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Longtime Bromley-Heath chief retiring

By **Travis Andersen** | GLOBE STAFF FEBRUARY 10, 2012

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Mildred Hailey, executive director of the Bromley-Heath Tenant Management Corp., will retire after more than 40 years at the helm of the organization that manages the Jamaica Plain housing development.

The Boston Housing Authority, which will assume direct control of operations in the nearly 1,000-unit development in April, announced yesterday that Hailey will step down on March 31.

“I think her legacy will be that of a national leader and

advocate on behalf of public residents throughout the country,” William McGonagle, administrator of the housing authority, said yesterday by phone.

Hailey, 78, did not return a call yesterday seeking comment.

McGonagle said that Hailey and a few other Bromley-Heath residents banded together in the early 1970s to form the nation’s first tenant management group at a public housing development to try to reverse the blight that had overtaken the area.

“My belief is that conditions had gotten so bad at that site that [Hailey and the other founders] just said they’d had enough and that they were going to tackle the problems at the development head-on,” McGonagle said.

Problems included unsafe living conditions and about 4,000 broken windows, he said, and the situation has greatly improved during Hailey’s tenure.

“She deserves tremendous credit for that,” McGonagle said.

He said the management corporation, with a board of directors composed of 10 residents and five nonresidents with expertise in public housing, will continue to play an advisory role when the housing authority takes over operations.

Angel Lopez, the housing authority’s development manager, and Francina Latimore, the authority’s assistant director for property management, will be assigned to Bromley-Heath in about two weeks to begin



WENDY MAEDA/GLOBE STAFF/FILE/1999

“I’ve worked with her on dozens of issues, and she’s always been . . . very much in command of what’s happening in the housing at Bromley-Heath,” Police Commissioner Edward F. Davis said about executive director Mildred Hailey (left), 78, who is retiring March 31.

working on the transition into the new management structure, a spokeswoman for McGonagle said.

Mayor Thomas M. Menino also had high praise for Hailey yesterday.

“Mildred Hailey has admirably served the residents of not only Bromley-Heath but the public housing residents of Boston and the nation for 40 years,” he said in a statement. “She has earned the right to retire after so many years of hard work and advocacy.

“Her deep-seated commitment to public housing residents and the poor will ensure that her proud legacy will be remembered for generations to come,” the mayor declared.

Police Commissioner Edward F. Davis said that Hailey has provided invaluable assistance on many initiatives, including community policing efforts at Bromley-Heath.

“I’ve worked with her on dozens of issues, and she’s always been available and very much in command of what’s happening in the housing at Bromley-Heath,” Davis said. “She is just a pleasure to work with.

“She understands what the tenants need, and she’s not afraid to tell you,” he said.

The tenure of Hailey, who earns a salary of \$92,000 that is federally funded, has not been without controversy.

In 2000, a federal indictment alleged that her husband was in the family apartment when her son, Raleigh “Ricky” Hailey Jr., conducted a drug deal with an informant in a different room. Her son pleaded guilty to a federal drug charge and was sentenced to three years probation, according to court records.

In 2010, the Boston Housing Authority released a scathing report that faulted the front office of the management corporation for a number of problems, including erroneous calculations of rent, failure to evict tenants with police records, and an inability to quash perceived racial tensions between black and Hispanic residents.

Tenant leaders in the development countered that it has never had a race problem and cited inaccuracies in the report published by the Globe at the time.

“I think it is commendable that we are still in this business after 40 years,” Hailey said after the report was released. “A lot of businesses don’t survive that long.

“Of course, there have been roadblocks and setbacks,” she said. “But you pick yourself up and go on.”

Councilor Matt O’Malley, who represents Jamaica Plain, said yesterday Hailey has brought a wealth of institutional knowledge and passion to her work.

“I’ll miss her, and I have no doubt she will continue to advocate for her neighbors and continue to make Bromley-Heath a better, safer place to live,” he said.

Globe correspondent Matt Rocheleau contributed to this report. Andersen can be reached at tandersen@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@TAGlobe](https://twitter.com/TAGlobe).

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