



## OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

**MARBLEHEAD HOUSING AUTHORITY** – December 17, 2024  
LWVM Observer – Cathy Marie Michael

Board members present: Jenn Schaeffner, Bill Kuker, Terri Tauro  
Absent: Kristin DuBay Horton, Jean Eldridge  
Executive Director: Cathy Hoog- Present

### **Public comment**

- One tenant read her statement on lack of communication (See attached.)
- Robo calls regarding today's meeting were spotty and not sent until yesterday morning
- December 15th visit by the fire department to the Roads School was not communicated. Tenants were left in dark as to why and what the firemen found, yet the smell of smoke persisted into the evening

### **Executive Director, Cathy Hoog, Report**

- Holiday party tomorrow
- New Years Party coming in January
- New hire for maintenance open position is bilingual and liked by the maintenance staff who interviewed him
- Maintenance - 175 Work Orders this past month
- Still 150 applications for 10 vacancies
- Salem Pantry pilot was a success so will run next year
- Coffee with the Cops continues

Terri Tauro - List of preventative maintenance discussed at last meeting - status?

**Winn Development Company** Winn is a 52-year-old company whose core business is production and maintenance of affordable housing. They have done similar projects in Boston, RI and elsewhere.

President – Larry Curtis

Senior Project Manager - Angela Giles

Executive Vice President - Adam Stein. (Adam grew up in Marblehead, had a best friend who lived at Broughton Rd. He finds it rewarding to do a project like this in Marblehead.)

Larry: We are an Architect led development company, have built 120,000 units in 4 states. We are proud of what we do. We have great hopes for Broughton Rd. These projects take a tremendous amount of working together. We want to be in concert with each other. That's our pledge to you. We pledge the end result of Broughton Rd to be an award-winning project.

Angela Giles is the person who will be interacting the most with the tenants. She has worked with projects before when units that needed to be refurbished were occupied, meaning tenants had to be relocated. The apartments will be renovated in phases. They will spend a lot of time with families who will be relocated to understand their needs. They've hired an excellent relocation company who will also spend much time getting to know each tenant before they are moved. Each resident will be able to return. That is state law.

Winn wants to tie the project into the nearby trail, the Senior Center, and the High School. They appreciate the land, want to keep it and take advantage of it for projects for the tenants.

Jenn Schaeffner asked for a summary to present to town meeting in May. Will ask moderator if they can make a presentation to the town.

Tenant Comments:

- To have our neighbors' support this needs to be very transparent, otherwise neighbors will push back.
- What assurances do we have that those who are displaced during renovation can come back?

Cathy Hoog response - State Law ensures that. Details are still being worked out. Winn has made a commitment that all your needs will be taken into consideration. The MHA is committed to this.

VP Winn response - We will give a warning before the relocation company visits your impacted units to discover who you are and what your needs are. We won't surprise you. The relocation and renovation will be done in phases.

About 50 of the 62 homes will be rebuilt. Nineteen would remain. It could be a year until anything is touched. Tenants will get to know the relocation folks very well.

Once there is a good timeline the relocation company will help with everything - packing, moving, etc. They will have staff speaking all languages necessary.

One tenant asked about a Tenant's bill of rights.

Audience member Lou Meyi spoke up for Sustainable Marblehead wondering how this project is dealing with environmental concerns.

President Larry response - Winn leads in energy efficient buildings. Building in a 70% reduction is center to the project. He said that's one reason they have a good track record in getting funding. They made assurances that they are a leader in this space and they learn from each project.

Attachment:

**December 17, 2024 MHA Board Meeting tenant comments/question**

There are two recent instances where we could have used **better communication from the MHA:**

**1. The robocall to tenants about today's Board meeting was sent yesterday morning.**

Cathy Hoog sent an email to me and Cathy Michael about the Dec. 17 Board meeting details, dated Dec. 11. I spoke to Kathy Collins mid-morning on Friday, Dec. 13 to request a robocall for the meeting, given the short time, the importance of the Winn Development presentation, and the competing demands of the holiday season. She said she would speak to Cathy Hoog about it. As of Sunday, there was no robocall, so two members of the Informal Tenant Organization flyered the 62 units at Broughton Rd. to get the word out. The robocall to tenants about today's Board meeting was sent yesterday morning (Dec. 16).

It would encourage tenant participation and improve communication between the MHA and tenants to put the robocall on a standard schedule, at least 2 business days before the meeting, whenever possible; this has been requested several times. Sometimes the robocall has gone out just hours before a meeting, and often, only after a tenant request. Your help in making this happen would be much appreciated.

**2. The lack of communication about the Saturday Dec. 15 visit by the Fire Dept to the Roads School**

A neighbor on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor at the Roads School called the MFD Saturday afternoon when she smelled what seemed to be an electrical fire; the smell was strongest in the south side stairwell between the second and third floors, and in the elevator. The firemen checked the areas with a thermal imaging device but could not locate the source of the smell and they left.

Many tenants were unaware of the situation. There was no message from the MHA about this incident, and no way for tenants to know what the firemen had found or concluded. I called the MHA afterhours number on Saturday and was told that the firemen hadn't found anything. The smell persisted into the evening. I asked the operator to forward a request to the MHA for a robocall to inform and reassure residents. That hasn't happened.

**How can we improve communication from the MHA to tenants about important matters like these?**

Thank you,  
Elaine McGrath  
RS305  
781-513-6214