



Office of the
Townsend Housing Authority
272 Main St., Townsend, MA. 01469

Chairman: Laura E Shifrin (2021)

General Member: Kevin Smith (2018)

Clerk, Susan Congdon (2019)

State Representative: Chaz Sexton-Diranian (2022)

Appointed Tenant Seat: BetteAnn Coleman (2020)

*Approved
5/2/2018*

Draft of the Minutes for
Thursday, November 30, 2017 7:00 p.m.
Library/Senior Center Community Room
12 Dudley Rd., Townsend, MA. 01469

THIS IS AN OPEN MEETING AND ALL ARE INVITED TO ATTEND

I. Preliminaries:

- 1.1 Meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairman Laura Shifrin.
- 1.2 Roll Call: Kevin Smith, Bette Ann Coleman appointee, State Representative Chaz Sexton-Diranian, Laura Shifrin (Absent with notice: Susan Congdon, Clerk)
- 1.3 Chairman announced that the meeting is being recorded.
- 1.4 Pledge of Allegiance was done and the Veterans present were thanked for their service to our country.
- 1.5 Additions/Deletions to agenda unforeseen: None. Agenda was amended more than 48 hrs prior to the meeting.
- 1.6 Chaz motioned, Kevin Seconded, and all approved the meeting Minutes of Friday, November 16, 2017 as emailed prior to the meeting to the board.
- 1.7 Chaz Sexton-Diranian read the OML violation of 11/22/2017 issued by Cindy King.
- 1.8 Laura Shifrin read the response prepared, Chaz made some explanations regarding this complaint and the process that ensued. Kevin made a motion seconded by Chaz to send this response to Ms. King. Was voted by all.

II. Chairman Shifrin introduced Lionel Romain, Director of Housing for Central and Western Massachusetts Community Economic Development (CEDAC) who gave a presentation of what role CEDAC could play in our next project. The biggest being the feasibility study funding that we are in need of. The biggest asset that we have to offer as a Town is the land. So there will be no funds needed to purchase the land needed to build on. He mentioned several new projects of Veterans that CEDAC has been involved in Lee and Agawam

III. Work Session: We asked what our steps would be. At this time new have no funds and we have no staff to help us thru this process.

CC: Kathy Spofford, Town Clerk

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3.1 Open discussion held regarding Veterans's Housing. Motion made, seconded and voted by all to invite Soldier On to attend one of our next meetings to make a presentation. Chairman mentioned that RCAP Solutions has been invited to attend a make a presentation. Veterans, Inc. was also suggested to invite and have them attend as well. The Chairman will work on making those invitations. Chaz to work on suggestions for survey and vehicle to do that.

3.2 No mail was mentioned to review at this meeting.

3.3 Next Meeting Date: Will be call of the chair.

3.4 Motion made, seconded and voted by all to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 p.m.

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November 30, 2017

~~RE~~ RE: Third Open Meeting Law Complaint — Cindy King

Dear Ms. King

The Townsend Housing Authority (THA) received your third Open Meeting Law Complaint Form, (attached) that alleges that there was a “deliberate attempt to cover up evidence of a previous OML complaint filed by you on 09/25/2017, 10/27/2017 and now 11/27/2017. It further assumes that there were conversations being held outside of an open THA meeting and further assumes that the THA is denying any actions that have occurred that violate compliance to Open Meeting Law M.G.L., c.30A 19.

We have acknowledged all of your concerns and have tried to make reparations in response to 11 three of your OML complaints to no satisfaction. We first would like to firmly assert that this authority has been transparent and above board in all of our actions and proceedings and has never made any attempts to collude or deliberately violate any Open Meetings Laws of the Commonwealth. Our primary purpose as the THA outlined by our mission statement is the following: “To promote, maintain and provide housing opportunities for income groups who could not otherwise afford to live here”. Our guide is the Affordable Housing Plan as voted by the Town of Townsend. Any other perceptions regarding our purpose is indeed just that, assumptions. We would like to submit this as our formal statement addressing all of your complaints and our remedies that seem fair and fit.

Your first OML complaint (which has been formally answered by the authority) dated September 25, 2017 made allegations that we had violated OML by creating a subgroup or task force non congruent to OML. We have tried to rectify this situation by immediately assembling the THA to hold a meeting at our next available date to address the then filed complaint and only discussed “procedural OML issues in order not to create any further violations.” Our discussions focused on making sure we are following protocol and the authority had no discussions about the complaint itself. The Chair notified the THA via email of this emergency meeting to address an OML complaint and that complaint was attached without any comment or further discussion. There was no dialogue between any members regarding this OML issue. Agenda was compiled and posted and supporting documents were submitted by members directly to the chair without discussion. Meeting was scheduled for October 23, 2017 which was cancelled because of a lack of quorum and a new meeting was posted by the Chair of the THA for October 27, 2017.

CC: Townsend Housing Authority, Sue Lisio, Liaison, Kathy Spofford, Town Clerk

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It was at that time that your second complaint (which also has been answered by the authority) states issue with the supporting documents that are non congruent to the original documents filed and posted for the previous October 23, 2017 meeting. The Chair notified the THA via email of this again needed emergency meeting to address the filed OML complaint and that complaint was again attached without any comment or further discussion. There was no dialogue between any members regarding this OML issue. It was here that the documents submitted by the THA's State Representative to post with the agenda came into question with your second and third OML complaints.

There were additions and deletions made to the second filing of paperwork submitted by the State Representative with the thought that this would comply with the first OML complaint not understanding that this was going to be interpreted as "covering up evidence". What was not understood by the State Representative; however, was that this paperwork should have been submitted the same as it had previously was submitted. This action was done solely by the State Representative in order to make reparations to the original OML complaint and in no way should have been misconstrued as an attempt by the THA to "coverup" any misguided intentions. The State Representative has taken sole responsibility for this error in judgment and has notified the THA that his intentions were only to comply with your original complaint. There was in no way any conversations regarding any official THA business held outside of the open meeting as your complaint contends and we will never have any intentions of discussing THA business outside of an open meeting.

Therefore, the THA will make the proper reparations to the filed paperwork by the Sate Representative to come into compliance as soon as the THA meets in 2018 and further contend that the public record was submitted as an error in judgement and not a deliberate attempt to "cover up" any matter. Secondly, the Chair, as reported at the 11-16-2017 THA open meeting has been registered to take the OML webinar on December 14, 2017. No member has agreed to take an in person training class and will not without compensation and travel arrangements provided by the town. Thirdly, the State Representative has publicly admitted his error in judgement regarding these documents and, as stated above, will make full corrections to be submitted at our first 2018 meeting. And lastly, the THA will continue to affirm that no official THA business is ever discussed outside of an open meeting as pursuant to Open Meeting Law.

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In the future, we cordially invite you to all our open meetings and there you would be given the opportunity to voice your thoughts and opinions freely. We open every meeting up to public comment because we are here to serve our community openly and strive for full transparency. We also encourage your assistance in collaborating with us to ensure we are all working for the same goals for the Town of Townsend as voted in the Affordable Housing Plan. As the Attorney General said herself when addressing our Town just last month, collaboration is the key to effective governments here in the Commonwealth and we agree with this idea wholeheartedly.

If you have any further questions or need any other information, please don't hesitate to contact anyone on the Townsend Housing Authority.

Laura E Shifrin, Chairman

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