



IMPROVEMENTS TO THE Palmer Street rotary, entrance of Snug Harbor, includes the restoration of the Daniel Shed memorial. Holding the bronze plaque that will be installed to the base of the granite shaft are Quincy Housing Authority Executive Director James Marathas (left) and Maintenance Foreman Billy O'Neil. At right holding a new copper beacon for the memorial is Labor Foreman Mark Kennedy. Other improvements at the rotary including new landscaping, new cement walkways, outdoor lighting and new benches. The rotary will be rededicated in June.

BRONZE PLAQUE for the Daniel Shed Memorial at the Palmer Street rotary, Snug Harbor, has been cleaned and restored. The marker is dedicated to Daniel Shed, an original settler and resident who lived in the area that became Snug Harbor (Germantown) from 1642 to 1658.

Quincy Sun Photos/Robert Bosworth

QHA Director Aims To Create Affordable Housing

James Marathas: Housing Authority Preparing RFP To Develop Land Behind 80 Clay St.

By **SCOTT JACKSON**
James Marathas, the executive director of the Quincy Housing Authority, said he hopes the agency is able to build more affordable housing in the city, including new units that could be built in Germantown and Wollaston.

The new units are just one of the initiatives the Quincy Housing Authority has in the works. Others include new accessible units at Sawyer Towers, an adult daycare at O'Brien Towers, elevator modernization at three of the agency's high-rise buildings, and playground and rotary renovations in Germantown.

Marathas, who has served as executive director of the Quincy Housing Authority since May 2017, said one of the goals for the coming years is to create new affordable housing in the city. "The big thing is the need for affordable housing. We all know that as rents rise – and they are, the rents for Quincy are almost mirroring Boston at this point – and as that happens the need for af-

fordable housing continues to grow and the pressure continues on us to provide housing," Marathas said. "The lobby is a busy place every day. There are people in and out every day. The applications just keep coming and coming and coming and there just isn't enough stock and there isn't enough inventory to go around.

"One of my goals for the next couple of years is going to be to try to create some new affordable housing opportunities for the city." To that end, Marathas said QHA would be releasing a request for proposals to build a multi-story building near Tobin Towers at 80 Clay St. in Wollaston. "We're currently prepar-

ing an RFP to go out to bid which will be looking for a developer to develop the land behind 80 Clay St., which will hopefully be to create some new affordable housing. That would be a multi-story building," Marathas said. "We are looking for opportunities to create affordable housing

Cont'd On Page 13

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Elevator Upgrades, Other Improvements At QHA

Cont'd From Page 2

wherever we can."

Marathas would prefer the new building be used for elderly housing, though it could be used for family housing instead.

"It depends on who answers the RFP," he responded when asked if it would be for elderly or family housing. "We're trying to gear it towards elderly, because that is where there is a tremendous, tremendous need and we have all the resources. We have the support services in place. We have everything in place to be able to accommodate them."

Marathas said he would like to see a 70-unit building in Wollaston, plus another 16 family units in the vicinity of O'Brien Towers on Bicknell Street in Germantown.

"If I had my way, there would be a 70-unit building in the back of 80 Clay St. I'm going to hopefully be proposing to build 16 new family units," on the vacant lot near O'Brien Towers, Marathas said.

The RFP for 80 Clay St. could be released this year, with construction starting in 2020, he said.

The Housing Authority operates 1,600 units of family and elderly/disabled housing in 10 properties located throughout the city. Each property is funded by the state or federal government.

The agency's units are 99.8 percent occupied, Marathas said. QHA's employees work to turn over the units as quickly as they can, he said, noting two units of family housing on Bicknell Street damaged in a January fire will re-open this summer.

"We are running around 99.8 percent occupancy, turning over units as quickly as we possibly can. The two units that were damaged in the fire, those are scheduled to come back online in the next month or so. Those were rebuilt and coming back online," Marathas said.

Some 7,000 people are on waiting lists to get into Housing Authority properties.

"Looking to get in now, for a Quincy resident, is up to five or seven years for elderly. Probably 20 plus



QUINCY HOUSING AUTHORITY will open two new playgrounds in June, said Executive Director James Marathas shown in the photo above looking over the Jean Kennedy Playground. The other playground, the Taffrail Playground, will feature a splash pad (shown below). There are also adjacent basketball courts. The two playgrounds are part of a \$1.2 million project.

Quincy Sun Photos/Robert Bosworth



years if you didn't live in Quincy. Then for family...if you were a Quincy resident and you're given a preference on the family side, it's probably five plus years. The waiting list was closed for 10 years. We only just recently opened it," Marathas said. "Altogether, we've got about 7,000 people on the waiting list.

"It's a challenge. There is a huge, huge need and we have limited resources."

Each housing authority across Massachusetts is capped at a certain number of units, Marathas explained, and Quincy's is at its cap.

"Housing authorities are capped at the number of units that they can actually manage. We're at our threshold," he said. "The only way we can create new affordable housing is by doing it under a non-profit. So, we can create a new non-

profit with a new board of directors and create new affordable housing through that non-profit, and that's kind of the route that we're going to be looking to go."

The three new fully accessible units at Sawyer Towers, located at 95 Martensen St. in Quincy Point, officially opened early this month and residents were

able to move in. The Housing Authority received \$250,000 from the state Department of Housing and Community Development and \$180,000 from Quincy's Affordable Housing Trust Fund to create the new units at Sawyer Towers, plus three family units in Snug Harbor that opened previously.

"Together, those two agencies funded the Quincy Housing Authority to build three new fully handicap-accessible units at Sawyer Towers, where there is a building with 150 units and no handicap units," Marathas said. "So, this added the first three fully accessible units to that build-

Cont'd On Page 15

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CLEAN TEAM – A group of students from the Harvard Kennedy School recently took part in the school's Veterans Impact Day by performing volunteer yardwork at the Sheila McIntyre House in Quincy, a home managed by Father Bill's & MainSpring (FBMS) for eight formerly homeless veterans. Pictured, from left to right, are David Delgado, Tommy Shannon, Jim Pershing, Daniel Yarbrough, Brian Mongeau, Michelle Fakler, Allie Sedgwick and Hans Olson.



IN THE LATE 1990s, the home on Burgin Parkway was named after Sheila McIntyre, who passed away April 14 at the age of 87. Mrs. McIntyre, wife of the late former mayor and state senator James R. McIntyre, dedicated much of her time and energy to helping those in Quincy and beyond who needed a helping hand.

Photos Courtesy Fr. Bill's & MainSpring



Elevator Upgrades, Other Improvements At QHA

Cont'd From Page 13

ing, which was desperately needed. We have a list of tenants waiting to transfer to fully accessible that need them that are in wheelchairs or have physical limitations...and we just don't have enough.

"This funding was extremely helpful to us."

The new units are located on the first floor of Sawyer Towers in space previously used by QHA's finance department. Those offices were moved to Tobin Towers, where the remainder of QHA's administrative offices are located.

Each of the new one-bedroom units at Sawyer Towers includes about 600 square feet of living space. They are designed for tenants who use wheelchairs.

"They're beautiful," Marathas said of the three units. "They have white cabinets. They have hard surface Corian countertops. They're big. The doorways are big. The showers you just roll right into. They're awesome."

The Housing Authority recently contracted with Rainbow Adult Day Health Care, which will construct and operate the adult day care at O'Brien Towers inside the community room there. The company will also run a shuttle so tenants of other QHA properties can use the new space.

"Some really exciting news – we just awarded an RFP to create a new adult daycare center. It's going to be at O'Brien Towers,"

Marathas said. "They are going to build a new facility at O'Brien Towers, which will offer nurse services, doctor services, massage rooms, yoga classes, lunch every day. It's going to really bump up the services to the tenants.

"And they are going to have a shuttle that goes around to all of our properties every day and pick people up and bring them to that adult health care center that is going to be at O'Brien Towers."

QHA has received a \$500,000 grant from DHCD to modernize the elevators at Tobin Towers. The agency also refinanced a federal bond and borrowed an extra \$2 million, which will allow for modernization of elevators at O'Brien Towers and Pagano Towers on Curtis Avenue in Quincy Point, plus the creation of five fully accessible units at O'Brien Towers.

Marathas said the last elevator work in those buildings took place about 30 years ago. The company that did that work is no longer in business, which makes repairing the elevators difficult.

"When they did it 30 years ago, they used a company that went out of business, so the parts are no longer available and the support for programming is no longer available. Whenever anything happens, we have to have the part manufactured...and we have to have someone come in and try to adapt it to a component that

doesn't belong," Marathas said. "It's a process every time one breaks. It's broken for a period of time because we have to manufacture the part, we have to get someone in to program it, we have to get someone in to adapt it, and it's just not that easy.

"People think the elevator goes down and we're not doing anything about it. We're working 24-7 to get the thing back up and running, but it's just not that easy."

It could take about a year before the new elevator work is completed, Marathas said. One elevator in each of the buildings will be worked on at a time, with the other elevator remaining in service.

"There are state procurement laws and there are regulations we have to follow," Marathas said. "The first thing we have to do is hire a designer. The designer will design the new components so hopefully they're not components that are going to be gone five years from now and they are going to be something that is available for a long period of time.

"Then, it will go out to bid. It legally has to be procured, so we will put it out to bid and the bid response time is probably a month or two. Then we will award it and they will order the equipment and then they'll start the process.

"The only negative thing is, there is always going to be one elevator down while that one is being rebuilt. So, for a period of six months to a year, all three buildings are pretty much going to have one elevator down while it is being modernized."

The Housing Authority is in the process of completing three projects in Germantown, which should be completed by the end of June.

The agency received a grant from the state Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs last year for two playgrounds in Snug Harbor. The Jean Kennedy Playground will be replaced with a half basketball court and a brand-new playground area. A new splash pad and basketball court will open on Taffrail Road, where a basketball court is now located.

"We've got two new playgrounds – a \$1.2 million project. They are both

going to be ready to open at the end of June," Marathas said. "Both parks are going to come online the end of [June], which is going to be the splash pad, two basketball courts, the Jean Kennedy Playground and the Taffrail Playground."

The agency is also sprucing up the Palmer Street rotary, which is home to a 20-foot high memorial to Daniel Shed, the first English settler of what is today known as Germantown.

"The rotary going into Palmer Street is getting a \$100,000 renovation," Marathas said. "It already got a new walkway, lighting. The monument's been unlit for years. We had the plaque all redone – the Daniel Shed memorial, that plaque is all redone. We're building a new light that's going to go on top of it. And the whole rotary is getting landscaped.

"That is coming to an end too. That will probably be the end of June also."

Marathas recently received an Extra Mile Award from Quincy Community Action Programs. The Housing Authority on Monday received an award from Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials for the services it provides to tenants. Those services include a food bank that provides food to every resident in the high-rise buildings on a monthly basis, support service for elderly residents, in-building health care at two of the high rises plus Manet Community Health Center's Snug Harbor location, a program that lets tenants in family housing put money into escrow that can be used to purchase a home, and the planned adult daycare center, among other initiatives.

"All that together got us recognized as a leader in support services in the housing authority industry," Marathas said.



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