



NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

AUGUST MINUTES

AUGUST 19, 2024

Approved on September 16, 2024

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, August 19, 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; Sharon Kimble; Attorney Tom O'Connor; Keith Walsh; Danielle McColgan; Jose Cruz; Deb Walker & Gary DePace.

RESOLUTION 2024-05 – ACCEPT FY24 QUARTERLY/YEAR END FINANCIALS, CERTIFICATION TOP 5 COMPENSATION DOCUMENT AND CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH LEAD PAINT NOTIFICATION LAWS AS PREPARED BY GARY DEPACE.

Gary went through the financials and spoke about the transfer in of Hampshire Regional assets which was closed out and became part of our revised budget. On the 400-9 program we are going to be voting on it as of the new fiscal year, these all transferred into our 400 consolidated program.

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

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Resolution.

QUESTIONS

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield– line #33 Solar operating costs there is nothing, can you please explain. Also, line #8 – other revenue subsidy. Line #16 – compensated absences and #18 through #21- I have questions. Where is the money for professional development?

Commissioner Jones – confirm that first report you gave; we were basically operating at 87% of what was budgeted. Will this automatically go into reserves for the next fiscal year?

Gary DePace – on the 87% - 13% under federal program budgeted just in case we were possibly going to lose operating reserves. We wanted to budget for extraordinary work if we were going to lose the reserve. In the federal program 26 1&2 we never did spend that. When we don't spend it, it stays in reserves.

Solar operating expense – what we pay for our portion of the cost to run the solar farm we participate in we get an additional credit over and above that on our electric bill, that is where that additional difference goes and becomes part of the retained revenue side which is what we call other revenue retained. \$185,000.00 – that is primarily the solar we get to keep. That account also incorporates for revenues we receive from tenant damages – repair work, tenant damage, we retain that. Expense side is maintenance contracts; the income side is retained revenue.

The difference between account 3690 other revenue, subsidy related is that revenue is monies received from laundry fund that offsets the utility cost because it is subsidy related. That revenue decreases our subsidy earned most of it is washer/dryer revenue, and it is used to offset our subsidy.

Compensated year expense – represents the cost of balances of sick and vacation time accruals from one period to the next. June 30th – we get a total of what is owed to employees if they all retired on that date. The difference between the year before and this year becomes an expense. The \$8,201.00 represents the 400's portion of increase in accrued compensated absences. It is not an expense; it is an accrual.

Legal expenses – just that.

Member compensation – amount paid to Board members.

4190 – training and travel – budgeted and approved.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – money spent on a PR form – where did the money come from? The solar farm – where is it? Washer/dryer money – is it factored into the fact whether or not half of that goes to LTO's or tenants? How much have we gotten? Legal fees – printout of legal fees residents have to pay NHA back.

Gary DePace – questions are primarily detailed from Accounts Payable and can get you detailed information. Re: the public relations campaign – I don't know if anything was spent to that.

TENANT COMMENT

SALVO RESIDENT –LTO president – thank the ED for our office, but we need more keys. It was well worth waiting for. We are working with Danielle on the needle exchange program. Needles going down the trash chute, water dripping down from air conditioning units to the first floor, we put stone around one unit but the whole building needs to be done, there are a lot of puddles which brings on mosquitoes. Jose ids helping to get the rugs cleaned. We heard a rumor that Jack moved on but we haven't heard. Bed bug issue – one apartment affected NHA jumped on it right away and rectified the situation. Thank you for not getting tenants riled up in the building over one unit with bed bugs.

SALVO RESIDENT – VP to Salvo LTO – thanks to the ED for her time and effort in giving us a beautiful office, we really appreciate it. We need clarification on how many employees you have working for NHA – maintenance, plumbers, janitors. I would appreciate it if you could get that to us ASAP.

SALVO RESIDENT – LTO secretary – air conditioning unit's drainage, pipes should be extended about 4" – the patios are turning green from the dripping water and it will erode the concrete. Jose is recommending this to Cara.

SALVO RESIDENT – There was a fire here a week ago. I got off the elevator at 5:50 p.m. and the lobby was filled with smoke. Went to my apartment and called 911, no smoke alarms went off or flashing red lights. Tested the alarms and went off. Why didn't the alarms go off? Called Fire Safety Friday and asked what was the cause of the smoke alarm not going off. The problem was with the panel malfunctioning. Also, there was an order from NHA that the fire department can close vents in the lobby and first floor hallways after they went through with the fire emergency. I would like to know who gave the order and the reason. I would like to know what has been done to investigate the malfunction of the panel and what is the schedule for inspection of fire equipment, there is nothing posted about the inspection. I am requesting a meeting with Fire Safety to address this issue. If this happened at night in a 7 story building, a fire with no alarm going off, what would have happened to the people in the building? I want this addressed ASAP, this is a very serious issue. I am afraid to be trapped in the elevator.

Cara Leiper – the system is up and running again. Al Chagnon was there when I reset the system, no trouble now. I will get back to people tomorrow.

SALVO RESIDENT – there are people with Covid in the building. People are not wearing masks; I work in the cafeteria. Something should be put in the elevators stating there is Covid in the building, that is all we have to know, it will be safer for everyone.

SALVO RESIDENT – there is activity on the 6th floor near where I live. I reported it to the LTO and neighborhood watch. I don't feel safe. LTO is investigating at night.

SALVO RESIDENT – any word on finishing the thing in the backyard – cement for picnic tables.

SALVO RESIDENT – I run the neighborhood watch. Thank you Chairperson Carney – the meetings are running better now; I appreciate the fact that you are actually in control of these meetings compared to the way they used to be run. We appreciate the time and effort put into doing that. I thank Ms. Leiper for diligently working with Jose and the LTO in trying to streamline and get some of the problems in our building under control, there is progress going forward, some things that are changing. Thank you for working with us on all of this.

SALVO RESIDENT – thanks for the office. There is a leak on the 6th floor due to rain, maintenance came and fixed it, there is a hole in the wall for the past week and it is just covered with cardboard and it keeps falling out. I am fearful of bugs living in the wall. I don't want it getting into my apartment, maintenance and management should have known about it for the week.

SALVO RESIDENT – I am not safe here and no one is safe with me either. There should be more programs like I have been hearing, having incoming speakers. I know a lot of people that can get the ball rolling. I introduced myself to neighbors on my floor to who I am so they know there is no stranger. Get to know who your neighbors are in the building, if you don't like your neighbor try to get along, stop bashing each other be positive and move in the right direction.

FORSANDER RESIDENT – In the July meeting I mentioned the fact that the budget that started the first of July, there is something for replacing exhaust fans in Forsander. On the annual plan there is an item for just a little bit south of \$200,000.00 for doing this. When repairing something like this you have to bring it up to code, not just replacing the exhaust fans in the building, it means offering all tenants a switch they can turn on to run the exhaust fan in their bathroom and kitchen. Last month someone said yes I will get back to you but no one did. The last few days there was a power outage Thursday night about 14 hours in building K – no emergency lighting came on during the night, this is a serious code violation. I would like to hear from someone.

MCDONALD RESIDENT – Where is Jack – I heard rumors, went looking for him today to inquire about the elevator. He said they were waiting on a part and it is still down. This brings to mind accepting low bids. Constantly. We are a building of elders and disabled. I couldn't understand the accountant's presentation. The key policy is extraordinarily burdensome still. Typical focus on money instead of humanitarian issues by NHA which was really exemplified by allowing the accountant to go first. Needle exchange box is not addressing the issues at hand. Why this instead of education? You have never gotten back to me later and I have had plenty of questions. Objective secretary or scribe, good business sense. Where are these solar installations and how are they used? Not always accepting low bidders. I will wait

patiently for answers. Thanks to Danielle, she is super and very helpful to all tenants, to have her around is a blessing. Where is Jack – seems like he disappeared, wanted to ask him about the elevators.

FLORENCE HEIGHTS RESIDENT – at the last meeting someone said NHA doesn't like brown people, Hispanics and minority – and it is getting old. Let's focus on what is going on and try to fix it. Does anyone notice how many property managers are Hispanic? Most people who make racist comments are residents, not staff. I have been in the office and no one has disrespected me. I want to thank the property manager at Florence Heights, things are changing, it is getting cleaner, did a spring cleaning and tried to change the old routine and I want to thank her for that. Board members refer to the Chair- I feel some people are rude and disrespectful making faces, etc. If you don't like how she performs submit a vote and stop acting childish, people can see you guys, it is on the camera. I congratulate her for keeping things in order and leading the Board.

SALVO RESIDENT – there is a Board member that spends the whole night rolling his eyes. Security – lot of drug activity ongoing for 5 years. Neighborhood watch is ineffective. Recently myself and others were told we would be evicted if we allowed people in the building on the No Trespass List. I don't have a clue who is on the list, I don't socialize with any of those people. People are being assaulted by drug addicts that they are trying to keep out of the building. And 80-year-old man was hit in the head, a 70-year-old woman with a heart condition had her finger broken- it is appalling. You are actually expecting people in their 60's, 70's, 80's to keep 20, 30, 40, 50-year-old drug addicts out of the building by themselves, something needs to be done about it. We are told NHA can't afford security. Any guard in Mass. makes between \$16 and \$21 an hour, I am sure at 20 hours a week NHA can afford that.

FLORENCE HEIGHTS RESIDENT – in the past couple of months things have changed tremendously. Spring cleanup, things are looking cleaner. The youth playground is not safe for kids. I advocate for the youth, maybe a safer spot. Huge change with maintenance, looks cleaner, I am proud to be a resident here.

SALVO RESIDENT – I want to make sure it's said. But firstly, I want to thank the chair and the board for the opportunity to speak my lived experiences. So thanks for that, and I'd like to start out. I guess what I what I call ambassador moments. These are good things that are going on, at salvo, and, as you can hear, there are some things that are going good, not just with salvo, but I'm learning from other properties. So I really appreciate allowing tenant to speak because we're learning a lot. I'm impressed with the local tennis organization's effort to include residents to address their needs, keep them informed, and the way they communicate in good faith with NHA. I think they're doing their best, and it's good to see such a great turnout last week's LTO meeting. I'm especially impressed with the notices and the flyers and the meeting notes secretaries, really good stuff displayed appropriately throughout the build, as I mentioned. In that meeting, the enthusiasm guys and you can see it here of residents feel like they're being heard, and that they have a voice. And that's a wonderful, wonderful thing. I've listened to their concerns about the drug problems throughout the building, and the fact that somebody even alluded to it. How tenants letting people inside the place to sell drugs, and what visiting! I personally, as I told you, I haven't witnessed it myself. I've just heard it. and I I did briefly witness and heard how the NHA. Administration worked tirelessly one weekend by being on staff bit on site and interrupting, thwarting some of these ongoing issues by trespassing, and one person in particular who's been living in the building as a with a tenant for 7 years, so I'm glad someone took the time, and, you know, consistent the time to. I don't know if you want to say scout out or watch. I think that needs to happen on the regular. But and I, you know, 7 years. So 10 is seeing that something's being done about it. They're so

happy, and I'm happy for them, too. Yet I have to say to you as thrill as I am. There's also concern that I think tenants especially should be mindful of. There have been reports of tenants approaching trespass individuals which is dangerous on so many levels. Previously an elderly, resident confronted a man

who trespass was on a trespass list, and who frequently visited a tenant, and this elderly tenant was physically assaulted, quite literally hit upside the head and most recently a Resident unofficially trying to staff the doors, was verbally and physically assaulted, and I didn't know if the finger was injured or broken. But I saw the thing that it was a as a result of that from a trespass person. And I just want to emphasize the job of securing the building is not the tenants responsibility. It's the job of NHA, my job as a board member, our job as administration. That's our job. We can't. And I'm just. I. I don't want to quell the enthusiasm that's going on. But I'm saying to my fellow residents, please try not to be keystone cops of the building for your own safety also, you know, shouting at others, one person said, Get off this property. You're not supposed to be here. And then telling another person, if you do this, and da da da, you're gonna be addicted last. I knew landlords don't evict judges do, but it's setting what I'm leery of is like a bullying of tenants, and we don't want that. I'm not saying that that's happening, but that's my fear. So I just want to keep the enthusiasm going. But be mindful of your actions and reaction. like I mentioned in my April 2,020 President comments, there are reported bed bugs in the building, because it's visible with exterminators, trucks, vans, and crews. Seen throughout Salvo. Yet radio silence from officially from NHA. The Robo call that all is being well and everything's being attended to piece the safety concerns about whether it's okay to use the laundry facilities on certain floors. And where there's treatment this 1st I've heard is one building. I have an idea, but I think I don't want I heard something that's very disturbing to me. It's like there's a attitude that residents can't handle the truth because residents get so emotionally excited if they, if they know that this is going on to not tell them brings on more anxiety. Residents have a right to safety and security, including to have a bug. Please to violate bug free environment and not to do that is patronizing, paternalistic as a patronizing paternalistic practice. Where people are adults to know what's going on, they should be treated as such, especially as the mission says about the excellent standards here. I'm not asking that you name the tenant, and you know what's that Scarlet Letter, that tenant? And I'm not asking for dental records, just the spirit of transparency and consideration. Additionally, as I've said too many times to count, it still would be beneficial if all tenants on all properties receive ongoing educational training on bedbugs. Remember. they are jumping vampires, so they are hitchhiking vampires. So and that's something we should be doing on the regular, but I do have to say in seeing people here, because for 2 years I saw that exterminator van here. But I have a clue what they were, some people say, are they free for roaches? But again, silence. And I think that people need to speak out. People can handle it, especially if you let them know we're on top of this and all that kind of stuff.

Cara Leiper: Your time is up. You can finish your sentence.

Okay, thank you. Okay, I have one other thing, but I'll say, lastly, and very importantly, staff are not permitted to talk to residents about other residents. It's inappropriate violation of trust. So many rules and regulations are violated, and this should be reported.

SALVO RESIDENT - Thank you.

STAFF COMMENTS

NONE

PUBLIC COMMENT

A member of the public – 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.

Jerry Halberstat – A statement by Veronica Miranda was read by Mr. Halberstat. This emailed statement is attached as last page of the minutes.

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 ¾ 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. EOHLC 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 EOHLIC 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.

