

AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY
AGENDA REGULAR MEETING/ MINUTES
Wednesday January 11, 2017
ANN WHALEN COMMUNITY ROOM, AMHERST, MA

Members of the Amherst Housing Authority met on **Wednesday January 11, 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 **10:12** a.m.

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

ABSENT: none

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 Debbie Turgeon, a candidate for Executive Director of the AHA; Adjournment.

Motion made by: P. Jessop

Second: S. Jefferson

Unanimous

Ms. Turgeon introduced herself. She said that she has 23 years of experience working at AHA and 7 months of being the Interim Executive Director

1. **Question- asked by:** C. Kruger- Why do you want this job and why do you want to work in housing?

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon came in 1993 as a temp and really like the housing field and learning about the community and the staff. She learned it all along the way: properties and work orders. In 1998 she brought in new vouchers and became the Director of Leased Housing. She worked on the financial piece and all aspects of Section 8 for 13 years and then worked as Housing Manager. In 2011 worked with the new Executive Director on all housing programs

2. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop asked what is good and what is bad about all her experience being in one agency

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that on the positive side she knows the agency from ground up and is familiar with all pieces of the Amherst Housing Authority so is somebody is out she can cover all roles. On the negative side she has not worked in other agencies that could be a little different.

3. **Question – asked by:** L. Quinn asked – At this stage knowing all aspects of the agency how do you see expanding to other agencies?

ANSWER:

Looking at best practices and can go to trainings and streamline whenever possible.

4. **Question- asked by:** L. Quinn asked about new challenges that she might face and what kind of ideas or changes she might want to adopt

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that staying on top of program changes is always a challenge which can be overcome with trainings and communication with others counterparts in the field.

5. **Question- asked by:** S. Jefferson asked Ms. Turgeon what she sees as her biggest weakness.

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that the finances would be her biggest weakness but she has had her hands in it for the past seven months plus with the Staff accountant out she had to learn about Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable and still learning.

6. **Question- asked by:** S. Jefferson asked Ms. Turgeon how the Board can help.

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that they can help by asking questions to which she will find the answers which help her learn.

7. **Question- asked by:** C. Kruger pointed out that Ms. Turgeon has a master degree with a business focus and many accreditations so now that you have been the Interim how do you see the difference in your job?

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that she views the organization as a full business working with budgets and financial statements. Connie asked how her job feels different in terms of the relationship with staff.

Ms. Turgeon answered that she hired everyone on staff except 2 and has supervised everyone. She feels that the agency has a great staff and that she has a great relationship with them.

8. **Question- asked by:** L. Quinn asked Ms. Turgeon: how do you see the position of Executive Director being the face of the AHA?

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that she sees herself attending other meetings building relationships with other agencies for example Community Connections, Dial Self, Homeless Agencies.

9. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop asked Ms. Turgeon how familiar she is with Massachusetts regulations.

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that she is very familiar with reporting and program regulations and how to training staff on new programs. Also she has worked in all aspects of HUD and HCV programs.

10. **Question- asked by:** C. Kruger asked her – what experience do you have with Capital improvements and relocation?

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon gave the example of Pomeroy relocation as part of helping the accessory units. Now she is working with AW Capital improvements.

11. **Question- asked by:** L. Quinn asked her – over last seven months how have you worked with the Current Capital Improvements?

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that she worked with the Assets Manager

12. **Question- asked by:** S. Jefferson asked her what are you doing different with the new person in the role of second in command?

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that she wants to make sure that the person is involved in everything and all aspects. That person is vital cover if the ED is out so that person needs to be able to step in without trembling for a moment.

13. **Question- asked by:** T. Boutilier asked her about the learning experience in the previous role of 2nd in command. What have you learned and how has that defined your leadership?

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon said that she has learned to dig in and learn and go after information if I need answers while still maintaining staff informed.

T. Boutilier then asked her – have there been specific things you are doing differently due to your experience? Changes in style or model mirroring?

Ms. Turgeon answered that her communication style has changed – no chaos from the first ED. Debbie works with her staff in the same manner. The 2nd model offered no transparency. Ms. Turgeon is working in a similar way to the 1st model.

14. **Question- asked by:** C. Kruger asked Ms. Turgeon about the role of the Board. Sometimes the Board doesn't know how things are going for the rest of the staff so how do you see moving forward the board being more effective?

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that she would facilitate more communication with other staff especially with the Chair. Board is the policy maker. Debbie should bring information to the Board

15. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop asked if a tenant or participant calls him as a commissioner should he take care of it?

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that he should direct the call to the staff. Tenants and participants should check with the staff. Communication is very important.

L. Quinn followed up with the comment that whoever is in the ED position the flow of communication should be clear. Maybe when the new ED comes on there should be ED and Board communication trainings.

Ms. Turgeon replied that we need to work together and prioritize issues and have clear communication.

16. **Question- asked by:** T. Boutilier asked in regard to the issue of questions coming to the commissioners – what is Debbie's experience with clients? Are they following up the proper communication? How do you see the ED's roles of mediating and information and how do you think that clients going to commissioners should be dealt with?

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that if a client goes to commissioners with issues the Board should ask if they did go to a staff member first.

17. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop asked Ms. Turgeon to speak about her experience developing new units or how she would move forward with new developments.

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that she hasn't been involved with developers but maybe moving forward she would suggest that reuse of existing buildings.

18. **Question- asked by:** L. Quinn asked Ms. Turgeon to talk about how she would grow new opportunities.

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon said that she started with 19% HCV's. She grew vouchers. Developed Bridge and Tamarack and then Main Street and Pomeroy Lane. Grew the State vouchers programs MRVP and AHVP and DMH vouchers.

19. **Question- asked by:** L. Quinn asked how Ms. Turgeon sees more growth and the ratio to staff.

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon said that she would like to see new opportunities and would staff accordingly.

20. **Question – asked by:** C. Kruger asked Ms. Turgeon how she sees working the town and other agencies.

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon said that she is already working with Nate Malloy at Presidential Apartments.

C. Kruger followed up saying that Amherst has a new Town Manager and this is a good opportunity if you are a permanent ED.

Ms. Turgeon replied that she would reach out. For the last few months she has been filling staff vacancies and she has been learning.

21. **Question - asked by:** C. Kruger asked what would Ms. Turgeon's first steps if she had the role of new ED

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon said that she would continue to reach out to other agencies including partners and also working with groups.

22. **Question- asked by:** L. Quinn asked if Ms. Turgeon had any other ideas for example for homelessness.

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that so far she has introduced herself to the community.

23. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop asked how involved has Ms. Turgeon been on the 1 year plan and the 5 year plan.

ANSWER:

She has worked with Chad on the 1 year and the 5 year plans.

24. **Question- asked by: T. Boutilier** commented that recently the Board has become more aware of the need to be provided with more information for example in the sense of staff moral and issues with communication. How would she do this differently to address these issues?

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon said that based on her experience if there had been issues with staff moral she would like to think the Board might ask staff how they are doing. If she became the ED she would communicate with the Board clearly. L. Quinn followed up saying that the Board would like to see more clear communication on finances. Then asked her how she would get more participants in RAB or tenants organizations

Ms. Turgeon said that she is already working on rallying clients and tenants.

25. **Question- asked by:** C. Kruger asked what challenges Ms. Turgeon sees for Public Housing in the next 5 years

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon said that she sees challenges with the new administration which could bring budget cuts and changes. It is important to stay informed and on her part whatever comes down the pike she will continue to keep everyone informed.

26. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop asked Ms. Turgeon how she feels about technology in the agency.

ANSWER:

Debbie said that we finally have Comcast for internet and phones. DSL was shut down for days. The software we have is good but not flawless and HAB needs to clean few things up.

S. Jefferson followed up asking what about tenants who are not technology savvy?

Ms. Turgeon said that she encourages new residents' participation to tell us what they need.

27. **Question- asked by:** T. Boutilier asked Ms. Turgeon whether she sees her role as looking for outside opportunities or waiting for participants to tell her what they need.

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that communication is a 2 way street maybe we can have a suggestion box. People are already seeing a more open door policy.

28. **Question- asked by:** P. Jessop asked Ms. Turgeon how she feels about regionalization of housing authorities

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that we need and should stay focus on our community.

29. **Question- asked by:** T. Boutilier asked questions about diversity in the staff

ANSWER:

Ms. Turgeon answered that we have a diverse staff and over the years has built a very diverse family that she would want to be treated with compassion and respect.

Ms. Turgeon was given an opportunity to ask the Board any questions. She asked the Board what is it that they want to see from the new ED.

P. Jessop said that he would want to see a continuation with passion in working with incurrent programs while also looking at future possibilities.

C. Kruger would like to feel connected maybe having individual time with the ED and sharing a task with commissioners.

T. Boutilier would like to see more interaction with the Board. Email updates are good.

S. Jefferson said more presence at town meetings.

L. Quinn said that staff needs to have tools and the AHA should be in the role of housing advocacy!!

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 11:48 am

Motion made by: P. Jessop

Second: C. Kruger

Passed Unanimous

Next meeting date: January 18, 2017 4:30p.m.

*** Materials Included**

Resume and cover letter by Debbie Turgeon

Executive Director Job profile