

STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
NEWTON HOUSING AUTHORITY  
32 Liberty Street  
Newton, New Jersey 07960

JUNE 28, 2021

(This is a condensed version of taped minutes of the Regularly Scheduled Monthly Meeting of Newton Housing Authority Commencing at 5:00 P.M.)

**ROLL CALL:**

Present: Chairperson Maria Fiedorczyk  
Vice-Chairman Richard Bitondo  
Commissioner William Nannery  
Commissioner Keith Keoppel

Excused: Commissioner Richard Turdo

Also Present:  
Acting Executive Director William F. Snyder  
Deborah Alvarez, Secretary/Transcriber

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT**

"Adequate notice of the meeting has been provided by the filing of a revised annual meeting notice with Municipal Court, Municipal Clerk posted on the official bulletin board and delivery of same to the Herald News and Star-Ledger on June 23, 2021. The New Jersey Open Public Meeting Law was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interest is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Newton Housing Authority has caused notice of the meeting to be advertised by having the date, time and place posted on the Newton Housing Authority website.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING – MAY 2021**

Commissioner Bitondo had a question regarding discussion about termination clause in Executech contract. Has it been fully resolved? His question is in regards to 7B. If there were a reason for NHA to terminate services; there's a 30-day notice, but if you wanted to sever ties, it's only 10 days. Didn't NHA decide to make them equal – 30 days in both cases, as 10 days wouldn't be enough time. Not sure if clearly identified in minutes. Even though it isn't part of the contract, is there an evaluation requirement.

ED Snyder answered there is for an employee; never saw one for a contractor, not that you couldn't do one. Usually State requirements for an evaluation for an ED are only if you have an employment contract, but if Board wants to do that, it's okay.

Motion to modify Agreement between Newton Housing Authority and Executech for provision of part-time Executive Director services, specifically **Termination Clause, Item 7B**, so that there be 30 days instead of 10 days notice if agreement is severed by Executech made by Commissioner Bitondo; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Keoppel.

ROLL CALL:	Chairperson Fiedorczyk	Yes
	Commissioner Bitondo	Yes
	Commissioner Nannery	Yes
	Commissioner Keoppel	Yes

Motion to approve May 2021 minutes with changes to Executech contract on Page 4 made by Chairperson Fiedorczyk; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Nannery.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)                      Excused: Turdo

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT**

ED Snyder welcomed everyone and introduced himself, although many residents met during recertification process. Perhaps in September the Staff, ED Snyder and Board members will meet with residents to go over some items he normally discusses when taking over a housing authority. Some things came up during recertification that tenants were unaware of or never told. It will then make it more comfortable and easier for recertification in 2022.

Mr. Snyder gave some background: doing housing authority work 45 years; Executive Director at 7 different housing authorities in New Jersey; dealt with many issues about aging in place. He has a whole program he deals with for people in elderly buildings; dealt with problems with gangs. He's worked in Newark, Paterson, Asbury Park, for example. Board brought him in January 1<sup>st</sup>. Phillipsburg Housing Authority was here before that. I've been here almost six months. Much of my time has been in bringing things up to speed: maintenance issues and recertification, which we just finished. I'm here on Wednesday's. Board is considering bringing someone into the office to handle other things when I'm not here.

ED Snyder drafted resolution about hiring office help. Transfer policy – since being here, Mr. Snyder received several requests to transfer apartments. Usually in an elderly building, people want to move from studio to 1-bedroom, which creates problems for housing authority. On tonight's agenda are proposed revisions for Board's discussion. Anyone who is here asking for a transfer, right now we are not transferring anyone because when he got here, that was the policy. We are trying to make it fair for people that do need to transfer, but the same time, not playing musical chairs as it gets expensive doing that.

Income recertifications just finished. There were more than 80, because there are vacant apartments; had to recertify people moving in.

ED Snyder has drafted a job description for part-time administrative assistance.

In tonight's agenda, is a proposal from copy company that has copy machine, which is antiquated and one of his issues since coming here, constantly breaking down, slow.

Telephone: some tenants might know this, but when ED Snyder goes to answer telephone, he has to go outside as there is no phone in his office. Phone needed and host of things for Board to know. We get complaints that calls still going to Phillipsburg. Joan was in office when ED Snyder spent an hour – which is more than 1 time with phone company. He's had no success and will research and get it done.

Mr. Snyder has noticed there are a lot of drain clogs in apartments – either bathroom or kitchen. Roto Rooter has come, gave him proposal to go on roof, use water jet, snake out all bad lines from roof down to ground as they feel it's blocked up. In older buildings, he's gone on roofs with a camera and gone down seeing all the fat that's gone down and are totally blocked up. It might not be in tenant's apartment, but in actual line itself. Doesn't need to be done right now, but has a proposal to show what it will cost. Cost is \$5,350. ED Snyder thinks it's a good idea to get it done.

Financial Report: We received that and Board members can see NHA is above in certain areas on expenses, but overall ahead of what we proposed in terms of reserves at this point in time re: revenue over our expenses. This is through April 30<sup>th</sup> – projected increase in net restricted assets was \$48,000 and we budgeted \$37,000. Some of Mr. Snyder's expenses on last 2-3 invoices are higher than what they would be normally because inspections were in there, tenant recertifications and will trend down and be much less than what actually budgeted in our contract.

Commissioner Bitondo asked about copier cost and could NHA get a lease on it. ED Snyder said NHA should get proposals for that. The proposal includes a lease. Commissioner Bitondo added purchase price is \$2,995 and 60-month lease - \$56.40. 48 month lease is \$74.40/month. ED Snyder said he would get 2 more proposals. A big machine is not needed; agenda and minutes are about 10 pages.

Chairperson Fiedorczyk asked if NHA has a QPA. Could NHA tap into Newton's QPA? ED Snyder said he's a CFO; was a QPA but let his license expire. Mr. Snyder said using Newton's QPA would be beneficial; proposals are needed when it's 15% below bid limit; bid limit is 17-5 and for QPA it's over \$40,000. Tom Russo, Town Manager, was suggested by Commissioner Bitondo. NHA doesn't purchase much, but would give NHA freedom. ED Snyder asked to be put in touch with someone for consideration; some sort of resolution needed and QPA might want to get paid. Commissioner Bitondo said Terry is Deputy Manager and asked ED Snyder if he has spoken with Terry. Mr. Snyder said yes and will speak with her.

Commissioner Bitondo asked if this would be a good time to highlight transfer policy. ED Snyder answered Board is considering an amendment to "Transfer Policy" regarding tenant transfer from apartment to apartment. That policy is contained in "Admission Continued Occupancy Policy" which is a big policy here at NHA that HUD requires, that specifies everything: how do you get on waiting list; how NHA recertifies your income; you name it's in there; number of people that can live in apartments by size. One item is **transfer policy**. Board and ED Snyder are considering resolution on Transfer Policy Changes, which have been discussed over past several months. Those changes are as follows:

1. In order to be eligible for a transfer, you would have to live here a minimum of 2 years before you can request a **Transfer for Convenience** or I just want another apartment. Reason is: NHA has 1-bedrooms and studios. If you're on waiting list and you get in, it's usually easier to get a studio, as many people turn them down, wanting a 1-bedroom. We don't want people to come in on a studio and next day, say by the way, I want a transfer to a 1-bedroom because technically then they're jumping waiting list. There's a 2 year limit; some housing authorities have 5 year limit.
2. Resident that's moving to new unit – old unit has to pass inspection to make sure that unit meets our standards. A complex owner won't allow someone to transfer who left the unit in very bad condition – holes in the wall or clutter, fire hazards – you need to pass inspection to be even eligible to move to another unit,
3. Have to be in good standing, no lease violations, rent up-to-date before you are considered.
4. Limit of 1 transfer per every 4 vacant units. Reason is right now we have 6. If we had 6 transfers, that's 12 apartments NHA has to turn over and it's a major burden. Your current policy requires that you have a transfer list. ED Snyder has had several residents come to him with letters. He has them that are dated. If this is approved, he will go back and formally start a list and people will be on list and offered a transfer – 1 every 4 apartments that become available.
5. Resident who is moving will be responsible for all costs of transferring – unit painting and cleaning. If apartment is available and someone moving, now NHA paying for cost of painting/cleaning 2 units. Most places require if tenant wants transfer, they have to move – this is only for "convenience". These aren't medically related or emergency transfer. Emergency transfer is where there is a major leak and housing authority rule is we have to move you out of there. In that case, it's a totally different type of transfer. NHA would pay for all expenses on that as it's something we're doing. Tenant only entitled to one Transfer of Convenience during your stay here.

If Board decides to pass this tonight, NHA is required by HUD Standards to actually notify all residents telling them they have 45 days in which to comment on this. Those comments will be taken to the Board and becomes effective at end of 45 days, but would notify you what comments are as sometimes a resident comes forward and maybe something was missed or not thought of – hey, that should be included.

## OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Bitondo asked about RFP for a non or streamline conversion. ED Snyder has held off doing that because – and he's recommending this around the State as he also runs the State (inaudible) Housing Authority Association. In June Congress has been discussing the Infrastructure Bill. In this Bill there is as much as \$50,000/unit for public housing in Capital Fund Program. ED Snyder thinks NHA should hang tight to see what they do with that, as NHA would want to take advantage of it. If it comes through, NHA might not need streamline conversion; take advantage of that to do all repairs, which is \$4 million to put into the building. After we see where that's going, then go back to streamline conversion, because long term plan still is – as long as that's out there. With streamline conversion you have additional cash flow, you take a loan. NHA is paying that back from cash flow from rents. If government gives NHA \$4 million, a loan would be minimal. Now you add cash flow to bottom line, put in bank for future long-term planning.

ED Snyder can do streamline conversion, if you want, but you might want to wait until after summer to see where this Administration and the number for housing authorities is \$800 million and the Bill going well over \$1.4 trillion, which included all of this capital fund money. Even with NYC, there's just over 1 million public housing units, equating to \$50,000/unit. Mr. Snyder will let Board know at next meeting if it looks like NHA will get any money.

Commissioner Bitondo asked if tonight is meeting where two Commissioners for NHA will be appointed by Town Council. Chairperson Fiedorczyk said yes, and they should be here at next meeting, needing to be sworn in. Commissioner Bitondo said Wendy Vandermoss and Karen Crossly are two women. Mr. Snyder will reach out to them regarding training, etc. There is 1 opening for a Resident Commissioner. Chairperson Fiedorczyk informed the audience Rick Turdo had a stroke; older man that would come with Paul. Now in rehab, but incapacitated; it is not known if he will return to NHA. Both ladies will go for training; they have worked with elderly. Wendy active at Homestead where her mother was a resident for many years. Karen lives next door.

Commissioner Bitondo suggested an edible arrangement be sent to Mr. Turdo as he did attend meetings here, coming from Phillipsburg, and on zoom, helping NHA tremendously. ED Snyder will take care of it.

Chairperson Fiedorczyk asked where calls are going re: answering service. ED Snyder answered they go to answering service, then to maintenance man. Phone number when you call general office number and don't get anyone, it states hit a number and sends call to Phillipsburg. Commissioner Bitondo asked if NHA could cancel that. Chairperson Fiedorczyk asked isn't it just a program in the phone. ED Snyder said Century Link is very difficult to work with. Chairperson Fiedorczyk dealt with them for 6 weeks attempting to get something changed from Newton to Branchburg. ED Snyder said now that recertification is completed, he can devote more time to Century Link.

Commissioner Bitondo wondered if old number could be canceled and get a new one. New number could be republished on web site.

Air conditioners are all installed that need to be installed. Chairperson Fiedorczyk added money used to be taken directly out of tenants' accounts for air-conditioners, but this year checks had to be written or money orders. Tenants said money order inconvenient, especially if tenant doesn't have a car or checking account. ED Snyder will do something different next year. Discussion included many suggestions. If you paid for the service in full, you got a discount.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **PART-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

Chairperson Fiedorczyk asked ED Snyder if he wrote job description. Commissioner Bitondo said it is very detailed and comprehensive. Discussion was for person to be in office 4-5 hours a day, but under 30 hours so no medical or pension. Person would be hired by Executech, so no involvement with pension. If hours under 29, then no health benefits. There would be sick time and vacation time -- .033 for hour of work. Payroll service would do all that.

ED Snyder asked where Board would suggest he advertise. He has an account with INDEED.COM and has been successful. ZIP Recruiter was also suggested. There is a form that goes with resume thanking applicant. Please refer someone if you know anyone interested. He will send Board a link so they can keep informed. ED Snyder suggested to set up a Personnel Committee. Chairperson Fiedorczyk said there is one, but they never meet. It hasn't been updated in a while. Salary per hour \$15 going to \$20 during a probationary period. Hours will be worked out as Joan and (inaudible) in the office at certain times. Commissioner Keoppel inquired if Project Self-Sufficiency might be a source.

Commissioner Bitondo asked about computer skills – would we be specific; someone with PHA Web database software: inventory software, spreadsheet software, work processing software – Excel, Publisher, Power Point, Word. Mr. Snyder said they should be capable of being trained; PHA Web is excellent software company. Discussion: starting hourly rate - \$15 for probationary period. Change 1-3 months to successful relevant experience and/or training.

Motion to approve job description with changes, as discussed, for ED Snyder to begin advertising for Administrative Assistant position, particularly in education, experience areas and computer skills made by Chairperson Fiedorczyk; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Bitondo.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Excused: Turdo.

## **PAYMENT OF CLAIMS**

ED Snyder explained form is different, as he was using spreadsheet having a great deal of difficulty. Now it goes into PHA Web accounting software; he approves bills before checks are written; once approved, he prints it out so Commissioners know nothing can be added or deleted. There were no questions or comments.

**RESOLUTION #2021-9 – APPROVAL OF BILL LIST FOR MONTH OF APRIL 2021**

WHEREAS, in the course of administering the operations of the Newton Housing Authority expenses are incurred; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to pay invoices monthly after being presented to the Board of Commissioners; NOW THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Newton Housing Authority, as follows:

1. That the attached list of bills for May 2021 in the amount of \$47,404.61 be approved for payment.
2. That the proper officers of the Authority be authorized to pay all items on the list of invoices.
3. That this Resolution shall take effect immediately.

Motion to approve payment of bills made by Commissioner Nannery; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Keoppel.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Excused: Turdo

**RESOLUTION #2021-10 – TRANSFER POLICY REVISIONS**

Chairperson Fiedorczyk noted it will become effective after resident notification and 45 day comment period. She asked if Commissioners were comfortable with changes and updates made to transfer. Commissioner Bitondo said 45 days will allow tenants to comment, read and repeat of key points that ED Snyder addressed.

(At this point in the meeting, Commissioner Bitondo read proposed Transfer Policy Revisions Resolution #2021-10 to those present:

WHEREAS, the Newton Housing Authority administers an 80-unit public housing project at 32 Liberty Street, Newton, New Jersey (Liberty Towers) and

WHEREAS, the Newton Housing Authority is required to adopt an admission and continued occupancy policy, which has been submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development for approval on August 15, 2017, and

WHEREAS, the ACOP (Admission & Continued Occupancy Policy acronym) has provisions for residents to transfer between apartment in Chapter 12 of the policy and

WHEREAS, the Housing Authority has been holding back, making resident request transfers due to COVID-19 and additional administrative burden and expense associated with transfers and

WHEREAS, several residents have inquired about making a transfer to a different unit for their convenience and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners have requested the Executive Director to suggest revisions to the Transfer Policy to make administratively simple, fair, equitable and cost effective to the Housing Authority and

WHEREAS, the Executive Director has proposed several revisions to the Transfer Policy for their consideration;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Newton housing Authority that the following revisions to the Transfer Policy are hereby approved.

1. A time limit of 2 years before a new resident can request a transfer for Convenience.
2. The resident's permanent unit must pass an inspection prior to moving to a new unit.
3. The resident must be in good standing to be considered for a transfer. No lease violations.
4. There will be a limit of 1 transfer for every 4 vacant units.
5. The resident will be responsible for the cost associated with transferring, unit painting and cleaning
6. All residents will be limited to one Transfer for Convenience.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that these transfer policy changes shall only become effective after formal resident notification and a 45-day comment period.

Motion to approve Transfer Policy for 45 day comment period; and to be placed back on Agenda in September made by Commissioner Bitondo; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Chairperson Fiedorczyk.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Excused: Turdo

A tenant asked regarding painting: is that for the apartment you are leaving or apartment you are moving into. ED Snyder answered one or the other. One you are leaving would get painted.

LAURA – 3<sup>rd</sup> floor – only here 2 years in September, but wants transfer. Does she wait until 45 day period is done or what? ED Snyder said send in letter now to office – something in writing, not an email. 45 day period is for comments from tenants. Chairperson Fiedorczyk said when 45 days have passed; Board will review comments

and then approve and vote on Resolution to update Transfer Policy. ED Snyder added policy will be posted on web site and a hard copy available in office.

Commissioner Bitondo asked what is process for comment. ED Snyder said in writing, drop in box in office. Tenant name, address at bottom of paper: My comments are as follows: and they can also add additional pages – done by this date. All comments will be on spreadsheet and brought to Board. Commissioner Bitondo said 6 points ED Snyder noted are a good start.

KATHLEEN – 2L - said she thought single person could only be in studio; couple is in 1 bedroom. Who changed rules? ED Snyder said he's using HUD rules – on 1 bedroom waiting list at top whether single or couple – 2 people cannot be put in studio as it exceeds occupancy limit, but you can put 1 person in 1 bedroom. Discussion followed: if only 1-bedroom is available, that is only choice. This is HUD policy and going forward, if single person above a certain age, only 1 bed left – that's it. NHA doesn't wait until couple available – single person gets 1 bedroom. Apartment cannot be kept vacant. ED Snyder said there are several vacancies – 1 bedroom at top of list – person got that apartment. Everyone else came in – only studios available.

Another woman asked if rent goes up if you go from studio to 1 bedroom. ED Snyder said no, based upon a formula – 30% of your adjusted, annual income. Everyone here has rent based upon their income.

Commissioner Bitondo added ED Snyder has almost 50 years of housing authority experience and works for multiple housing authorities now. He is very knowledgeable in this area, more so than most.

ED Snyder will go out for bids on new copy machine and Roto Rooter service.

## **REMARKS OF CITIZENS**

KATHLEEN – 2L -- Inquired why tenants were not notified of meeting in May. Chairperson Fiedorczyk responded it was on computer, and could be accessed by phone, with number listed on website or on bulletin board. Kathleen said she doesn't have computer and where was phone number posted. ED Snyder answered going forward meetings will be public.

LAURA – 3H – Elevator on left – the other day it jumped down to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, a sudden drop, and has happened before. ED Snyder knows elevators have a problem; they are old and are being discussed re: major upgrades to building. NHA trying to find money to do that. Elevator maintenance here regularly; also looking at contract to perhaps switch vendors and go out to bid again.

KATHLEEN – 2L – Said how nice the 2 maintenance men are very nice, polite and proper. They fixed leak in her tub with WD-40; fixed her window with WD-40; then plumber had to be called. Men are nice but WD-40 doesn't fix leak or windows.

Discussion: work orders will be looked at – probably needs new ballast. While air-conditioners were being installed it was noted many have broken ballasts and old. Please put in another work order. Commissioner Bitondo asked in looking to future of infrastructure bill passing, should NHA get going with an architect and engineer to identify capital projects NHA wants to undertake. Get a jump on it. ED Snyder said he can do an RFP for architect – to do a physical needs assessment, specifies quantities/cost, etc. It might run \$25,000. We need to proceed here with something, whether it's streamline conversion or the infrastructure money. Maybe a local person. Discussion about a previous architect – he was for specific projects, not for overall.

ANN WILLIS – 5A – The situation is solved, but why couldn't I use my adoption papers for identification for here. Problem going on for years and this time she had to go find her birth certificate, which I can't find. ED Snyder said it should have always been in the file – a HUD requirement just like Social Security card is; they audit the files when they come and look to make sure things are there. We have been flexible, but need it. HUD has different rules, unfortunately. Ann said everyone else has taken it: State of N.J., Social Security, etc. Once in the file, it's there.

LISA – 3C – There is a lot of water behind the machines and comes out to the floor. ED Snyder said plumber was called.

NOLA – 2K – Is there any way possible to get all windows washed. Chairperson Fiedorczyk asked Mr. Snyder if obtaining a window washer is possible? Someone said they've lived here 10 years and never been washed once. ED Snyder added many places a window washer is hired, it's posted on floor, people sign up and pay individually. Discussion followed and it will be looked into.

LAURA – 3H – The drain in middle of laundry room floor is receding. ED Snyder will look at it.

KIKI – 4R – Light out on her fire box is out at this time; there was always a light on before. ED Snyder asked if she has 2 strobe lights in there. Kiki said one was put in a long time ago. He will take a look at it again.

Chairperson Fiedorczyk mentioned the porch out front: ceiling fans and lights. It has been discussed before ED Snyder was here – some lights are not working; some of the fans are not working. NHA has requested for a long time to have someone look at them to get them operable so that porch can be used. ED Snyder did not know anything about this. Chairperson Fiedorczyk requested Mr. Snyder get an electrician to look at it. There was a problem with wiring out front at one point. One man touches either fan switches or lights.

LAURA – 3H – Thanked ED Snyder for getting testing and vaccines done in the building.

MARILYN MILLER – 4L – When will the Social Workers begin to come back? Chairperson Fiedorczyk said she believes Mary Peterson retired. Public Health for County had a social worker that would come out once a month. She doesn't know when it will be started up again. ED Snyder said if he had a person to call, he would reach out to them. Chairperson Fiedorczyk suggested Office of Aging, and said she would call them tomorrow, find out what she can and let tenants know.

**ADDITIONAL MOTION RE: PHYSICAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Motion made by Commissioner Bitondo to authorize ED Snyder to develop an RFP for architectural and engineering services to perform a physical needs assessment and to develop the specifications and solicit proposals; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Nannery.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Excused: Turdo

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn made by Chairperson Fiedorczyk; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Nannery.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Excused: Turdo

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 6:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Alvarez  
Secretary/Transcriber