

The Webster Housing Authority held its special joint meeting with the Webster Board of Selectmen on Monday, January 12, 2026, in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at the Webster Town Hall at 350 Main St, Webster. The Selectman Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and announced the meeting would be recorded through the Zoom app.

- I. *Call to Order:* The Webster Housing Authority was called up at 6:10 pm to discuss the appointment of a WHA Board Commissioner. In attendance from the Authority were Chair David DuPont, Commissioner Peter Luchina, Commissioner Sue Smichinski, and Acting Director Melissa Morley.
- II. *Discuss and Appoint WHA Board Member:* The Selectmen Chair called the candidates up to the podium one by one to speak on their interest and why they would be a good fit.
 - a. *Barbara Avery:* Lifelong resident of Webster. Her husband was previously on the board a few years back. David had recommended that she apply and that she would be a great fit. She is a board member at the Reliant Medical Group Patient Advocacy Group and was the former president of the UMASS Harrington Auxiliary. She is also very active in the community and volunteers at Sacred Heart Church and the Webster library. Chair DuPont asks her what her last career choice was, and Ms. Avery responded that she has worked at WPI and was in HR for about 24 years. She has also moved to different departments, so she has vast knowledge of how the college operates.
 - b. *Frank Sefanik:* Has been a resident of Webster off and on for many years and has been a resident of Golden Heights I for 7+ years. He has attended every board meeting. He is a retired engineer. He ran for a board vacancy previously and felt he lost because he wasn't aware there was early voting. He feels he has the experience and background to be a board member. Chair DuPont asks him if he is currently a resident of the Webster Housing Authority. Mr. Stefanik responds, yes.
 - c. *Rhea Parker:* Has been a tenant at Golden Heights I for 13 years, come August. She attends board meetings and usually has a comment to make. She used to be the president of the LTO when there was one. She helped tenants with problems that they had. This is her third time running for a board position. She was the Vice President of an organization called Parents without Partners. Her last job was working for Travelers Insurance, and she was there for about 23 years. Chair DuPont asks Ms. Parker if she is a resident of the Webster Housing Authority. Ms. Parker replies by saying that she is.

The Selectmen Chair asks each candidate what skill they think is really important for serving on the board. Ms. Parker's response is to be able to help tenants and make decisions on what is best for them. Mr. Stefanik replies with having great listening skills and always being out in the community talking to people. Also, knowing rules and regulations. Ms. Avery responds that she does not have experience of being a resident, but that it is sometimes good to have an objective person. Someone looking from the outside and bringing a different dimension to the table. Bringing a sort of balance to the board.

The Selectmen Chair then asks who is currently a resident on the board, and Chair DuPont responds that Commissioner Smichinski is a current resident and that Commissioner Herra was also a resident. Due to Mr. Herra's passing and being the selected Resident Commissioner, the next vacancy will have to be filled by a resident. Chair DuPont then asks if we want there to be a board consisting mostly of residents or do we want there to be a balance. Commissioner Luchina comments that he has two concerns. One is that resident commissioners tend to

micro-manage the Executive Director and interfere with the day-to-day operations of the Authority. The second is that he finds residents being on the board a conflict of interest, as every vote will affect them directly.

Selectman Gabor asks if there is a system where residents can create a tenant organization. Chair DuPont responds that they can reorganize if they choose to, and that they have the opportunity to give public comments. The acting Executive Director has also started a resident town hall where residents can voice opinions and concerns, they have. There is also the resident comment section in the board meeting agendas for agenda items.

A selectman asks who the current commissioners are and what their positions are. Chair DuPont responds that he is the State Appointee and Chairperson. Commissioner Smichinski replies that she is a commissioner who was elected through an election. Commissioner Luchina states that he was elected by the community and is a commissioner. Chair DuPont states that Vice Chair Ward's seat is the one they are trying to fill and that Commissioner Herra's seat is the one that needs to be a resident and appointed by the selectmen.

The selectmen's Chair then asks if the Webster Housing Authority Chair has a recommendation. Chair DuPont responds that to keep balance in the board, he nominates Barbara Avery. Selectman Dziedzic seconds the nomination. Hearing no discussion, Barbara Avery was unanimously voted as the next Commissioner of the Webster Housing Authority.

III. Adjourn: The vote ended at 6:47 pm

DRAFT Respectfully Submitted (Attest) DRAFT Melissa Morley, Acting Executive Director