHA works in collaboration with government and civic organizations to support and encourage the well-being and economic self-sufficiency of BHA residents; to sustain a diverse population in Brookline; and to maintain attractive residential neighborhoods.*

For further information see our website at [www.brooklinehousing.org](http://www.brooklinehousing.org) or call us at 617-277-2022.