



# NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

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MARCH MINUTES  
MARCH 18, 2024  
Approved on July 15, 2024

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, March 18, 2024 at 5:42 P.M.

Chairperson Carney called the meeting to order at 5:42 P.M.

Upon Roll Call, those present and absent were as follows:

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Carney; Vice Chairperson Richards; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Jones; Commissioner Cancel & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cara Leiper; Sharon Kimble; Jack Redman; Attorney Tom O'Connor; Amanda Huertas; Danielle McColgan; Jose Cruz; Aime Matos; Deb Walker; Heather Maxwell; Angela Santaniello; Roy Martin; Gwen Nabad; Doug Kierdorf; Susan Riley & Yasiri Castillo.

## TENANT COMMENT

**Salvo Resident** – the only concern I have that was brought to my attention on another Board is that we have a Board member that is bullying people and that is not right. I think something should be done about that but I am not sure exactly how the Board goes about doing that. I don't know if you can be censored as a Commissioner or not but I think it should be looked into if it has not already been looked into.

**Chairperson Carney** – just so the public knows we don't respond at this point or actually at all during our regular meeting, so don't think we don't care especially if there are resident concerns brought up. You will hear how those are dealt with at the next meeting but we do hear your concerns and we are not just being rude by not responding.

**Hampshire Heights Resident** – I am calling with the tip of the month for residents which is a PHN that I found regarding rent, so if anyone that lives in public housing has been on disability in the last twelve months and they start working there is an income exclusion and it is called a rent freeze. I wanted to just share this information that I discovered with the public.

**Hillside Terrace Resident/LTO President** – Hampshire County property announced in our weekly bulletin that we were going to have an exciting informational session and that it was important to come to this meeting. I am here representing the tenants council for Hillside Terrace, but I don't exactly know because the information wasn't posted about what exactly I am supposed to be here for in terms of the exciting news.

**Salvo Resident** – last week at Salvo there were bed bug treatments on the third floor, there were some residents really anxiety producing to have that here especially after what has happened in this building for a long time. They came in probably the next day I was told it was probably on the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> floors. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor that is the laundry room – we can remember when the bed bugs were here before there was a letter including one from Braman that says we have to close on an abundance of caution, we have to close

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all the bed bugs, they were targeting maybe one, two or three people who were the cause of the laundry rooms not being open. In this situation and I don't know if it is been resolved the laundry rooms were open, I personally think they should be open because that is one way of dealing with the bed bugs. I just want to applaud that it seemingly is more efficient than ever because someone across from me, it took them a month before they could verify what the bed bugs were and this time they went there and said yep, let's get to it. My question is, I think even if new people are coming in, we need to still have some training, I know the training came when the news coverage came but I think this should be happening property wide where people know what they are and look like because so many people thought they were fleas and all kinds of stuff other than what they were. There is a 23 minute video, I think it would be a good thing if everybody could have that so they can know what they are looking for. As far as bullying, I think that those are terms that people use all the time without truly understanding exactly what they are. When you disagree with someone that is not bullying. Think of the word gaslight. Gaslight came out in a 1953 movie, they had the gaslight turned on, the woman was like it is dark in here and making her feel like she was crazy changing what she is saying and turning it around. We need to understand what really constitutes bullying. A lot of times what people are accusing people of especially if it involves me, most likely you will get silence from me, but my silence doesn't mean inactivity, it is just that I won't give it wing. Someone sent this to me from Texas today – "Dear God fix me when I am the problem, protect me when I am not." That is my saying to what people have to say. With Mel King the first thing they did with us was we had a group on racism within our group. These are the terms we really need to understand what is going on and think about who is the architect orchestrating all this stuff between residents. Residents should be doing something that is unifying, not divisions, not tokens, not incentives, not \$100.00 off, or whatever the case may be. That is very important.

**Florence Heights Resident** – I live in public housing and a lot of people are talking about the bullying thing. Some people might not know what bullying is, but the victim of bullying knows what bullying is. As one of them who is being harassed, antagonized and called names, I am pretty sure when I am accusing somebody of bullying, I know exactly what I mean. It is funny when people say like oh people don't know what the definition of bullying is and the definition of what a bully is, I know the definition of bullying. It's funny how they keep harassing the victim and try to minimize this and it is not cool especially when it is a Board member. There should be repercussions to that, it is not nice calling people names, calling people a junkie, it is not nice talking about people's past, it is not nice at all when somebody should lead by example.

**Salvo Resident** – regarding the ventilation and stuff like that, mine keeps going off in my bathroom, they come in and spray the fan and it works for a couple of days and then it is off and on. My apartment has not had anything done in the 22 years I have been here. The wallpaper is peeling off the wall. By the end of this week my stuff will be out of here so if maintenance wants to they will be able to come in and do something. The stuff on the Annual Plan, this has been on the plan for 10 years. Jon Hite had it on the plan, same things over and over and then an emergency comes up. Can't we get one thing done at a time? I have never seen the outside with leaves piled up all over the place, it was never like that. Jon Hite would not allow that – Cara what is going on? If you want us to do it ask us and we will get some rakes and rake it up as long as you guys haul it away. There are a lot of us that will help. Cara, we are counting on you to do things and do the right thing. You have been looking in the opposite direction right now, we love you but hey what can we do? You are the leader – lead us in some kind of direction.

#### **STAFF COMMENT**

NONE

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Sciarra – I am just happy to be with you all this evening and to hear a little bit about the Annual Plan. I don't have any comments I am just happy to listen and just be with you all. Thank you for the opportunity, I appreciate it.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Cara read the report and gave updates.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – is your report not in our packet anymore?

Cara – it has never been in your packet because oftentimes I am still preparing it up to right before the meeting.

### APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 2024 MINUTES

Commissioner Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Vice- Chairperson Richards.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice Chairperson Richards; Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the February 2024 Minutes.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – why can't you put the name of the residents because of some training we got. I think it is difficult for people to know what was said. Why can't you put their initials?

Chairperson Carney – we talked about this at length at the last meeting. Yours was a two part question. 1. Was asking why we aren't using the names and I think that question was answered for you. Then there was an additional part of that question which is more like why not now and why earlier, you withdrew that part of the question. I think you want to ask further whether instead of what was advised by NAHRO and explained at the last meeting, which is to just put the name of the property from which the resident comes and list that person as Salvo, Forsander, etc. which was advised by NAHRO, I think you are asking and this again goes to policy and not really something, you are asking whether instead of doing what was advised which is just to list the property name and resident.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – no, I know there was a discussion but it is very difficult to see what exactly what is decided on it. Question – maybe when we are making some of the comments, we can highlight names or Salvo, so your eye can go to it instead of one big paragraph, so it is not just one page of stuff, bold names. I suggest residents email your questions that you want answered so you can make sure you know what you are saying and that it is communicated effectively as you like because I have had to make a lot of corrections.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

### MOTION

Approval of the January 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Vice-Chairperson Richards put forth the Motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Brooks.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice Chairperson Richards; Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the January 2024 Minutes.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I would like the pages to be numbered. I was more concerned about the December minutes and I was going to rewrite my statement and can't you look at the recording just like I asked you now.

## NEW BUSINESS

### MOTION

Accept Revisions to Approved December 2023 Minutes.

Commissioner Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Cancel.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice Chairperson Richards; Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Brooks & Commissioner Jones.

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield - I left my comments in Texas and it was hard for me to re-create, I remember saying can't you go to the transcript, just what I said earlier, it is not like I just didn't do it, it was that it was somewhere else. I was in Texas and hard to re-create especially when I know these meetings are closed captioned and written down. The reason I am having a little bit of confusion now is I didn't have this in my packet, some of these weren't here and I think I remember somebody else saying they got things and it wasn't in there now so me seeing everything in its totality – it looks right. I am not voting on anything I am not sure about, it doesn't make any sense and the corrections were made, I want to see it. I feel like sometimes these notes, I sound like a female step it and fetch it. For example at the bottom part, I wish that these would be where you said here is the recording, so it is not out of this order. I wish you put them and say, these are the things she wrote about, not put on the last page. I know I didn't say um, um, it's emotional, I, I, I, I hope, I know I didn't say that. On the second paragraph bed bugs have been around for some time before this administration and will return. So let's get, so let's get effective measures in place. I get really nervous about this because some of the things that the ED just mentioned about oh there was a little mix up and like déjà vu that happened with an annual plan like December last year was put on this year, thank goodness Commissioner Cancel for that catch, there are a couple of things that are being caught that I worry about especially when we have a recording secretary. I don't know much about the transcriptionist but do we need to do that every time, have two people, one look and one do this so we can make sure we get accuracy in reporting? Again, I am not saying verbatim, I am saying let's get the gist of the information correctly.

Chairperson Carney – would you like to offer any additions, corrections or deletions beyond the statement that you just made?

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – yes, I said on the second paragraph, take that and put it where it says - and she read the following – not on the very last page somewhere because they came together. It was a consistency in thought, so let's please have that. In the first paragraph it says I did say I typed up something um, um, five I's – I know I didn't say that so that can be taken out. In the second paragraph – bed bugs, etc. and will return unless there are effective measures in place.

**Cara** – so on the last page that is an exact from the recording from Northampton Media. All I did was pull up the transcription and I copied it and pasted it, so that is exactly verbatim of what was said.

**Chairperson Carney** – Is it possible to remove the things that sound like stuttering for example, that are just a matter of the transcription, sometimes there is a little something in transcription where clearly you know somebody isn't saying I, I, I, or if they were, we know they only meant one I. Can we make that correction, removing the two or three additional I's that the transcription showed? The other correction, is it possible to insert it into the area where it did in fact occur in the meeting, not at the end?

**Cara** – it is possible, I guess it is a question to the Commissioners – Commissioner Jones said that it was a statement as a Commissioner not as a resident. So when we had the discussion originally it was that it would be added at the end as an attachment, that is why I added it at the end, because it was supposed to be an attachment, and the other is to the order.

**Chairperson Carney** – the corrections offered by Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield we ask Commissioner Jones are you ok with that?

**Commissioner Jones** – I would go either way – I would like to continue the meeting and I think this is a rather small item and I just felt it was important for the Commissioner to have her comments as part of the minutes and this seems to do it. One place or the other does not matter to me.

#### RESOLUTION 2024-02 – Approval of FY2025 State Annual Plan

Vice-Chairperson Richards put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Jones.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice Chairperson Richards; Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Brooks & Commissioner Jones.

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Resolution.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – I thought it was good they had meetings with residents, posted meetings at the state properties, newsletters, invitations and robo calls. Annual means every year and this is the first time in 10 years this has happened to this degree, I think it is wonderful. Because you are just doing this now is my hesitancy and the other question is isn't it supposed to be in a publicized newspaper? Is the newsletter we have sufficient for the notification as opposed to a public notice in the newspaper?

**Cara** – The State Plan is not required for the newspaper, it is the Federal plan that is required to be put in the newspaper.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – question – the measures you went through now is that something that is required for all residents to participate in it and why just a month beforehand when I think these start up in a 6 month process to gather more input or requests in the Annual Plan?

**Cara** – this year to further engage residents in the process, it was based on the Board asking us to have more resident engagement in the plan and process. We made a concerted effort to get residents, we usually have 4 or 5 residents. We brought food and snacks so residents would actually come. The Board asked us to make sure more people come, we had 70 people attend, the Board asked us to do something and we did it. This particular part is not required. What is required is we post it on the website, put it in the office, do all the things we always do but we did these extra steps because the Board asked us to get more resident input on it.

**Chairperson Carney** – may I please clarify then. I hear you say that there is not a requirement to do all that we have done, but we did hear concerns of Commissioners at the last annual meeting. I remember myself thinking we are going to do everything we can to see that there is satisfaction among Commissioners especially regarding the outreach to residents and the involvement even though it is not required by the State. Am I correct?

**Cara** – yes.

**Vice-Chairperson Richards** – I want to join JoElla in thanking Cara and the rest of the folks for making this extra effort. I think it was well worth it and I think 70 people, that is amazing and I am really happy that has happened along with some local tenant associations being formed, so thank you for your efforts.

**Commissioner Cancel** – I want to echo on what others have said about the outreach for the State Annual Plan. I am really enjoying a lot of the good positive forward movement from our agency as a whole, from the Board, all the trainings we have been getting, from the staff, all the hard work they are doing and in particular in reaching out to tenants and hearing folks out. This is really what it should look like and it makes me really happy. Another thing that makes me happy was to see that we have been working on the mitigation for the basements at the Hampshire Heights property and it is really great to see we are almost there. Fix the roads and the mitigation with the basement, that was lumped into one big project. I just want to acknowledge that it is just really exciting. Thank you, Cara, thank you everybody.

**Commissioner Jones** – the survey at the back of the report, was that composed of only State housing tenants and not the Federal folks?

**Cara** – Correct.

**Commissioner Jones** – how was that administered?

**Cara** – the State sends surveys out to residents, they send a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the survey to the residents address and they take the data and put information together and we get the final results.

**Commissioner Jones** – do we know the participation rate from those folks?

**Cara** – this was for 667 housing, they sent out 200 surveys and received 70 back. These percentages are based on the 70 responses.

**Commissioner Jones** – there are of course different ways to measure the effectiveness of surveys and the questions as I read through it seem fine. It would be interesting to see how they were actually measured. If you look at the very last question on the survey, basically a general question - are you satisfied with your living arrangement or something to that effect. If you add those two numbers A & B or 1 & 2 whatever, it comes to 77% that are satisfied. We should never be satisfied with just 77% but I thought that was an interesting number to bring forth with all the stuff we have to do on a monthly basis as a Board, so thank you for that.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – in the Mel King institute binder. Annual Plan – 6 months to begin drafting, 5 months to post initial draft, 4 months LHA meets with LTO to hear about the plan. There is a process, it does not say you are required. The newsletter is a great option. I echo what Commissioner Cancel said about how it was done this year, it was really great and I will applaud us on that step. I don't remember seeing it in a motion. Good that this is happening – I just didn't see it in a motion, not that it needed to be in a motion, but good first steps.

**Vice-Chairperson Richards** – question – Commissioner Jones referred to a survey. We have quite a few residents in a NHA property over 10 years. I wonder is there a benchmark for that, how do we stack up against other Housing Authorities on the length of time residents are in our public housing?

**Cara** – as part of the PMR there is a graph we get, I would be happy to look at that graph. It does a comparison, our Housing Authority against other Housing Authorities, our size and across the State. I don't know that off the top of my head but I would be happy to get that for you.

**Vice-Chairperson Richards** – not unlike Commissioner Jones, I was pleased with some of the percentages that we saw on the survey. On the other hand, I was looking at some of the PMR's. When does an issue become an emergency, as we heard tonight a resident talk about what he perceived as an emergency. How does that move up?

**Cara** – for example, we were getting a lot of no heat calls and no hot water calls at Cahill. Before I applied for the grant for the mini splits and the heating program we had it in the Annual Plan for Cahill and we had to move that to the top because the systems were going down daily, no heat or hot water. It is a very costly project and we moved it up. We had to provide them with alternate places to shower and plug in heat sources, a terrible situation to have elderly disabled residents in that plight. So those are the kinds of things that would be an urgent situation that would move something up on the list. This caused many items to move down on the list for that slated time period. The good thing is within applying for the grant funds we have been able to recoup some of that money, so I think it will give us a little bit more wiggle room, hence I will be able to do something sooner, like starting that fan project faster.

**Vice-Chairperson Richards** – terrific, thank you. I agree with Commissioner Cancel, I am very excited to get that Hampshire Heights project going and finished and underway. So thank you.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – again, so far so good with what happened this year. I am involved with lots of surveys. In the 10 years I have been here I have never had one survey. Why don't I get surveys from formerly DHCD? I just don't understand. Maybe we need to get surveys from other agencies. Maybe not the same survey, but that would give a list and I think Commissioner Jones said 70% is good but when do they have a chance to do that and correctly? Maybe survey monkey and they are easy to do a survey and it would be really nice to get feedback from folks.

**Chairperson Carney** – can we look into why Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield has not received any distributed surveys from EOHLC formerly DHCD – could there be some reason – how does the State distribute those surveys they do at every Housing Authority?

**Cara** – they mail them with a self-addressed stamped envelope to their mailing address.

**Chairperson Carney** – is it possible there is some reason resident Tarbutton-Springfield has not received that mail?

**Cara** – I have no idea, it doesn't involve us on any level, we are not even told when it happens, we just get the results when it is over.

**Chairperson Carney** – that is helpful to know. I don't know, Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield, maybe we can ask a question at EOHLC and see if maybe they have the wrong address on file.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – I only know of one tenant because I have asked around who got exactly what the ED said in the 10 years I have been here.

**Chairperson Carney** – but we do have the 200 responses we looked at so you may not know the other 198 people.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – in this building?

**Cara** – it is based on the program. If it is a 667 they evaluate – they don't do the same program every year, next year it could be the 200 program. That is up to them.

**Chairperson Carney** – it does seem odd that Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield has never received a survey in her 10 years here. Maybe we could put a little bug in EOHLC's ear and say we heard from our resident Commissioner that she never received a survey and they could actually look and see whether it was mailed. I am sure then we can look and see what is going on with the mail.

**Question** – there were some indication that the residents comments were very helpful of course and actually able to be integrated into this plan – could you tell us a little more about that Director Leiper?

**Cara** explained about the input from a Salvo resident who said you are putting mini splits in but the windows and sliders are drafty. I had forgotten about that so it was a great input. The LTO's had concerns about some of the sidewalk areas, not annual plan stuff but good communication.

**Chairperson Carney** – I don't think you will hear any disagreement from this Board that communication is key, to the extent we can hear what resident concerns are and then have the opportunity to integrate those into our State Annual Plan or our Federal Plan. That only makes it all the better and helps us meet the needs of residents. I really appreciate your listening and integrating those pieces into the Annual Plan.

**Commissioner Jones** put forth the motion to adjourn the March meeting at 6:59 P.M., seconded by Vice-Chairperson Richards.