Commonwealth of Massachusetts

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Maura T. Healey, Governor ▫ Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor ▫ Jennifer Maddox Undersecretary

Public Housing Notice 2021-01

To: Local Housing Authorities & Officials of Massachusetts Towns
From: Ben Stone, Director, Division of Public Housing
Date: February 11, 2021 (Updated March 7, 2023)
Re: **Changes Pertaining to Town Appointed Tenant Board Members**

On January 14, 2021, Governor Baker signed Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2020, "An Act Enabling Partnerships for Growth" into law. Sections 70-72 and 88-91 of this law makes changes to Chapter 121B, §1, §5 and §5A regarding Tenant Board Members in Towns by providing for one member appointed by the Governor, three members elected by the Town, and one "tenant board member" to be appointed by the Town.

This notice does not apply to LHA Boards in cities, which already have a provision for City Appointed Board Members. This notice also does not apply to regional housing authority Boards.

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Section 1. Overview

Briefly, the law, which becomes effective on May 15, 2021, which is 120 days after its January 14, 2021 enactment, requires Towns to appoint a tenant member to a Local Housing Authority (LHA) Board from a list of names submitted to the Town by a recognized Local Tenant Organization (LTO). If there is no LTO, then the LHA is required to notify its public housing residents of the opportunity to submit their names to the Town for consideration for appointment. Where federal law as found in 42 U.S.C. 1437 and the regulation at 24 CFR Part 964, requires that a tenant in a federal housing program be on the LHA Board, preference is given to tenants in federal housing programs. LHAs with federally funded programs should consult with HUD if they are unclear whether they must have a federal tenant on the Board. Where there is no list of tenants submitted to the Town for appointment, the Town may appoint any tenant or adult authorized household member. Where the LHA has no public housing units, a participant in a rental assistance program administered by the LHA may be appointed.[1]

In accordance with prior DHCD guidance, many Towns only held elections for 3 seats on the LHA Board after Chapter 235 of the Acts of 2014 became effective, reducing the number of elected Board seats in towns to 3. The seat that would have been up for election but was left vacant after the effective date of Chapter 235 of the Acts of 2014 (November 6, 2014) will be the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat.

Note that this legislation does not affect the seat of the state appointed LHA Board Member.

Table 1. Key dates

01/14/2021	**Enactment date**	LHAs and Towns begin the process of determining which seat will be the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat and filling the seat
05/15/2021	**Effective date** *(120 days after enactment date)*	If there is a vacancy on the board on this date, that seat will be the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat (see Section 5)
07/14/2021	**Key date for determining which seat on the LHA Board will be the Tenant Member Seat** *(60 days after effective date)*	If there was no vacancy on the board on the effective date, the elected seat with the first term to expire after this date will be the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat, unless another seat has become vacant since the effective date (see Section 5)
08/13/2021	**Town Appointed Tenant Board Member should be seated** *(90 days after effective date)*	See Section 7 for details on filling the seat

[1] If an LHA has no public housing units OR rental assistance units, it may request a waiver (Waiver Type 2) from this requirement from DHCD.

Section 2. Eligibility

The Tenant Board member may be a tenant or an authorized adult household member residing in public housing in the Town or an authorized adult member of household participating in a rental assistance program administered by the LHA in the Town (all those eligible for Tenant Board member seat will be referred to in this document as "tenant").

Tenants of state-aided Section 8 New Construction/Substantial Rehabilitation public housing developments that are owned by an LHA are eligible to be appointed by the Town to the Tenant Board Member seat. Other participants of project based or mobile rental assistance programs that are not administered by the LHA are not eligible to be appointed to the Tenant Board Member seat by the Town.

Section 3. Scope of Tenant Board Member's Participation

The Town Appointed Tenant Board Member is a full member of the LHA's governing Board with all of the rights and responsibilities of an LHA Board member. A Tenant Board member must be allowed to take part in any and all decisions related to the administration, operation, and management of all LHA programs, except to the extent that it would affect their "personal interest" as proscribed by the DHCD regulation at 760 CMR 4.03(4). Tenant Board Members are not required to be identified as such on the LHA website or web page that is required by 760 CMR 4.02(1)(a), and, upon request of the Tenant Board Member, the LHA should remove any such identification of the Tenant Board Member.

Section 4. What Should LHAs do Now that Law is Enacted?

LHAs should immediately communicate the following information to the Town:[2]

- Contact information for all LTO(s).
- Any federal requirement that a federal tenant sit on the LHA Board.
- Any waivers applied for and/or received from DHCD which would postpone a Town appointment to the Tenant Board Member Seat for up to one year (see Section 8. Waivers).
- All information required to identify Tenant Board Member seat, including any vacant seats, and projected expiring seats.

LHAs should immediately inform LTO(s) regarding:

- Any waiver received from DHCD which would postpone a Town appointment to the Tenant Board Member Seat for one year due to current tenant on Board (see Section 8. Waivers, Waiver Type 1 below).
- If the Board has a vacant seat, the date by which the LTO(s) may submit a list of eligible Tenant Board Members to the Town in the event that DHCD does not grant a waiver.

If there is no LTO, LHA should immediately communicate with all residents regarding:

[2] See Attachment A. for example letter.

- Any waiver received from DHCD which would postpone a Town appointment to the Tenant Board Member Seat for one year due to current tenant on Board (see Section 8. Waivers, Waiver Type 1 below).
- If no waiver and Board has a vacant seat, the tenants' opportunity to submit their names to the Town for consideration of appointment.

Section 5. How is the Town Appointed Tenant Member Seat on the LHA Board to be identified?

Where there is a vacant seat on the effective date (May 15, 2021)

If, on May 15, 2021, an LHA has three or fewer elected Board members, a vacant seat will become the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat. The fact that a seat is or was occupied by a holdover or a temporary appointment is not considered in making the determination as to which seat is the Tenant Board Member Seat; such seats are considered to be vacant for the purposes of this determination.

In the event that there is more than one elected seat that is vacant, the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat will be the seat that was vacated first (the oldest date).[3]

Where there is no vacant seat on the effective date (May 15, 2021)

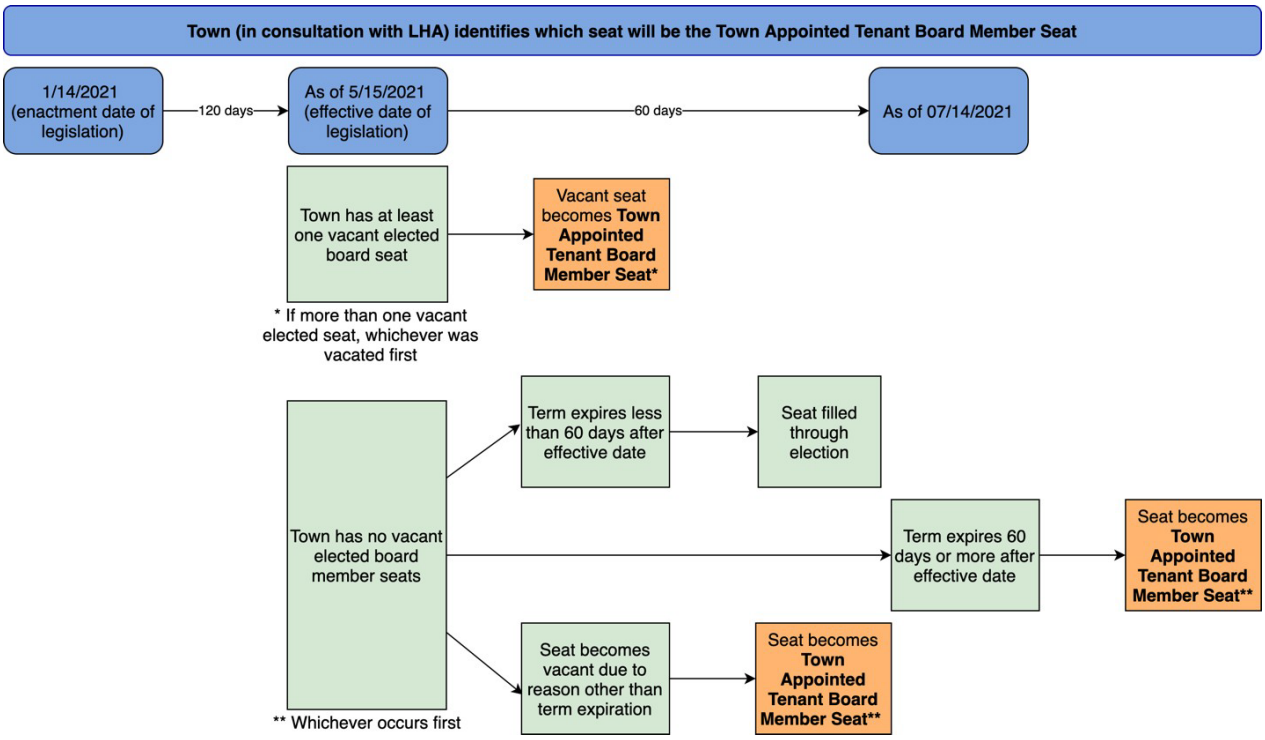
In Towns that have 4 elected Board members on May 15, 2021, the elected seat having the first term to expire after July 14, 2021 shall be the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat, unless another seat becomes vacant before such date, in which case the first seat that becomes vacant before such date shall be the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat.

If an LHA tenant whose term is expiring currently occupies the seat that will become the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat, that fact is not considered in making the determination as to which seat is the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat. The LHA tenant whose term is expiring may be eligible for appointment to the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat as described below.[4]

[3] In the unlikely event that more than one vacancy occurred on the exact same day, the Town Appointed Tenant Member Seat will be the seat corresponding to the earliest date on which the member who occupied it was sworn in.

[4] In the unlikely event that more than one term expires on the same day after July 14, 2021, the Tenant Board Member Seat will be the seat corresponding to the earliest date on which the member who occupied it was sworn in. In the unlikely event that more than one seat becomes vacant on the same day, the Tenant Member Seat will be the seat corresponding to the earliest date on which the member who occupied it was sworn in.

Figure 1. Identifying Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat



Section 6. What is the term of the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat?

The Town Appointed Tenant Board Member is appointed to a term of 5 years. Appointments made to fill a vacant seat where the vacancy exists for a reason other than term expiration will be for the remainder of the unexpired term.

Section 7. How will the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat be filled?

LHAs shall provide all necessary information for identification of seat to Town based on criteria above.[5]

Where there is a vacant seat on the effective date (May 15, 2021)

With an LTO(s).

- As noted above, LHAs should provide the Town with contact information for LTO(s) promptly following the passage of the Act.
- Town must give written notice of the vacancy to the LTO(s) at least 10 business days after May 15, 2021.

[5] See Attachments B. – E. for example notices.

- Town provides written notice to all LTO(s) that within 60 calendar days each LTO(s) may submit to the Town a list of 2 to 5 names of tenants who are eligible for appointment to the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member seat.
- If the Town does not receive a list from the LTO(s) within 60 days of the notice to LTOs of the vacancy, then the Town may appoint any eligible tenant who has indicated a willingness to serve of its choosing to the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat.
- The Town is required to make the appointment within 60 days after the deadline for LTOs to provide a list of eligible tenants.
- If there is no person who is eligible and willing to serve as the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member then the LHA may seek a waiver from DHCD of the requirement that the Town appoint a tenant (see Section 8. Waivers).

No LTO(s).

- LHA sends written notices to each public housing tenant household and posts notices in common areas informing residents that if they wish to be considered for the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member seat, they must submit their names to the Town Clerk within 30 days. The notices must include contact information for the Town Clerk, as well as information about training programs available to Tenant Board Members.
- If the Town does not receive any names from tenants within 30 days of the notices to residents, then the Town may appoint any eligible tenant of its choosing to the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member seat.
- The Town is required to make an appointment within 30 days after the deadline for tenants to submit names.
- If there is no person who is eligible and willing to serve as the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member then the LHA may seek a waiver from DHCD of the requirement that the Town appoint a tenant (see Section 8. Waivers).

Where there is no vacant seat on the effective date (May 15, 2021)

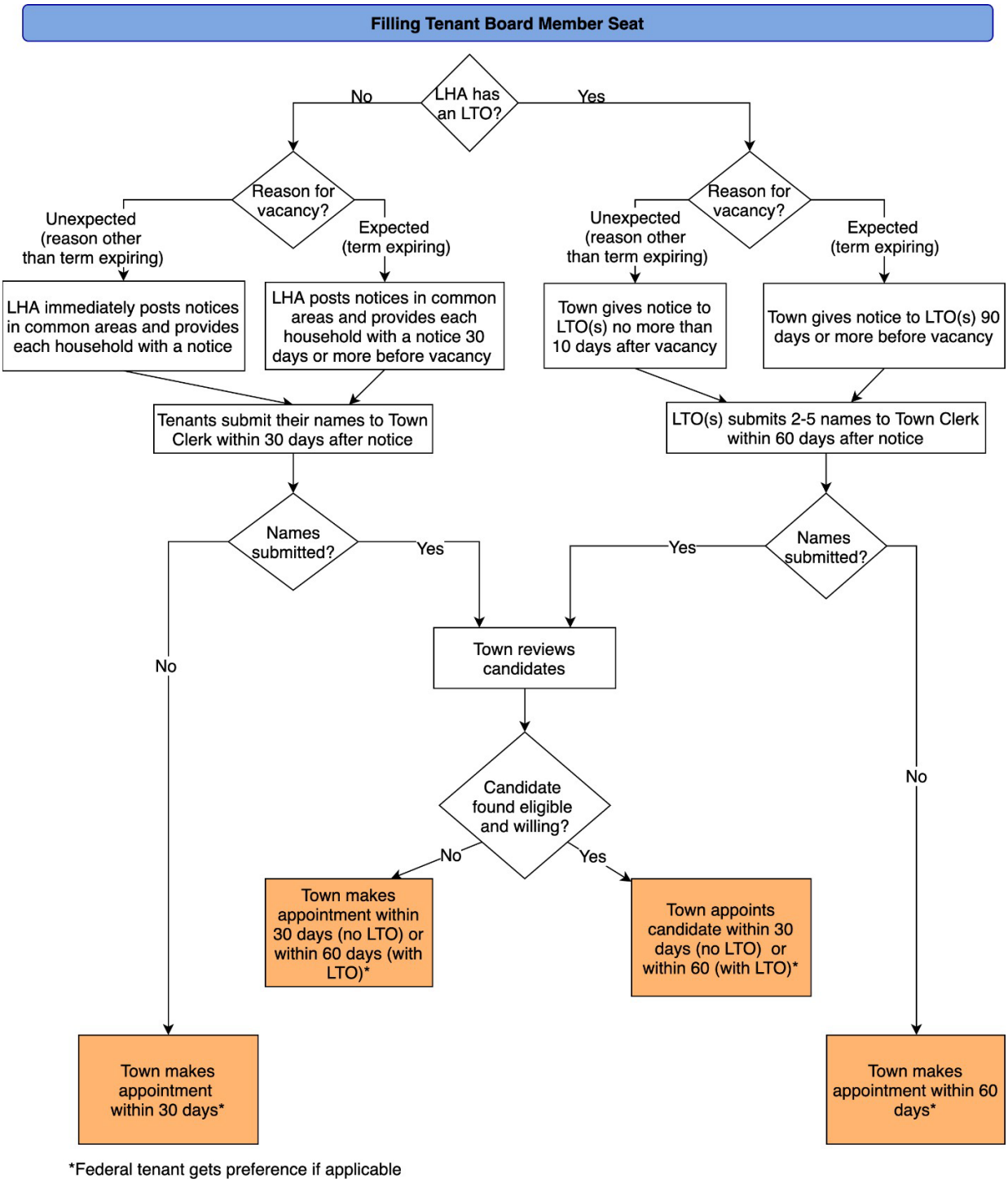
With an LTO(s).

- The Town is required to give the LTO(s) at least ninety days' written notice of the upcoming expiration of the term of the seat that is to become the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat. If a vacancy occurs in the seat to become the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat for some reason other than the expiration of a term, then the Town is required to give LTOs at least 10 business days written notice that the vacancy has occurred.
- Town follows procedures for "With an LTO(s)" listed above.

No LTO(s).

- LHA gives notice immediately after unexpected vacancies and at least 30 days before vacancies due to term expiration.
- LHA follows procedures for "No LTO(s)" listed above.

Figure 2. Filling Town Appointed Tenant Board Member



*Federal tenant gets preference if applicable

Section 8. Waivers

(*Note that this section was updated on March 7, 2023 to clarify that submissions of waiver requests must be accompanied by a Board vote approving the waiver request.*)

LHAs may request waivers from DHCD that will temporarily postpone the appointment of the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member pursuant to this legislation. Waivers may be requested by an LHA through an online form found on the DHCD Admin Housing Applications page.[6] Waivers may be requested under two conditions:

1) LHA Board already has a Town elected or appointed Board member who is a member of a tenant household or rental assistance household; or
2) No person is eligible and willing to serve as the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member.

Note: Because it is not possible to determine the Town Appointed Board Member seat until the law becomes effective, LHAs should not request waivers from DHCD until at least May 15, 2021.

Waiver Type 1

LHA Board already has a Town elected or appointed Board member who is a member of a tenant or rental assistance household

LHAs may request a waiver where a person who is a tenant or an adult authorized household member residing in a public housing in the Town or a participant of a rental assistance program administered by the LHA is currently serving as an elected member or as a member who was appointed for the remainder of a term by the Town to fill a vacancy. The availability of such waivers is not meant to imply that there may only be one member on the LHA Board who is a tenant, but rather to allow more time for LHAs that already have one or more tenants on the Board to transition to a Town Appointed Tenant Board Member. LHAs are not expected nor required to submit a request for a waiver on these grounds, and a Town is required to appoint Tenant Board Member to an LHA that already has tenant(s) on the Board if an LHA has not received a DHCD waiver to postpone such an appointment.

Waivers granted are valid for one year and may be renewed for one year at a time until the elected or appointed member who is identified in the waiver vacates the seat or until the expiration of that member's term. At that point, the seat becomes the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member Seat and the Town and LHA should follow the appointment process described above.

In order to request a waiver on these grounds, LHA must provide the following information:

- Name of Board Member who is a tenant/rental assistance participant and date that the term of the seat that they occupy expires (end of 5-year term for which person was elected by Town or end of remainder of term if person was appointed by Town to fill vacant seat);
- Certification by the LHA and the tenant/participant that the Board Member is a tenant of the LHA and identification of the housing program in which the tenant/participant is housed;

[6] See Attachment F. for additional information.

- Agreement by the tenant/participant and the LHA to notify the Town if the Board Member is no longer a tenant/participant of LHA housing or is no longer a member of the Board.
- C*opy of a Board vote approving the request for the waiver.*

DHCD will require board votes supporting each waiver request submitted after March 7, 2023.

Waiver Type 2

No person is eligible and willing to serve as the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member

If there is no person who is eligible and willing to serve as the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member after the LHA has given the required notice to its residents of the opportunity to serve, then the LHA may request DHCD to grant a waiver so that the Town may appoint a person other than a person who is eligible as a Tenant Member, who will be appointed to a one-year term.

In order to request a waiver on these grounds, an LHA must provide the following information:

- Written statement of why a waiver is being requested;
  - Identification of any LTO(s) and their contact information;
  - Date/time of meetings with all LTO(s) with brief description of meeting content;
  - LHAs must indicate to DHCD the dates and locations of posting of notices.
- Evidence of notices which may include:
  - Copies of notices posted on the LHA's web page and in the common areas of the LHA;
  - Copies of notices sent to all LHA households of tenants and rental assistance participants;
  - Notices should inform tenants of the opportunity to serve as a Board member, including contact information for the Town Clerk and describe the available technical assistance training programs available to Tenant Board Members.
- *Copy of a Board vote approving the request for the waiver.*

Prior to granting a waiver DHCD will review the LHA's written statement and determine whether the LHA provided the required notices. Waivers may be only granted for one-year periods, but they may be renewed upon the same showing of need by the LHA.

If DHCD grants a waiver, it shall notify the LHA and the Town that a person other than a person who is eligible to be a tenant member may be appointed to the Town Appointed Tenant Board Member seat for a one-year period. The LHA must notify its LTO(s), if any, of this waiver and post the waiver online and throughout common areas of its developments.

Section 9. Tracking Town Appointed Tenant Board Members

When a Town Appointed Tenant Board Member has started their term, LHAs should record this information in the LHA Board Attendance application by marking the column "Town Tenant Board Member." A Board Member is considered a "Town Appointed Tenant Board Member" after an appointment has been made by the Town of a person who meets the definition of Tenant Member in c. 121B, sec. 1.

Section 10. Attachments

Attachment A. LHA Information to Town
Attachment B. LHA Notice to Tenants
Attachment C. Tenant to Town Clerk
Attachment D. Town to LTO Notice of Vacancy
Attachment E. LTO Names Submitted to Town
Attachment F. Requesting Waivers

Please contact your HMS with any questions regarding this notice.