

**NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTERVIEWS
SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2019 9:30AM**

Roll Call to Convene: 9:38am
Chairman Scott Brightman
Commissioner Reg Foster
Commissioner Karen Hughey
Commissioner Penelope Kirk

Executive Director Bernie Kirstein
Tenant Helen
Tenant Richard

New guidelines regarding packet to be submitted to DHCD include the minutes of the meeting and asking all of the candidate the same questions.

How will you familiarize yourself with DHCD?

Relationship with Board?

Relationship with residents?

Why are you in public housing/

Why interested in Needham?

Experience with development?

Management style?

How do you manage crisis?

Fix within a year?

Commuter a problem?

How do you maintain good relationships with community?

What is your commitment here?

Liability for housing authority/smoking in apartments/wifi detectors?

MOUs

Residents fearful to come to NHA office – how to make office more welcoming?

How will you introduce yourself to staff/residents?

WO put in and nothing happens – how do you make sure stuff gets taken care of?

Make NHA energy efficient?

NHA is part of Town but not part of budget, how do you manage those relationships?

Master plan?

How to fill leased housing position?

Most important role of executive director?

How many people have you managed before?

Rick: Reviewed references that were supplied and they were positive.

Candidate: Angie Interview Start 9:50am

Angie: She has been working for housing authorities for the past twenty years. She started filing and worked her way up. She spent seventeen years at Fall River Housing Authority, but there was no room to grow, so she moved onto Hingham as the Assistant Director. She then moved onto Worcester as a Housing Manager because it was a bigger housing authority. She has done work in Section 8 housing. She currently manages 600 units.

Richard: There have been considerable trouble communicating with the authority and getting problems solved. The current procedure is to call the office and request a work order. Then the work order will get

passed to maintenance to be taken care of. The work isn't done, so the residents call or email the executive director to get the work done. The residents will also call executive director with bigger problems (i.e. paving). They then will bring concerns to the Board. The executive director does not have time to personally address every issue. How will you reinvent the communication procedure?

Angie: The communication between the supervisors of maintenance is broken. There needs to be a plan in place. If something isn't working, they need to figure out what will work. If they still can't find an answer, the maintenance supervisors need to go to the executive director.

Richard: We have a resident handbook that has been out of date in 2010. Most people don't know if exists and don't have a copy. It lays out policies, rules, regulations, and helpful information. It needs to be revised. Would you commit yourself to making that a priority?

Angie: Yes. Fall River was good at having up to date policies. She believes it is very important for both residents and staff to have an up to date handbook.

Richard: The last year, we've had a variety of events – weather issues, lease improprieties, a murder – and many issues remain unresolved. A major snow storm could damage some of the roofs. Are you prepared to manage such a crisis? What would you do for the people? Where would you look for the funding?

Angie: You would have to find funding. You can look to HUD. You have to do research and brainstorm. You need to have a plan for disasters and also have a back up plan.

Helen: What is your most important strength and your weakness?

Angie: She's personable, and it's both a strength and a weakness. She is a big communicator. She currently deals with elderly and with families and has to change her communication style for each. She is a real as it gets. It can be a weakness because of how straightforward she is.

Helen: It is important to network and continue an open door policy with the community. How much are you willing to reach out to the community and get involved?

Angie: You do whatever you need to do to help your residents.

Helen: What is a reasonable turnaround time for work orders?

Angie: She was thinking about the swamp in front of the door issue brought up previously. It sounds like the issue needs to be brought up with the city and work together to fix the problem.

Helen: The Mass Union Members have been encouraging Memorandums of Understanding as a contract between residents and the housing.

Angie: Worcester Housing Authority took over housing at Holden. The previous executive director was having a hard time with a group of tenants so there was a contract, but it was never put in place or signed. She's familiar with it.

Helen: Did you have a problem with Phase 1 and Phase 2 funding?

Angie: The current executive director was really good at getting funding. She didn't really have to deal with that as much.

Commissioner Kirk: It's important for the Executive Director to encourage and oversee the Service Coordinator. It's important to keep the programs going. Have you ever been involved with something like that?

Angie: There are some programs currently, including college classes, a place for your GED, etc. She will connect new tenants with the Resident Services Coordinator. It is very important to have in a housing authority, to let them know this can be a stepping stone.

Commissioner Kirk: How do you feel about having someone on the staff being a member of Rotary?

Angie: Absolutely. It's a team, the executive director, the staff, the residents. You have to connect anyone.

Commissioner Kirk: Wouldn't the Maintenance Director be expected to be in touch with the Town?

Angie: No. That should be the Executive Director. The Maintenance Director should bring it to the Executive Director.

Chairman Brightman: Intangibles – integrity, hard worker, wants the job, communication and accessibility. Can you go into those a little?

Angie: She loves what she does. She goes to work early because she wants to. She cares about what she does. It comes from her parents and her background. She won't know everything but it's about a team and bringing in people who will help you.

Chairman Brightman: What is your experience around evictions?

Angie: She serves a lot of 30B notices and goes to court every Tuesday. She gives three chances. Even when the tenants are eventually evicted, the tenants will still go up and give her a hug. Even during evictions, it's important to remember they're still humans who make mistakes. There was a woman who hadn't paid her rent, she had an agreement previously. She had to bring her to court. She was set up for failure for the previous management.

Commissioner Hughey: Is there a particular reason you applied to Needham?

Angie: It's smaller. She has an open door policy and Worcester doesn't like that. Tenants are always coming into her office. She wants to maintain that policy. She wants to walk around and check in with people. She walks her property at least four times a week twice a day with a supervisor of maintenance. It's important to be out there. It's important for her to have a smaller authority.

Commissioner Hughey: How familiar are you with HUD?

Angie: With regards to regulations, she is familiar with it. With regards to the executive level, she's less familiar with it.

Commissioner Hughey: How are you with all of the day to day – i.e. waitlists?

Angie: As far as the annual recertifications and interims, her staff does them, but they cannot be submitted until she reviews them. She is very familiar with the requirements.

Commissioner Hughey: Are you looking for a long term commitment?

Angie: She is looking for longevity. She would like to get into a place where she knows she can stay around and retire from there. She still has coffee with some of her previous tenants from Fall River.

Commissioner Hughey: How do you feel about more energy efficient options?

Angie: That's great. If there is funding, it's great.

Commissioner Foster: Where are you at with your bachelor's degree?

Angie: Finishing up capstone and two classes. She will graduate this Spring.

Commissioner Foster: What would be your target notice time/start time?

Angie: She would like to give the Worcester Housing Authority a month. Her role there is large.

Commissioner Foster: What do you manage?

Angie: It's a mix of state and federal, families and elderly.

Commissioner Foster: There have been some serious issues exposed. There was a major audit. We are having some sampling of the files being looked at. What is your experience digging yourself out of that sort of thing? How long does it take? How do you restore confidence of tenants and board?

Angie: Similar situation with Holden. She has weekly meetings with Director and Deputy Director on progress she has made. There were hundreds of applications not entered into the system. There were fourteen vacant units and she approached the maintenance guy to find out why. Since November 1, she brought down the vacancies from fourteen to one. Some of the applications are transferring over to Champs. There was a contract made for a company to come in and rehab 705 units five years ago but the condos were never done. She made them hold to their contract and finish up their contracts. There's a lot but it doesn't take one person. You have to work as a team. You need to be assertive when you need to be. She is soft with her tenants.

Commissioner Foster: Would you find the commute challenging?

Angie: She currently takes an hour and a half to get home for traffic.

Commissioner Foster: What is the secret of success in dealing with crisis?

Angie: Structure and communication. You need to have a plan. For snow storms, the maintenance director should have a snow plan in effect.

Commissioner Foster: How would you characterize your management style with regards to tenants, staff, and the board?

Angie: She's personable and friendly. Currently she has a staff of four. She has one staff who is tough and is insubordinate. She wrote her up a few times and she finally got it. They open up with her and she listens, and that's fine but there's a job to be done. You have to be personable but you have to remind them they have a job to do.

Commissioner Foster: Residents will come in with a maintenance problem, but they are also afraid to come in to file a work order due to a fear of retribution. How do you establish a culture where the residents feel comfortable coming in?

Angie: She can't imagine tenants being fearful.

Commissioner Hughey: It's not a problem Needham has had, retaliation. But residents will talk to other residents in other housing authorities that have been retaliated against and are scared.

Angie: There is a resident that has complained to DHCD and the Town with no luck. She took over the resident and she keeps complaining. She told her she only wants to hear about new things, not just old news. The resident was texting the Executive Director and emailing her. She brought in DHCD help and the complaints have stopped.

Commissioner Foster: NHA is a quasi organization but is part of the Town of Needham but is not part of their budget. The Town really cares about NHA and public housing. How would you handle those Town relations?

Angie: It is important to have that relationship with the Town. The Town should be aware of what is going on. It can be monthly meetings. Currently she does crime watch meetings, but most of it is about maintenance. There are different people from different departments to answer any questions. She currently does them once a month.

Commissioner Foster: Spent a year building a Facilities Master Plan, including modernization, redevelopment opportunities, and possible funding sources. Are you familiar with RAD? HUD has been encouraging NHA to go through that route. NHA is looking to add additional units and take on modernizations. How do you feel about having all of that on your plate in addition to the day to day?

Angie: She was just in a meeting with RAD looking at possible options for her current facility. Any new additions to an authority is exciting. The Worcester Housing Authority just did some modernizations.

Commissioner Foster: What are the most important characteristics of an executive director?

Angie: Patience, communication, and structure.

Commissioner Foster: What are the biggest mistakes to avoid?

Angie: No communication, no structure, and lack of patience.

Commissioner Pingitore: There's a lot of frustration and exhaustion, with work not being done. How would you go about identifying that as a real problem? What would you do to fix that problem?

Angie: She will look up work order history and make sure the tenant did call it in. Check in on what the work was done. She will pull the maintenance supervisor in and check in on the situation. She will take the response back to the tenant and explain the situation. You have to let the tenant know you are aware of the situation and you care.

Commissioner Pingitore: What would you do about the idea of if you complain, maintenance retaliates, in whatever way? How do you find the problem and address it?

Angie: She is big on customer service. You have to do the investigation on if there is actually a problem, and then take it from there. Maybe the whole staff does a training on customer service. Training your employees is important – customer service being one of them. Everyone can get negative and you just need a reminder. Trainings are important.

Commissioner Pingitore: Do you have experience reporting to a board? What is your style in dealing with a board?

Angie: In Hingham, yes, she dealt with the Chairman of the Board almost daily. She just interacted with them on an individual basis.

Commissioner Pingitore: What is your direct experience with development?

Angie: She doesn't have a lot of experience with that but is willing to jump in. She loves something that challenges her and that she can build up.

Commissioner Pingitore: When you are confronted with a circumstance where you don't know the answer, what is it that you do to educate yourself and get the answer you need?

Angie: She will call her colleagues. She will network.

Commissioner Pingitore: How would you characterize your relationship with DHCD? How is your relationship with HUD?

Angie: She doesn't really have a relationship with DHCD. She has a good relationship with HUD. She does inspections for Section 8 properties on the side.

Commissioner Foster: Were you managing the Section 8 housing yourself? The Section 8 housing vouchers at NHA is managed by Dedham. How do you feel about that?

Angie: She was managing them herself. She was learning as she went. NHA needs to take that management back and get the money back.

Commissioner Pingitore: Why public housing and why Needham? It's a small housing authority with big problems.

Angie: Needham is small. She's done bigger and she likes small. It allows her to be personable and have the open door policy. She wants something with longevity. She currently manages the tenants at Holden. The tenants were paying their rent very late. She pulled them all in and gave them structure. She had to correct a lot of problems within the files.

Helen: Are you willing to follow up for past requests that the current LTO had made and was granted previously but has been tabled? (Examples: new bike racks, new picnic table)

Angie: Absolutely.

Helen: Where does resident needs fall on your priority list and does it match the priority of maintenance?

Angie: Residents' priorities are right on top. You are the customer, so you are right on top. You have to look at the full scope of the problem but then you make a plan.

Helen: The surveillance cameras to be installed have been tabled because the cost inflated when NHA lost the person who was to install them. She is willing to help do some research. Would you be willing to do something with the surveillance cameras, even if it's not the full project?

Angie: She would be willing to discuss it.

Bernie: What do you think is the greatest goal of an Executive Director?

Angie: Customer satisfaction. If your residents are happy, if your Town is happy, then you are happy. Being successful and having the place on it's "A game" will make her feel good about what she does. Keep it safe, clean, and sanitary.

Interview End 11:08am

Commissioner Hughey: Originally I was thinking she would be better for Director of Leased Housing but her background is more extensive than her resume implies. She has experience in almost everything the Executive Director is responsible for.

Commissioner Foster: The Holden situation wasn't on her resume, but it seemed very similar to the current situation in Needham.

Helen: She seems to be really good with follow up. She is very hands on and boots on the ground, becoming familiar with the residents. She is an excellent, well rounded candidate, working her way up and being involved in different sized housing communities. She seems willing to learn as she goes. She has a good attitude.

Richard: He agrees with Helen. Her sincerity, authenticity, and wit overcome her grammar.

Commissioner Kirk: Agrees with Richard. Personality and dedication wise, she seems great.

Commissioner Pingitore: He shares some concern about her communication skills and no executive experience dealing with the board or dealing with the Town. She seems to know the mechanics of how to run a housing authority. Different managers for different times.

Bernie: He did some modernization work in Worcester – it's twice the size of Needham. There were gangs infiltrating the area. Managing that housing is not an easy task, so Needham would be much easier for her.

Rick: The reference from Fall River spoke very highly of her. Her writing on her resume looks great.

Commissioner Foster: He was pleasantly surprised; her strengths did not come across the same in her resume. All three candidates have missed the mark in different areas, but can they make up for it? She was very strongly on the mark on a lot of things. Her customer service orientation was very strong. He liked her answers on how to rebuild good communication with the residents. Her experience with Holden is very important. It's a positive indicator that she has been working full time and working on her bachelor's. She is the strongest candidate for having broad exposure to the state and federal side.

Motion to search subcommittee to recommend to the board that an offer of employment be extended to Angie Maderas pending DHCD approval and background checks.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Hughey, the motion was approved by a vote of 4-0.

Search committee: Commissioner Foster, Commissioner Hughey, Helen, and Richard.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Foster seconded by Commissioner Hughey, approved by a vote of 4-0. 11:28am