



# NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

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## APPROVED – JULY 15, 2024 JULY MINUTES

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, July 15, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.  
Upon Roll Call, those present and absent were as follows:

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cara Leiper; Jack Redman; Sharon Kimble; Attorney Tom O'Connor; Keith Walsh; Danielle McColgan; Jose Cruz; Deb Walker.

### TENANT COMMENT

**FORSANDER RESIDENT** – FY25 budget – replacement fans, is it possible to see the budget, it should be a public document. Can you briefly outline the plan and the timetable to do this work. The building is 58 years old, there are 3 buildings where the exhaust fans are not working. Mold is growing on towels and in the bathroom. There have been many years of neglected normal maintenance. The Board is currently in violation of the Mass State Sanitary Code – what does the Board think about this?

**SALVO RESIDENT** – It has been a while since they got hooked up on the big screen, hopefully in the future we can get better accommodations. Air conditioning is a problem in the community room. People are enjoying the community gardens and the flowers out front. We have 192 units and no one comes out because they are scared. On July 8<sup>th</sup> we had a good meeting with Jack and the Board members and we are looking forward to our office on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. People want to go to the LTO for questions. The needle exchange program is ongoing.

**SALVO RESIDENT** – Regarding parking permits. Do we need one at Salvo and is there an end date – it hasn't been in the magazine. Is the program finished? Speed bumps – yes or no?

**SALVO RESIDENT** – Angela is working diligently to identify unsavory characters in the building. Do people have to get shot before you remove these people? Appreciate it if you would listen to her and take action on the information she is giving you.

**SALVO RESIDENT** – This past weekend the electricity blew out in my apartment. I just got home Friday from the nursing home and as I was sitting in my chair I heard a popping sound and the TV and air conditioner – everything went out. I tried to turn the breaker on, it was the weekend and I called for maintenance and they said call the power company. I ran into a maintenance person later who was on call and he asked if I called the maintenance line. I called at 8:00 & 10:30 and got the same story. There should be a system like it used to be. Please explain what the procedure is.

**SALVO RESIDENT** – Welcome back Cara. I have reported quite a bit the people in our building who aren't supposed to be. We are trying to get some trespass orders on some people. Follow up and see where we are with the discussion Cara and I had with Captain Caputo. Everyone in the building is

basically involved with the neighborhood watch. There was an individual arrested recently who had been banned from all NHA properties. Need some help with the trespass orders.

**SALVO RESIDENT** – Carpets need to be cleaned, it has been 3 years. There is human and dog urine in the carpets. Will a cleaning be happening soon? There is no air conditioning in the community room for a year – why is it not fixed? Mini splits – will be expensive to clean every 6 months. Dust will be getting into them and if not cleaned we will get mildew.

**SALVO RESIDENT** – There is no air conditioning in the hallways, they were shut down by the Fire Department. I checked and they said they have nothing to do with it. It has been a year since we have had air conditioning in the hallways – 18 years ago we had it, I have asthma and COPD and I am unable to leave my apartment.

**SALVO RESIDENT** – I was a security officer for 5 years for 2500 people in a factory. I have been a case worker and a community leader. I am a happy, normal person. I love this building, we have a few issues, but not problems to be scared. Trying to deal with this guy named Memphis who has been living in this building and he is dirty. I gave him shirts, pants and shoes. He is so dirty that I am scared that he can bring in germs and sickness in our elevators, this kid can kill people in this building right now. I went to the Board of Health and I am accusing Jose and Cara that they are not doing anything about this. You have to put this kid in a safe place, in a mental hospital.

**SALVO RESIDENT** – I would like it if you would add more trees at Salvo to replace the trees that were taken down. There is litter in the parking lot, myself and others attempt to pick up the trash, maybe you could put up signs? The trash has made its way to the garden. I would volunteer if that is what you need. It is not desirable to have the trash mingling with the food.

**MCDONALD RESIDENT** – Cooperation and complacency. Incentivize people cleaning up the parking lot- rewards, yes, good behavior, more rewards. A pretty intense drug scene going on in the building I called the police and want to see the police report. Planting trees is a good thing. Mold – had an inspection and the inspector recognized the apartment had a lot of mold. Problem with rampant racism on the part of Northampton Housing Authority – you don't like people of brown skin. Loneliness is a big epidemic and it is not against the law not to bathe. The air conditioning in my apartment doesn't work and there is mold.

**SALVO RESIDENT** – I echo the comments of the LTO they said many things that I would have brought up. There is Nascar racing on the property, the Senior Center and Fruit Street. One-person speeding was a staff person as well as a kitchen volunteer. We don't have speed bumps or signs which is necessary, I will bring up the issue to Ward 3 as well. Concern with drug issues. I can't say I have seen anything but I hear it. It is a problem that should be dealt with all the time. Revisit security at the front door, not residents. The mini splits are great but the heat in the hallways is stifling, we need the vents opened. The community room is hot for the Highland Valley workers. The agenda was not posted on the city site – it should be available to everyone, help those who can't be here on how to use the computer. Thank you for getting the notices up. It is nice to get them up timely and they should be on all the floors.

#### STAFF COMMENTS

NONE

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Redacted at persons request– I am curious as to how the housing bond bill is going to shake out for the Hampshire Heights remediation in the basement as well as windows. Concern for mold and the windows at Hampshire Heights. Also, residents are members of the public.

**Yasiri Castillo** – there are a lot of drug issues over there. Remind people how hard it is to deal with addiction, not everybody takes the time to reach out. Take 5 or 10 minutes to educate yourselves, how Narcan works and how to help, be grateful for what we have.

**Jerry Halberstat** – thank you for your hospitality. Listening to the tenant comments – very constructive. People are willing to reach out on their concerns and issues and problems they see big and small. The Board and management hear those comments and use them towards a constructive end, it will be a great improvement. When you suppress the problems they come around and bite you. Other Housing Authorities that I know are very reluctant to accept critical comments. I think here you are managing to hear their comments for what they are worth as an attempt to be helpful, I think you will all be happier, more constructive. In general, when tenants have problems they may deserve and need help and I think it is up to other tenants to reach out as you have or for management or service coordinators to find the resource that people deserve with the right to live in a community but they also need to conform to some of the expectations and standards in the community and it is better if a professional is brought in to deal with this kind of thing. I hope you don't take it as critical but I have seen it get out of hand, it is really better not to put the person on the spot publicly and not try to even with goodwill ask them to be moved out because that is really a function of management. The first step is try to find out what the problem is and bring in the resources to try to deal with it if at all possible. I hope you take that as positive comments on what I see as a very constructive meeting.

**Chairperson Carney** – We do really value public comment. Working on fixing residents, public and staff by-laws. That has been pointed out to us that we are all members of the public; more to come on that.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

Cara read the report with updates.

## APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 2024 REGULAR MINUTES

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

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

**VOTING NAY:** Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield

**Therefore Chairperson Carney approved the June 2024 minutes.**

**Chairperson Carney** – In terms of meeting minutes there are only three things – additions, corrections or deletions. I am saying this for public edification so folks can understand what I mean.

Chairperson Carney put up a screen with the definition of additions, corrections and deletions.

The reason I bring this up is that my practice is to limit our discussion to those three areas. There is a lot of work that is involved in the creation of the official minutes for this meeting. Chairperson Carney explained the process of transcribing. There have been critical even derogatory and inappropriate comments regarding the taking of the minutes, suggesting an “impartial stenographer to take the minutes”. I take issue with that because I hear it as actually a criticism of the person who has been doing our minutes for many, many years, that that person is partial, is biased. I will not have any discussion of our meeting minutes from here on in except to allow for the offering of an addition, correction or deletion

at which point the minutes get changed to being – approval of the minutes as corrected. I have asked the Commissioners to submit in writing their additions, corrections or deletions by 3:30 p.m. on the day of the meeting. This is the obligation of the Chair which is why I have apologized to the public and to other members of the Board and I do not intend to have any discussion or comment or debate about this. Anyone who wishes to, they may use time at the resident or public comment where the speech is not limited, where full first amendment rights to do or say or denigrate or complain as much as one wishes, that is what the Supreme Court says, but I will not allow it in the context of our Board meeting.

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

##### MOTION – APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 2024 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

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

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

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the March 2024 minutes.

#### DISCUSSION

##### STATUS OF FY2023 AUP ACTION PLAN

Chairperson Carney – at the last meeting we were told by EOHLC that until our AUP is resolved, we dealt with all this at the last meeting, they advised us to keep this as a standing agenda item, but only if we need to discuss something that has some further action taken by the State. We have not had any further action; they have received our AUP as we voted on at the last meeting. I will announce, this agenda item will appear again at our August meeting at which point if there is something to report then we will have that to discuss.

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### MOTION – ACCEPT LOW BIDDER NENA CONSTRUCTION INC. IN THE AMOUNT OF \$807,000.00 FOR EOHLC #214126 HAMPSHIRE HEIGHTS WINDOW REPLACEMENTS

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

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

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I appreciate the fact we got the information on the bidder, it is helpful but I wish we got information on the other bidders. I looked them up in the better business bureau but they are in Rhode Island – helpful information from EOHLC. I thought the cost would include the basement of Hampshire Heights – just the windows for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a million dollars, I thought they were together. I would like to have had some information on the other bidders so I can look into that too as opposed to just coming in and rubber stamping something – we are supposed to be doing it.

Commissioner Cancel – I lived in Hampshire Heights and I get really excited anytime we have something that gets approved for Hampshire Heights. I do also have the basements in the back of my mind all the time, but I am happy we are getting the windows done which is really needed.

**Vice-Chairperson Richards** – I echo Commissioner Cancel – I am very happy to get this done. What responsibility do we have to take the lowest bidder?

**Chairperson Carney** – The contractor not being guilty of OSHA complaints or wage theft – I don't know if it has filtered down here. We have a form at the City level where a contractor will certify they are in compliance with wage law and in this case prevailing wage.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – I echo what you are saying, those are things that are of interest – it would have been helpful to see that to make an informed decision. If you get that information if you could forward it to me I would appreciate it. That is a lot of money to not have basements included.

At this point Cara addressed a list of questions and explained a State project with a Fish number over and under \$100,000.00. EOHLIC does the management of the project. All of our projects are in different phases right now.

**Chairperson Carney** – I would like to clarify that we don't really get to decide, it is really the State that tells us that based on their work and evaluating and advertising. They have chosen, this is the lowest bidder, you are presenting us with the names of the other bidders that we could only consider if the lowest bidder came back with poor references. Am I correct?

**Cara Leiper** – yes, if I brought this to you and you know something that Tobias Berhner didn't, I could go back to them and say, we have this concern that would then trip this designer to do further investigation. It would have to be a really bad thing because they are saying they do all the background checks, references, better business bureau, they have passed and this is who we are picking.

**Chairperson Carney** – the term rubber stamp has been brought up, but the State doesn't give us a lot of leeway over \$100,000.00.

**Cara Leiper** – the State laws apply no matter what it is. EOHLIC has a construction department and they help us with projects over \$100,000.00 – they do the legwork. Smaller Housing Authorities have RCAT.

**Chairperson Carney** – DCAMM (Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance) takes this responsibility very seriously and why they do this for projects over \$100,000.00 that have State funds.

**Commissioner Cancel** – EOHLIC makes the determination – do they include wage theft and prevailing wage home rule?

**Cara Leiper** – access to CAPHub – we might request an hourly wage for a project. The State will give us a wage report and it is uploaded into this document, this makes sure the prevailing wage is being paid. It is always taken into consideration in all the jobs we do whether EOHLIC is running the show for it or we are.

**Chairperson Carney** – spoke about Home Rule. Does the State have something similar at their level? That is something we could find out but we don't have much leeway.

**Cara Leiper** – this is money the State is giving us. It is not our money to say yay or nay.

**Chairperson Carney** – what if we chose to not approve this motion?

**Cara Leiper** – you would have a PMR finding for not spending the money. PMR – you wouldn't be within the percentage rate of the capital spending. It would be an issue.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – I would like this information emailed to me, I appreciate the packet. Clark & Green Architectural in Great Barrington, Ma. communicated with three individuals who had direct experience with NENA Construction and sent information to EOHLC and Northampton. It says we have had positive things. Who was the most recent one and I would be interested in what they have to say and even Cohasset Housing Authority. I looked on their meeting minutes to get an idea. I appreciate the information on over \$100,000.00 and \$5,000.00 and who needs to look into that. We are responsible for this stuff. This is helpful for the Board to know. This has been clarifying, this is a great start and this is something we should have been doing all along.

**Chairperson Carney** – I hope everyone doesn't abstain or reject, I would like to see some forward motion on this project.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – We have to vote with our conscience and the information we have. I do appreciate the ability to make my own decision. I would like to have all the information before I make my decision.

**Vice-Chairperson Richards** put forth the motion to adjourn the July meeting at 7:10 p.m. seconded by Commissioner Cancel. All were in favor.