

Scituate Housing Authority Special Meeting, June 11, 2012

A SCITUATE HOUSING AUTHORITY SPECIAL MEETING WAS HELD ON
MONDAY, JUNE 11, 2012 AT 3:00 PM AT THE STATE HOUSE, ROOM 348, BOSTON, MA 02133.

Present: Stephen Coulter

Patricia Butler

Maryanne Lewis

Michael Collins

Absent: John Zigouras

Also Present: Kathy DeMarsh, Executive Director and Secretary to the Board; James Cantwell, State Representative; aides representing State Senator, Robert Hedlund and State Representative, Garrett Bradley; Lizbeth Heyer, Director of Public Housing; Deborah Goddard, Legal Counsel for the DHCD; Steve Burm, Legislative Director

A meeting was held at the State House with the Scituate Housing Authority Board of Commissioners and state officials to hear the position of the two housing Commissioners, Maryanne Lewis and Stephen Coulter and their reason for refusing to sign the financial certifications, as well as to obtain an explanation from the Department of Housing and Community Development on the language and its implications.

All sides were given a chance to present their case. A request by Maryanne Lewis and Stephen Coulter for the language to be modified was denied. It was noted that only two housing authorities out of 240 in the state have not turned in the certifications, Scituate and Barre.

When Maryanne Lewis said that she felt it was "unconstitutional, unethical, and immoral when one branch of government overreaches their authority by holding up money for not signing", Deborah Goddard cited Chapter 121B and said there is no issue of the authority of DHCD to regulate the housing authority. Her response to concerns of signing "under the pains and penalties of perjury", was in order to be charged with perjury, there would have to be intentional malice. Stephen Coulter said he was uncomfortable signing the budget certification as the budget is prepared by a third party, the accountant. Deborah Goddard stated that preparing the budget is not an activity of the accountant, but rather an exercise that all board members should be part of. MaryAnne Lewis asked that M.G.L. 121B be changed, that the Attorney General be contacted, and that DHCD lift the freeze for six months. The state said no to all. In addition, the Department of Housing and Community Development advised the Board members of the Scituate Housing Authority that the language in the Certifications would not be changed.