



NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

OCTOBER MINUTES
OCTOBER 21, 2024
Approved on November 18, 2024

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, October 21, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 5:31 P.M.
Upon Roll Call, those present and absent were as follows:

PRESENT: Chairperson Carney; Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield. Vice-Chairperson Richards joined at 5:34 p.m.

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

TENANT COMMENT

SALVO RESIDENT –LTO president – had a meeting with the Executive Director over the Hatfield property. For 2 ½ hours we discussed issues with four members, we worked things out and approved the contract. The last few days there are hateful people out there after a few meetings. They are here for the health, safety and quality of life at Walter Salvo and residents in all NHA neighborhoods and want to help get the LTO's going, to not get involved in the bullying and hatefulness and it has to stop. I am not going to be involved in it. We are going to bring in some outside people for some medical and other things, health and safety for the people.

SALVO LTO Vice President – Salvo LTO is working on the health, safety and quality of life for Salvo residents and we are going to work with the Executive Director and the Board to try to better the situation for people.

SALVO RESIDENT – LTO president – We thank you for your support and we will continue to look for your support.


SALVO RESIDENT – I was never in favor of the LTO. Several residents tell me what is going on at Salvo. Cara and the rest need to work together. I told Cara before she is taking on too much with the other Housing Authorities. Cara, people will work with you if you work with them, not fight against them. I am now in favor of the LTO, I am going to listen to what the tenants have to say.

MCDONALD RESIDENT – We are forming an LTO. Gardens – some people find it easy to come and take plants or dirt or whatever. Thanks for letting us garden, if people want to garden we are willing to help, we don't need to steal from each other.

FLORENCE HEIGHTS RESIDENT – I complained about an issue in February and I had to move. A lot of residents are suffering from mental health and addiction. One of the people responsible for bullying is still in the chair and nothing was done and is still doing it. What is going to be done? People can relapse because of bullying. This is serious. Sit down and see how you can solve this problem the witch hunting has been going on for over a year. People on the Board who is doing this too.

SALVO RESIDENT – listening to the comments I can say I have been subjected to a bunch of this spiteful, hateful and bully type of mentality as well. When you have meetings everybody needs to have rules to follow and it needs to be clearly defined how a meeting will be followed and whether or not people can interrupt. As long as they have the leadership providing those clear definitions of a meeting

49 Old South Street, Suite 1 • Northampton, MA • 01060

T 413-584-4030 • F 413-582-1350 • TDD 711 • 

that will help tremendously. Sometimes residents get so involved and they get so passionate about their ideas but their ideas may not be good for everyone, but the LTO's are there for everyone to help. The hardest thing with the neighborhood watch even, is working with residents and getting people to agree to disagree and try to move forward with a good resolution. I hate to see the LTO has been bullied, these gentleman leading the LTO are trying to do their best to do the right thing and there are rules that have to be followed, they are trying to work with NHA just like the neighborhood watch has done for a long time now. As long as we work together things are going to be ok. I thank you for working with the LTO because that is what is going to make this a successful LTO, is being able to communicate with each other and working together. Thank you Executive Director, we appreciate you working with them. I hope the Board is listening to this information about bullying, this stuff is very real, and it is also retaliation. At Salvo there are 192 apartments, that is a lot of people to get along with. Some people think they have lived here long enough and they don't have to follow rules. Jose has worked really hard at holding people accountable for lease violations, he doing his job too. I have seen changes with neighborhood watch involved when they bring things to NHA's attention, they address those problems. I believe the cohesiveness between LTO, neighborhood watch and NHA is working.

SALVO RESIDENT – I need to be able to use other than my personal email but an office email or an LTO email so I can be a fully participating member. On October 3rd I completed all my requirements for the Mass NAHRO board certification. Professional relationships – staff and residents and their relationships and the boundaries we have to maintain, some stuff can be seen as a conflict of interest and can be reported to the State Ethics Commission. I think the Board should consider this. Housing tenants conference – they said management agreement where the LTO is involved which is a great thing, the PHN from EOHLC says it should also include tenants. I have been supportive of LTO's but I object to a staff member telling tenants about other tenants and I haven't seen the Board address that. Collaborative Resource Group in Greenfield – free to tenants. Need a robocall to let people know they are ok and safe, need a security officer here. Last night I saw 3 trespass people come into the building, it is not the tenants' responsibility. Money and resources for that should be prioritized. There was a licensed therapist here about a decade ago – it is clearly needed. I thank the property manager and everybody else involved by us being awaked by yelling and moaning and screaming it is really disturbing. Get a licensed therapist here, we have Smith College with a social work department, they can come in and help, why are we dealing with this, this is not a warehouse for people with their issues, there are remedies and it should be of importance.

STAFF COMMENT

Wanda – Property Manager – I am fairly new to NHA and I have been on every Board meeting and I take notes. Doing property management for a long time I am seasoned with the demographic of residents that we have the pleasure to service. Us managers are also being bullied. We are working very hard sometimes until late at night to make sure we do the best we can for our residents. I myself have been a target or spoken to in a condescending manor – not even in one of my buildings – talking behind my back. It is so hard for a manager to really dig their heels in and do what needs to be done in order to make your communities an enjoyable place to live when we are constantly dealing with resident issues and bullying or several residents coming to us saying a certain resident is saying this or that. If the bullying were to stop and the passive aggressiveness that I have witnessed here at this Board meeting, which is out of control, if we all work together we would be able to accomplish so much more. Every manager that I have worked together with in the Housing Authority including the ED, we have worked tireless hours to try to make a difference here. All I see is us getting yelled at and bullied. The passive aggressiveness and underhanded comments and we can't work that way. We are here to make a difference. Nobody has addressed the bullying that the managers and the ED has to endure.

PUBLIC COMMENT

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION

TO REVIEW HATFIELD MANAGEMENT 3 YEAR CONTRACT RENEWAL

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney, Vice-Chairperson Richards, Commissioner Brooks, Commissioner Jones and Commissioner Cancel.

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

MOTION

TO RECOGNIZE CHAIRPERSON ALEX MALINOWSKI FROM THE HATFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY

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

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Cara Leiper gave an overview of the contract. We started with 6 months with NHA as of May 29, 2024 and this contract ends at the end of November. At the August Board meeting we were asked to extend the contract. I have met with the LTO's and how we are handling things. Both LTO's wrote letters of support.

Alex Malinowski – Hatfield Board Chair – I have been with the Hatfield Housing Authority Board for about 7 – 8 years. My grandfather started the Housing Authority who is now 82 years old. Mr. Malinowski spoke about his background and why he became a member.

I hope I can get your support and let Northampton Housing Authority keep us under your wing.

QUESTIONS

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – how many other Housing Authorities were taken into consideration to take this part time position?

Alex Malinowski – only one and they didn't present themselves well. Your people came in and were very polite right off the bat. Northampton did it best and they are keeping their word on everything they have said.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – our Executive Director was not part of that presentation she was out on leave – who did the presenting?

Alex Malinowski – Brenna, the Hatfield ED told him that Cara was on leave and the presentation was by 3 people.

Chairperson Carney – Jack and Sharon presented to us as a Board, they identified themselves as being the folks who made the presentation.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I have a concern as a tenant – I can't understand why EOHLC did not prepare for that, why wait until the Director leaves? Was the effort to get more people out there

to know there was a position available – did you broaden your search? How is this going to help tenants in Salvo House who need help with the rest of the properties?

Alex Malinowski – for us it is a small Housing Authority – 44 units. For us to hire an ED part time, we don't have the funds necessarily for that. For Northampton to come in to help it is not going to affect anything with you, it is more of just a guidance for us. On broadening our horizons on the ED search, it was a last minute decision by our ED on what she had to do. It wasn't like we had six months to find an ED, it was a tight situation for us and the State recommended Northampton and another Housing Authority and we ended up going with Northampton.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I just don't see how it is going to help residents here and for that reason as a Board Commissioner I am going to vote no and I wish you all the best. I have a problem with one person doing too much.

Vice-Chairperson Richards – Can you tell us Alex, what kind of staff you have and what they do?

Alex Malinowski – one maintenance man, Vince. We hire a plow company and Vince does any maintenance he can keep up on. He is very talented with what he does, he does anything we ask him to do.

Cara Leiper – Marilyn, the State has RCAT that handles the capital projects with Pete Doppman. Sharon does the financial part. I did help put the presentation together with my team. Deb Dunphy Smith is there two days a week, and wants to go back to one day a week. I will have a property manager there one day a week and we will work through those details.

Commissioner Jones – I really think Marilyn kind of stole my thunder where I was going because it was a question on how maintenance is getting done. How many actual hours a month would be devoted to this, it does not seem like it is a huge lift.

Cara Leiper – Deb 7 ½ hours a week, Sharon equally that, Pete maybe four and myself and supportive staff maybe one day but these are all done around the Northampton Housing Authority except for Deb who is retired.

Jones – so these are monthly numbers?

Cara Leiper – yes, except for Deb. They have one Board meeting a month at 6:30 so it doesn't affect NHA hours. We will have a property manager do office hours one day a week, so Deb is not having to come out of retirement, it will depend on whether we continue this on a long term basis or not.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I thank my esteemed colleagues about maintenance. Another concern we are still on an audit and we haven't had that cleared. One of the items was because of lack of staff and high absenteeism. NHA wasn't able to upload that vital information. If you don't have the staff and time for this agency, that is my problem with going somewhere else. How much will the ED be making from this and with all the management agreements we have, what is her salary? I don't see how it trickles down to us.

Cara Leiper – we had our PMR on Thursday. I don't have the official rating yet but the State said we did a very good job and they indicated that they were closing the AUP findings because we gave them everything they asked for and then some. The salary is \$43,200.00, any Executive Director there gets 20%, that is how the State works it. Deb gets paid and Sharon gets a small portion and the rest goes into the general fund for the Housing Authority and that is true of all of the contracts.

Chairperson Carney – it is really determined by State regulation in terms of what amount of money the contract is for and how that is broken up.

Cara Leiper – just like an Executive Director contract, a management agreement for a Housing Authority is also a formulary amount based upon EOHLC's form and entry of numbers and they drive all of that.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – how much are you making on a gross level per year?

Chairperson Carney – can you generate an answer, take some time for Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield and you can send it to her directly. She can make comment to that during next month's meeting. Print it out and give it to her.

Vice-Chairperson Richards – I guess what stands out for me, I feel Hatfield is our closest neighbor, we are under one congressional district and they are tiny and I would be inclined to help them out.

Chairperson Carney – having been in City government we have had to rely a lot on many different departments for mutual aid. Our state represents Northampton and Hatfield. This was supported initially by State Representative Sabadosa as well as Senator Comerford. Because we have done a great job from what I hear, that we have been appreciated by Housing Authorities. I do want to express my strong support for this three-year contract.

Alex Malinowski – thank you for having me here and being able to help us out for the next three years. Hopefully we will talk soon.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

Cara read the report with updates.

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 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 September 2024 minutes.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DISCUSSION

STATUS OF FY2023 AUP ACTION PLAN

Cara Leiper – Carolina said Friday she would send me an email. I will reach out to her saying it is closed. She verbally did tell me she has everything and the Board should consider the matter closed.

MOTION

ADOPT REVISED BYLAWS UPON POSITIVE RECOMMENDATION OF GOVERNANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE.

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: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the motion.

Chairperson Carney – there were two separate meetings. Attorney Jeff Driscoll, Attorney O'Connor, myself, Commissioner Cancel and also Vice-Chairperson Richards was asked to give an historical perspective on some of these. She clarified a few other items re: the bylaw packet given to Commissioners. We discussed creating a separate document that expresses our mission and our vision. Something the whole Board can work on in the future.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – thank you for the information and thank you, Chair for suggesting the Board be a part of this. I look forward to being a part of the updating of the mission.

Chairperson Carney – I want to point out to the Board the reason we double posted it as both that committee meeting and a full NHA meeting. The intention has always been that people could participate, in fact members of the public participated and provided input and it was a working group that was very inclusive. I am so sorry Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield that you misunderstood that or did not hear it. It was in writing and also spoken. Hopefully, you will continue to participate at our next governance and policy committee should you have anything that particularly interests you and join in as always.
Cara Leiper – correction on page 6 – needs to occur with a date, it needs to be changed to today's date.

Commissioner Cancel put forth an amendment to the bylaws adding today's date seconded by Commissioner Jones.
All were in favor, none opposed.

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION

APPROVE APPLICATION & CERTIFICATE FOR PAYMENT # 3 FOR FISH # 214121 FOR \$34,169.60

Commissioner Jones 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: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Cara Leiper – this is for the 24" electric stove replacement phase 2 & 3 by Summer Electric signed off by Tom Boyer, construction advisor from EOHLC on 9/24/24.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield put forth the motion to adjourn the October 21, 2024 meeting at 7:13 p.m. seconded by Commissioner Brooks. All were in favor.