



Welcome, glad you are here!

Thanks so much for coming to our board meeting. Before we get started, we want to give you a quick sense of how things work so you know what to expect.

Our meetings are held in public, but they are a bit different from a town hall or open forum. Massachusetts Open Meeting Law requires that all public business be conducted in public, so that residents can see their government at work and be confident that decisions are made openly and transparently.

The actual business of the evening, reviewing reports, voting on items, and making decisions, is carried out by the Board of Commissioners.

Though the Open Meeting Law does not require it, the MHA Board always includes a Public Comment period on our agenda because we genuinely want to hear from residents and community members. It is your chance to speak directly to the Board, share what is on your mind, flag a concern, or offer information you think we should know. We take every comment seriously.

One thing that sometimes surprises people: Board members will listen quietly during public comment rather than respond in the moment and create a dialogue with attendees. That is due to the requirements under Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. Responding to questions or discussing topics that were not on the posted agenda can put us in violation of the Open Meeting Law. So, if it seems like we are not responding, please know we are listening carefully and your comments go into the official record to ensure comments are followed up on.

Common Questions about Monthly MHA Board Meetings

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

What does the Board actually do?

The board sets policy, approves the budget, and provides oversight to make sure the Housing Authority is running the way it should. Commissioners are either appointed or elected and are responsible for the big picture direction and accountability of the organization rather than managing day-to-day operations.

Can Board members respond to my comments during the meeting?

During public comment, Board members will listen and take notes rather than respond directly. We appreciate your understanding! State Open Meeting Law requires that open discussions be limited to topics posted on the agenda at least 48 hours in advance. It is



designed to keep the process transparent and fair. The Board will follow up with any public comments when appropriate.

What happens to my comments after I speak?

All comments during the public comment period are summarized and go into the official meeting record. The Board may take them into account in future decisions, ask staff to follow up with you directly, or add a related topic to a future agenda so it can be properly discussed and acted on.

What are other ways I can contact board members?

We would love to hear from you! You are welcome to reach out by email or phone, and we also recently started open office hours so you can connect with board members in person outside of a formal meeting. Contact information is available on our website. Please note that residents should utilize systems in place with the Housing Authority to call in work orders, get information about their lease/rent payments and other routine business.

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What is the role of the Executive Director?

The Executive Director runs the Housing Authority day-to-day operations. The Executive Director is hired by the board and responsible for the safety and security of all residents and staff of the Housing Authority. This includes carrying out board policy, managing staff, all tenancy-related activities, all fiduciary matters of the Housing Authority and making sure we are operating at the highest standards according to State regulations. The Board members ensure that the operations of the Authority are running smoothly and receive data and updates from the Executive Director to properly oversee the success of the agency.

I have a concern about my unit. Who is the best person to talk to?

For things like repairs, lease questions, or waiting list inquiries, please contact the Housing Authority office directly. Staff are responsible for helping with those matters. The Board meeting is best suited for broader policy concerns or issues that have been through the normal channels without resolution.

Can the Executive Director respond during public comment?

Sometimes! If the Board asks for a quick clarification on a factual matter, the Executive Director may weigh in. That said, like the Commissioners, they are also bound by Open Meeting Law and will generally keep responses brief and factual during Board Meetings.

THE BUSINESS MEETING

What goes on at a business meeting?

The Board takes care of official business: approving the minutes from the last meeting, hearing financial and operational updates, and voting on any resolutions or contracts that are on the agenda. Everything happens out in the open and gets recorded in the minutes.

Can something be added to the agenda at the meeting?

The agenda is set at least 48 hours in advance as required by the State Open Meeting Law, so items raised during public comment will be considered for a future meeting. If something



important comes up, we can make sure it goes on to the next agenda so it can be properly discussed and acted on.

How do I get something on a future agenda?

Reach out to the Executive Director's office in writing before the next agenda is posted. They will let you know whether it is something the board needs to weigh in on, or whether it can be handled at the staff level.

Are meeting minutes available to read afterward?

Absolutely! Minutes are public records and are available through the Housing Authority office. They are also posted on the Housing Authority website at www.marbleheadha.org Draft minutes from the most recent meeting are usually presented for approval at the following Board meeting.

What do the minutes include?

Minutes reflect a summary of the main items that occur at the meeting, including votes and deliberations. They are not a transcript or a verbatim record of everything that was said. If you would like your comments to be reflected in the minutes verbatim, please submit them in writing before or shortly after the meeting.

A few quick notes on public comment: Please state your name and address when you speak. Each speaker gets up to three minutes. Direct your comments to the board as a whole rather than to individual members or staff. Written comments submitted in advance are also welcome and will be included in the meeting record.

Spread the word!

The more residents who attend our Board meetings, the stronger our community voice. Please encourage your neighbors to come along to a future meeting. Everyone is welcome!