

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

September 12, 2022

(Condensed version of taped minutes of Regularly Scheduled Monthly Meeting of  
Newton Housing Authority  
Commencing at 5:05 P.M.)

**ROLL CALL:**

Present: Chairman Maria Fiedorczyk  
Vice-Chairman Richard Bitondo  
Commissioner Mary Ann Carlson  
Commissioner Karen Crossley  
Commissioner Joe Ricciardo  
Commissioner Wendy Vandermaas\*

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

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT**

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by the filing of an Annual Meeting Notice with Municipal Clerk, posting on the official bulletin board and delivery of same to New Jersey Herald & Star Ledger on December 14, 2021. The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have an 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 this meeting to be advertised by having the date, time and place posted on the Newton Housing Authority website.

Members of the public are welcome and encouraged by the Newton Housing Authority to comment during the public comment portions of the meeting. There will be two public comment sections of the meeting. Residents can address the Board of Commissioners on Agenda items during the Public Comments Agenda Items portion of the meeting and general subjects of interest during the Public Comments General Items portion of the meeting for items not on the Agenda segment of the meeting. All questions and comments

From the public will be directed to the Chairperson. When addressing the Board of Commissioners, please provide your name and address.

**FLAG SALUTE**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS – AGENDA ITEMS – nothing at this time**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 29, 2022**

Motion to approve August 29<sup>th</sup> minutes made by Commissioner Crossley; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Carlson.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5) Excused at this vote: Vandermaas

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WILLIAM SNYDER**

There is one pending eviction for non-payment of rent; trying to work it out, but will probably go into Court.

RFP for legal services has been sent out, as at times legal services are needed, i.e. terminating elevator contract; ED Snyder tried to make as minimal as possible. Please recommend a local attorney, if you know of one – some background with HUD, but mostly Open Public Meetings Act, local public contract law – most attorneys dealing with government have that background – coming to NHA on September 28<sup>th</sup>.

(Commissioner Vandermaas arrived at 5:10 P.M.)

Resident Association meets on September 14<sup>th</sup>; there are currently 3 vacancies; in process of filling them.

Financial audit for fiscal year ending 12/31/2021 was completed on August 25<sup>th</sup>. ED Snyder waiting for copy to send to each Commissioner. Issue is it's supposed to be submitted electronically by September 30<sup>th</sup>. Problem is ED Snyder has no access to these online systems. Worse scenario is, after being on phone with someone in Washington, D.C.; he will send audit on paper and see what they say.

HUD REACT inspection is coming. Notice sent out today to all residents. It will be October 4<sup>th</sup> and notice states they will enter a sampling of everyone's apartment, but do not know which ones until day of inspection. Of the 80 units here, it's usually 10% -- not more than 8 units. Tenants receive legal notice according to their lease, which was done today. NHA working hard to make sure we pass inspection.

Mechanical room showed to a few last week; now it's even better. All red motors painted red; curbs painted yellow around bottom. Maintenance man replaced all chipped and broken insulation around pipes.

**CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN:** We've been responding to HUD. Another letter sent today with a formal response to them, essentially saying what NHA is doing to deal with said inspection. We have to go back and use UPCS – **Uniform Physical Condition Standard Inspection Forms**; inspecting common areas; mechanical systems, all apartments; fill out forms and are only thing that will settle issue with HUD. It is being done in conjunction with maintenance man.

ED Snyder will be here day of inspection; going around with Inspector so I know what's going on. He can hear from me also.

Awnings on order and should be up in time for inspection, hopefully. Area around building – concrete band – has been power washed, so now able to put new awnings on.

Gazebo will probably be delivered within next 2 weeks – 10x10 gazebo and similar to one up top. Ed (maintenance man) has been replacing broken light fixture on exterior of building in prep for inspection.

Ed/MM – will repaint all of curbs yellow so it looks fresh. Mud jacking has been done on the sidewalks with inspections.

3 prices received on new camera system. Current one we view in the office, but doesn't allow viewing back. Prices range from \$3,900 to almost \$16,000 to \$46,000. They're obviously not the same. I'll speak with low bidder and then say we want a formal Request For Bids and see where that comes in. Generally, a proposal is asked for; look at it, cut it out, take the price and ask them to quote exactly this equipment OR equal – does it say new wiring. Man at \$3,900 isn't running new wiring; not getting items that man at \$46,000 is supplying. Still in the works.

Circulating pump has been installed. Mail boxes have 2 metal decals on them with apartment numbers. Half are worn off; now in process of trying to get new metal ones before the inspection; replace apartment number. Mailman puts mail in from back, so it doesn't bother him. In some instances, someone else might get a person's mail, having to figure out where the mailbox is.

Generator maintenance company came in; actually did a tutorial on the generator for maintenance man so he knows how to operate/start it. In the past few years, State passed a law – this is news to me – housing authorities tested their generators the same time every week. I'm now told that you are no longer allowed to do that because of Clean Air Act; surprising to me because generators are run to make sure, if there were to be a power outage, generator will start up. I will make sure that's absolutely the case now.

Chairman Fiedorczyk added NHA has always had a problem with size of the gas line. ED Snyder answered NHA purchased a gas generator; it's on site, ready to go and then gas company said there wasn't enough gas in the street to be able to power a generator like that. It was then sold.

5 benches outside; 1 more to go with new plywood. Shed outside was totally cleaned out and can be used for storage. Property at rear of our property has gray water being dumped onto NHA; we've notified the Construction Department/Health Department and they will send someone out. Gray water could be from a sump pump. Neighbor on other side has leader/downspout going right onto our property, which is rain water. That will be checked out at same time. It is difficult to mow in back because it's so mushy.

Elevator doors are being worked on that in-house. Lower part of doors are rusted; kick plates will be added. Air-conditioners are being removed as residents paid for that; Commissioner Ricciardo and I discussed an easier way to install air-conditioners.

**Commissioner Ricciardo:** On every window is a panel; inside is nothing but insulation. If you remove that panel and put an a/c unit or heat pump in there, it solves the problem. **Chairman Fiedorczyk:** Phillipsburg spoke of doing that, but then said they couldn't. **Commissioner Bitondo:** They were talking about installing a sleeve in window. ED Snyder: Maybe when we have PCA done, we can do more investigation with them; actually pull out one panel. It looks like there is nothing behind it at all. We might have to up electric.

Elevator company was put on notice and people here are monitoring everything that they do including clocking in/clocking out. Then when they don't do what they're supposed to do, there is a 60-day Clause that says NHA has to notify them and then termination. They have 30 days to cure it, which ED Snyder doesn't feel they'll cure anything. Then we'll send out other notice.

Last meeting someone suggested about door on side that doesn't stay open. Ed/maintenance said it's easier just to put a let on it, which he's done and might have to be adjusted, but seems to be working and helping.

Someone suggested this door become an automatic door. We reached out to door company to come, give us a price and see what that entails.

## **PRESENTATION OF SCHOLARSHIP AWARD**

Ryan Vandermaas, son of Commissioner Wendy Vandermaas, introduced by ED Snyder. ED Snyder runs State Housing Redevelopment Trade Association; every year scholarships are given out; also help form the Joint Insurance Fund (JIF) years ago; giving us money to operate and to give scholarships. They are for children in Section 8, Public Housing – a competitive situation going by scores, essay, etc. This year we were able to award two 4-year scholarships – 1 to Ryan Vandermaas, who had one of our highest scores ever – (applause). It is \$3,000 a year/4 years to be used at his discretion. Every year grades must be maintained, be a full-time student – show results to ED Snyder during summer and check will be coming for the 4 years. Ryan interested in Pre-Law and Psychology.

Other scholarship to be presented was won by Alexandra Vandermaas; receiving a \$2,500 a year/4 years - \$10,000 scholarship. (Applause) Check was presented to Commissioner Vandermaas, her mother. Alexandra going to school to be a music teacher at Montclair.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**SMOKING POLICY – Chairman Fiedorczyk:** Many discussions about location of smoking area. With new gazebo going up, a decision has to be made. One is to move

smoking area to upper gazebo, leave one down here for majority of tenants because it's more accessible to more residents, meaning smoking would be done in upper gazebo.

**ED Snyder:** There was a presentation in August by the Center for Prevention of Smoking, etc. They actually made the presentation even though nothing was decided yet; it was their recommendation to move away from building. Their reason being: even though law is 25', but even with 25', certain wind conditions, if next to a building, it can go into apartments. It is really the Board's decision which way NHA goes.

**Commissioner Crossley:** Understands the distance of being up in back. My hope is if that's what decided, that there are people that utilize the space here and bigger space, because when change was made from the front, no one goes out front to sit, which is disheartening as no conversation with neighbors, etc. I liked seeing activity and life in front of building and it brought something to the building. I just hope in moving to back area, bigger space doesn't go to waste. 90% of people outside are smokers; not a lot of non-smokers sitting out there; only seeing 1-2 out there. ED Snyder agreed about mostly smokers sitting outside. Many conditions to be considered and it is a hard decision.

**Commissioner Ricciardo:** I'm a smoker, have a seating area outside and go there; don't smoke in house. As long as you provide an area for them. **Commissioner Bitondo:** Is there a paved walkway. What are negative features of using this gazebo for smoking? Proximity to building? **ED Snyder:** Asphalt walkway with no steps – slight incline. No railing. **A VOICE:** I'm on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and every evening, I can smell smoke. **GENTLEMAN:** I'm deaf, a smoker also, and have difficulty hearing the discussion. **ED Snyder:** Before my arrival, that was designated area; since I'm here complaints are received. (People then moved closer to speaker table.)

**Commissioner Bitondo:** There are 2 options: this gazebo or new one is there another option to be considered? **ED Snyder:** Try to find another area, but where, other than parking lot – closer to the doors. **Commissioner Crossley:** What about new gazebo for non-smokers, if put out front? **ED Snyder:** Another consideration is: install gazebo, see how it goes; can always buy another in the future to put out front. Question comes down to: to install gazebo, maintain it as smoking area, see how it goes – or move it. **Commissioner Bitondo:** Reason it's going in back is base is already established? Stone base to be used. Discussion about placement of new gazebo where tent is at the moment. **ED Snyder:** Only intention was to replace damaged gazebo – smoking/non-smoking – as some infrastructure was broken. If you make it too difficult for smokers, they will just smoke in their apartments. Most smokers here do go outside, and I appreciate that. Places that have become **no smoking campuses**, they just smoke in apartment. Our smokers are very compliant and respectful. If they perhaps are within 25' perimeter, will move when asked.

**Commissioner Crossley:** If we move it, is it going to be utilized; if not, is this going to be used by non-smokers. (Several answered no.) **ED Snyder:** I researched this, when you have an area outside, it's not to be enclosed. Smokers are very vocal about wanting to keep that spot; I don't recall non-smokers saying you have to move them. If a group of non-smokers wanted that spot or another spot, we could probably

accommodate them somewhere else close to the building. **Commissioner Ricciardo:** Send out a survey – here – here – here or back there; have residents fill it out and turn back in to Office. **GENTLEMAN:** There are more non-smokers, smokers will lose, and smokers will not go out there or go out front. Handicap man cannot walk up there, lives here 20 years. Who will shovel when there's ice/snow? **Chairman Fiedorczyk** and **Commissioner Bitondo:** It needs to be finalized by or at next meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS – nothing at this time**

**RESOLUTIONS #2022-31- #2022-33**

1. RESOLUTION #2022-32 – APPROVAL OF BILL LIST FOR SEPTEMBER 2022 MEETING (Corrected from Agenda - #2022-27 was at August meeting)

Motion to approve payment of bill list for September 2022 in amount of \$137,495.28 made by Commissioner Bitondo; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Crossley.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5) Abstain: Vandermaas

2. RESOLUTION #2022-33 – TO APPROVE AUTHORIZATION OF ED SNYDER TO PUBLICIZE IN PAPERS OF RECORD FOR LEGAL SERVICES

Motion to authorize and approve ED Snyder to publicize in papers of record the RFP for legal services made by Commissioner Bitondo; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Ricciardo.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

3. RESOLUTION #2022-31 – TO AUTHORIZE & APPROVE ED SNYDER TO DISCONTINUE CONTRACT WITH ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE COMPANY (Postponed from August 29, 2022 meeting.)

Motion to authorize and approve ED Snyder to discontinue contract with elevator Maintenance Company in accordance with terms of contract made by Commissioner Ricciardo; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Crossley.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

**PUBLIC COMMENTS – General Items**

ANN - #5N - Concerned about smokers that can't walk and use walkers, going to gazebo in back will be dangerous and law suit possible, if someone gets injured especially with bad weather conditions. Non-smokers don't come outside.

What does Karen do in the office? Upset that she disturbs flowers that are paid for and planted by residents; also removed American flag in a pipe that was installed by Fred (#4C). One particular couple planted flowers around gazebo, Karen removed them.

FRED - #4C – Men cleaned area, found piece of pipe and supplied American flag, flag fell over. Fred found another pole with eagle on it, got flag, had it anchored in the ground, it went through 2 thunder storms, never moved. After Fred was in hospital, he came back, flag was gone. He had also put in low lights to illuminate flag; when he returned it was all gone. Feels there is no respect from anyone. ED Snyder will look into what happened with flag. Fred stated he puts flowers out in front of building and maintains the flag there also.

LISETTE – 3T – Has medical problems; her apartment smells like cigarettes. Cancer patient, was moved from another apartment in the building. Gave a particular paper to Commissioner Bitondo. Doctors and HUD are supportive of her. Planning on moving out of NHA. Cannot be in area where there is smoking.

LAURA – 3H – For non-smokers, could there be an area where some chairs are placed, lit up, she doesn't want to go in front or side at night. She has asthma, likes to socialize, but can't be near smokers.

JOSEPHINE - #5G – Smoking has gotten out of hand; conversations being recorded, sheets being handed out with questions – people don't sign their name. She feels harassment taking place. There should be more than one area. Commissioner Bitondo: Residents recording one another has nothing to do with Board of Commissioners or Executive Director. JOSEPHINE received a letter stating there was marijuana coming from her apartment, no idea who sent it, never smoked in her apartment – hasn't smoked cigarettes in over 30 years.

MARY - #3D – Has lived here 20 years; feels there isn't the personal care that was in the past, not complaining, but enjoyed social occasions outside with the non-smokers. Doesn't want to invade their territory as she is a non-smoker. Didn't know about other things going on, but misses personal touch that was here before, complimentary to this place.

PHYLLIS – 5M – Sick of smoking problems and so are other non-smokers. This hate and anger and dissention among everyone now is ridiculous. We are adults, circle where flag was, why can't a gazebo be there – not up the hill and over 25' from building; people with difficulty walking could get there. Heartbreaking what is happening.

CELESTE - #4J – People here don't see all the things that Commissioners and maintenance men are doing for the building to keep residents safe, new benches, etc. I make people smile, that's my job. To see people fighting bothers me.

ANN - #5N – Been here 10 years, all got along.

Chairman Fiedorczyk: The world has changed and not always in the best ways. Ann asked how long ago was 25' started? When other Directors here nothing said about smoking. Commissioner Vandermaas Rules have changed and no smoking anywhere

on property. At Homestead my mother went all the way out to road; people called thinking she was escaping. Commissioner Carlson: I've been here 15 years. There are more smokers now than ever, which is another problem. We never had this many smokers – this is new; laws are new.

PAT POWERS - #3N – First time she's hearing all this stuff; stays in her room.

DEBORAH – Is it possible to fix personal garden beds before inspection?

**ADJOURNMENT – 6:09 P.M.**

Motion to go into Executive Session made by Commissioner Bitondo; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Crossley.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

**(AFTER THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING)**

Motion made by Commissioner Bitondo that meeting go back into Public Session; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Chairman Fiedorczyk.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

Motion made by Commissioner Bitondo to approve Agreement between Newton Housing Authority and Execu-tech, Inc. for the provision of part-time Executive Director/Management Services as modified by Tracy Goldstein, Esq.; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Ricciardo.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn for the evening made by Commissioner Ricciardo; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Crossley.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)