



# NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

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FEBRUARY MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 24, 2025  
Approved on March 17, 2025

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, February 24, 2025 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; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Jones; Commissioner Healey & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield who joined the meeting at 5:51 p.m.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cara Leiper; Sharon Kimble; Doug Kierdorf; Al Chagnon; Michael Edwards; Angela Santaniello & Sandra Torrence.

Chairperson Carney – Vice-Chairperson Richards is leaving the Northampton Housing Authority Board effective December 2024. We have a new commissioner replacing Marilyn and that is Patty Healey.

Commissioner Healey introduced herself and thanked Mayor Sciarra and the City Council for onboarding very quickly so we could get a quorum soon.

Chairperson Carney – just for tonight I am suspending the public comment session because there are some items that we need to have clarification on regarding public comment. I need advice from the Housing Authority Attorney.

## LTO COMMENT

Doug Kierdorf – Forsander LTO President. The tenant association board had a meeting with the Executive Director and went over important items. We looked at the Capital Improvement Plan. It is still up in the air on buzzers and ventilation. When is this going to happen? Our new property manager is now on board.

Salvo LTO – no comments but a tenant would like to speak.

Salvo Tenant – The public comment is suspended – who takes responsibility for this decision and why was this decision made to shut off public commentary at a public meeting? I would like an answer by next meeting. I looked up the bylaws and any deliberation outside a meeting is invalid. It is against the bylaws – there had to be some kind of deliberation to arrive at this decision, otherwise it was done by one person – either way it is not democratic, it is illegal and I would like some answers.

Chairperson Carney – thank you and I can promise you we can give you answers to this question at the March meeting. I appreciate your comment.

## PUBLIC COMMENT – SUSPENDED

## APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 2024 REGULAR MINUTES

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

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VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Commissioner Brooks & Commissioner Jones.

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSENT: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Healey.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the December 2024 minutes.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

Cara Leiper read the report with updates.

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

### NEW BUSINESS

#### MOTION

#### ACCEPT 2<sup>ND</sup> QUARTER (DECEMBER) FINANCIALS AS PREPARED BY FEE ACCOUNTANT

#### GARY DEPACE

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Healey.

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Gary DePace explained to the new commissioner that our fiscal year starts July 1<sup>st</sup> and ends June 30<sup>th</sup>.

These reports you are approving are 6 month financial statements. The budget is approved by Boston.

We are at 39.91 % of our annual non-utility expense level. That compares to 50% completion of our year.

Cara can now implement the expenditures that the budget approved. This is for our State programs – 400, 689 and MRVP. Cara then explained the projects.

**Chairperson Carney** – State has numbers they assign to different programs. We have small dwelling units also. Commissioner Healey if you have questions just ask.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – I did not get my packet hand delivered. Gary thank you for coming and sharing your information with me. Question – the records you have – how would you be able to factor in things for example if someone has been getting a percentage off their rent, would that factor anywhere or if someone is getting a reasonable accommodation at a high price? Would that be shown on the ledgers you have and how can we detect that? I am thinking of Chelsea Housing Authority how the records were really great but behind that there was a lot of chaos and inaccuracies there. I need specificity and time to go through these things because things can be presented but it doesn't mean they are actually accurate so I need help from you with that.

**Gary DePace** – accuracy comes from the internal works of the Housing Authority. I compile the information from those records to present the financial statements. I create them and they are then audited by our auditors. If there are discrepancies, they show up through audit findings. I don't believe we have had any audit findings. To be determining individual rents is based upon regulation and those are tested through audits.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – I have asked you this before but I have never seen a warrant so I don't have this information and from the training I got with the office of the Inspector General they are saying I should be. As a Board we should be able to go through these and check and counter check the information that has been provided and I am always saying we don't have it provided. This can be presented and you get it from the LHA that you have and you want to trust the information that has been provided, that is where my problem is. I want to respect the directive of Ben Stone. There are some

records that don't make sense. Maybe we should get the state auditor to come in and look at these records.

**Gary DePace** – we have an audit. It is done annually.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – I called Diane and she said it would take about a year. Some tenants from 2019 have been getting \$100.00 off their rent but it doesn't show. How can you reconcile monthly rent? There may be other things going on. I have low confidence on that information being presented and it is not accurate and I hate to say the word “cooked.”

**Commissioner Jones** – the point Gary made about auditing – that is the same practice that my own place of employment, my union follows. We have required annual audits by an independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party and discrepancies are brought forward if any and the Housing Authority is basically following the same procedure. The person doing the audit is not a regular staff member of the Authority. They are a hired out independent contractor on an annual basis. The function of the Board is to ensure that to the best of their ability that is getting done. Chelsea – part of the problem among other things is Board members were paying themselves \$20,000.00 a year, we don't have that here – it is not even a fair comparison.

**Commissioner Healey** – this is my first meeting – let me understand the question posed – is it that when there is a monthly meeting with a monthly budget presented – I understand we have it audited and I have faith in audits, I was on the Mass. Nurses Assoc. Board for many years and relied on the auditors to turn up problems. Is it that Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield would like to see the specifics of the entire budget – is that something the Board does?

**Chairperson Carney** – questions or comments are directed through the Chair. Commissioner Healey more of a comment than a question – these are quarterly reports and audits that we are hearing from Gary DePace. We have a commissioner that serves as Treasurer and all financials are done through the administrative office. It sounds like Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield would like specifics on expenses and revenue and has one particular question.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – usually the Board of LHA's has access to warrants – that monthly board members can look at and we are in charge of procurement. In the 4 years I have been here, I have asked to see this. Whether we have an investigation or not I think Ben Stone head of EOHLC has asked for an investigation. Something isn't copacetic and doesn't add up. I have never been able to see, look and go through the issues with the budget. I praise Gary for sending out information and training us. The reason I say no is because I do not trust the person who is making the figures, the organization, I don't trust our Board to do the right thing, we have not done it. Is the Healey person – is the Governor here?

**Commissioner Healey** – I wish I was the Governor, but I am not.

**Chairperson Carney** – Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – we did have an introduction for Commissioner Healey before you arrived. Commissioner Healey is a new board member replacing Vice-Chairperson Richards who did not know in December she had to leave Northampton. Fortunately, we were lucky to find Commissioner Healey to serve the remainder of Vice-Chairperson Richard's seat.

**Commissioner Brooks** – as the treasurer of the board I go through checks that are passed through Cara's people every week. The night before last it took me 6 ½ hours to go through last month's checks. The clerics who work for Cara Leiper, and I have worked in business for 25 years; I have never seen a better staff anywhere – that is my personal response.

**Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield** – the investigation from Ben Stone is talking about financial items so I don't think this is just out of here and we are supposed to be dealing with that.

**MOTION**  
**TO APPROVE CHANGE ORDER FOR FISH # 214126-01 – HAMPSHIRE HEIGHTS WINDOW PROJECT.**

Commissioner Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Healey.  
VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Healey.

VOTING NAY: NONE.

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Cara Leiper – we are receiving a credit of \$19,890.96 from Nena Construction for window detail change at Hampshire heights resulting from the installation method and exterior trim changes. The original pricing did not have the new trim item, trimming and existing siding removal means and methods in question removed from the scope but no credit was provided. This is funded by EOHLC and this allows the credit to go back to the State.

\*\*\* Chairperson Carney and Cara Leiper explained the process of change orders.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – who is the vendor for this?

Chairperson Carney – the contractor is Nena Construction.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I am happy to see Hampshire Heights getting some attention. I do appreciate that this is happening with those Hampshire Heights families. I abstain because I did not get the information in hand.

Cara Leiper – the State chooses the contractors, architects and designers, we have no control over any of that, only to approve to accept or reject the free projects.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I am concerned with the vendors and their relationship with tenants. If it is not the administration who is getting these vendors who is getting these vendors and I am very concerned.

Commissioner Brooks – Hampshire Heights is one of the oldest projects in Northampton. The reason for the change order is we are trying to save money for the State by making cuts to the old things that are up. We save money for the State and the State gives us money in return – that is part of the deal.

Chairperson Carney – Commissioner Healey for decades' water has been an issue at Hampshire Heights and we have never selected that particular area for any sort of housing or development. For years there have been serious problems with the water table in the basements. Most of that is being addressed now by an investment by the State. The State is highly invested in trying to help us mitigate the water problems.

Commissioner Brooks – a history of Jackson Street – it was created post World War 2 and very little land grants were left in downtown Northampton to create new public housing. They decided to put it up on top of a bog. At one time that land was a pre-historic lake and in the spring was all under water that stretched from King Street to the center of Florence.

Chairperson Carney – so many issues with water up Bridge Road and up to Fitzgerald Lake – very wet.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – thank you Commissioner Brooks for the history lesson. Thank you Chairperson Carney for bringing up the history thing because I think you were a Councilor when some of these issues were coming up. We are talking decades' people have been going through this. Is it this population that we are dealing with that we don't put the priority on that, this needed to be done. If it is getting done, fine, but I still have some issues, so I will abstain.

#### MOTION

#### TO APPROVE CHANGE ORDER FOR FISH #214126-02 – HAMPSHIRE HEIGHTS WINDOW PROJECT.

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Healey.

VOTING NAY: NONE.

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Cara Leiper – change order in the amount of \$16,865.29 for Nena Construction. The reason is charges and credits resulting from field changes for the bathroom window demolition and installation.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – is this one facility bathroom window or was it more than one they had to demolish?

Cara Leiper – they did windows at the entire property.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – every bathroom window at Hampshire Heights got their bathroom diminished and new windows installed – is that what you are saying?

Cara Leiper – the entire property received new windows.

### MOTION

#### APPROVE CHANGE ORDER FOR FISH #214126-03 – HAMPSHIRE HEIGHTS WINDOW PROJECT

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Healey.

VOTING NAY: NONE.

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Cara Leiper - cost of \$14,697.75 for attic stock sashes – each attic requires 3 windows of each kind so they had to purchase these windows.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I do appreciate people want to mitigate some of these damages. What about damages to tenants apartments, medical stuff for the children? Is that factored in? People had to move furniture, etc. I don't think we ever talked to these people, or the Board as a whole even looked into it. What about what happens if there is a surplus? I wouldn't want that to be used somewhere else involved in this. It is all a little murky.

### MOTION

#### APPROVE CHANGE ORDER FOR FISH #214126-04 – HAMPSHIRE HEIGHTS WINDOW PROJECT

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Healey.

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Cara Leiper – this is for asbestos abatement - a credit in the amount of \$91,650.64 resulting from the reduction in the abatement scope for Batiste Environmental. \$84,744.00 for deletions, \$4,237.20 for 5% profit and \$2669.44 for 3% performance and payment bonds.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – the issue of the water in the basement isn't restricted to Hampshire Heights. I am glad we are on the trajectory to getting these things done. We have had problems with contractors and residents, I hope they are getting vetted, that is my concern. We need to take care of our residents. Take care of property yes, but also the people.

Chairperson Carney – this is funded entirely by the State and these funds go right back to the State for the savings that were incurred for this particular one, the environmental abatement.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Healey put forth the motion to adjourn the February 24, 2025 meeting at 6:33 p.m. seconded by Commissioner Brooks. All were in favor.