

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

March 20, 2023
(Condensed version of taped minutes of Regularly Scheduled
Monthly Meeting of Newton Housing Authority)
Commencing at 5:28 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

FLAG SALUTE

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 28, 2022. The New Jersey Open Public Meetings 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 interests 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.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS – nothing at this time

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 13, 2023

Motion to approve made by Commissioner Crossley; 2nd by Commissioner Ricciardo.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT – ED William Snyder

Interim report sent by ED Snyder to each Commissioner. Final bill for camera system on this Agenda – now complete. There was an incident already; NPD here, looked at the cameras, commented how easy the system is to use, how crystal clear with bright colors.

Commissioner Ricciardo mentioned report from HQW, company doing physical needs assessment. Bill on list re: finishing field survey and should have draft report soon. ED will forward to Commissioners as soon as he receives it.

Windows – Maintenance ordered balancers for a handful of windows; now got gaskets; a few windows were done including MaryAnn's and one in ED's office as test case. ED used one finger to get window up/down. Windows are thermo pane and still good. Still waiting for balances for all apartments. Maintenance will go floor by floor and change every single window. Some windows have locking mechanisms that are broken. Ed estimated it will take 15 minutes for each window to be repaired, Ed has tool to put balancer in. If Ed feels draft around window, he will chalk on inside.

Lobby renovations finished – new fireplace, new chairs, hallways now being painted and laundry room. Commissioner Ricciardo suggested when architect doing his report, chalking and sealing exterior of windows should be part of what they do. When new committee is formed for Building & Grounds they will go through comments and ED will make written report before going out to bid.

Recertifications are in place; there is handful on 3rd floor that need to be signed; notices went out on 4th floor; 5th floor notices sent out on 3/15.

All Commissioners got new email addresses. Karen has regular list and NHA list. There is a general one – info@newtonhousingauthority.com. ED purchased 2 notebooks; tablets had been discussed, but are expensive – 12 to \$1,400. Notebooks were \$300 plus, work great. ED downloading agendas, bill list every month and minutes so Commissioner can go into file and retrieve what they need. If more notebooks needed, ED will purchase more.

Meeting today with all residents re: Streamline Voluntary Conversion; a very good turnout, as at least one meeting is required – this is our second. Major thing with program as explained today is tenants have rights. One thing that happens is when you convert – resident gets a Housing Choice Voucher – actually called **Tenant Protection Voucher**. That voucher can be used for 3 things: used to stay here as use

voucher as is, which means at any time they can take voucher go anywhere they want in the USA including Region 2, which is Puerto Rico, St. Croix, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, Alaska, Hawaii. What NHA is requesting that they sign a **consent form** which a sample was given out today, that consent form says that they're going to Project Based Unit, which means the subsidy (voucher) gets attached to apartment. Unless we do that, we cannot proceed with SLVC. There's much more money in those programs as rents are a lot higher. There was positive feedback from residents that were here on residents signing consent form. ED requested residents here today to tell other residents, please sign consent form. They have 30 days to do this and at end of 30 days, ED will review it, prepare a report. We will reach out personally to anyone who hasn't signed it or if they say no, we need to know why. As I explained today, if too many people say no, we won't do SLVC. We'll review the other options – other option really is RAD, but instead of switching to Project Based Vouchers, it would be Project Based Rental Assistance as NHA has no voucher program through the N.J. Housing Mortgage Finance Agency. That will provide rents, but nowhere near the rent level of SLVC, meaning less cash flow, meaning fewer improvements. By signing this – and if we get almost everybody onboard – there will be millions of dollars more in improvements that we'll be able to make.

HUD online systems – PIC – Public Information Center, which is where all tenant data is uploaded to during recertification, NHA was at 65% submission rate, ED made corrections and this month NHA is at 100%, which is where we want to be. We are good with online systems.

Capital Fund Program for 2022 – everything's entered, which will be uploaded and ED can draw down 2022 money. As I explained last month 2023 is already in and should start working on that. ED said NHA used 2022 all up as NHA is considered to be **fungible** – moving it to Operations and use it for repairs. If you are under 250 units, Capital Fund money is **fungible**.

Last month one tenant complained about dumpsters. NHA was able to replace dumpsters with new ones, which are much easier for tenants to use – have received good feedback on that.

We have only one vacancy, one moving out on 3/16, all good with that.

There will be a resident dinner on April 5th. Commissioner Crossley is helping with that and involved with residents – all Board members have been invited also.

Annually, NHA has to do a Right-to-Know Study, which is done by RAMM Environmental, We got it back, and will be uploaded when I get my ID and password from State.

Tenants made a request some time ago re: bulletin boards for elevator. They have been installed.

Signs were ordered and arrived – some just replacements of drab ones, making outside of building look better. Maintenance has actually started hanging some of them.

Verizon has removed most of their equipment, there's one more conduit pole. Wire actually runs from back of building to front. We want to keep the conduit to use as a pole, if we need it. They damaged our roof, which I didn't see but our roofer said its \$35-\$40,000 in repairs, which sounds exorbitant to me. Verizon wants to do a final walk through, having had a subcontractor doing this. We told them we won't do a walk through until our roofer is with us, so that he can tell us where damage is and why it costs so much. The subcontractor won't get paid from Verizon until we get a "close out" including Town approval. We will make sure it is fixed. Some heavier equipment was dragged over the membrane.

Laundry equipment bids are due on March 29th – we have 2 this time.

Flyers are around building that Commissioner Crossley had involving REC programs – Senior bus is going to offer transportation, please sign up for all those events. Center for Prevention and Counseling extended their Smoking cessation program to March 22nd.

Commissioner Bitondo: Re: Streamline Voluntary Conversion – Bill Katchen and ED talked about a pre-qualifying requirement is to spend down capital reserve and outlay. What amount does NHA have? At what point in time does NHA begin to spending it down; we don't have to wait until SLVC is approved, correct? ED: It's about \$700,000. No, but when we get report from architect and know what we have to spend, we'll do that; not spend any of that money until HUD approves NHA for conversion, as we have a few issues we have to face. ED continually sends letters to HUD, and emails, but no response. Letter sent by ED to Contract Administrator with Cliffside Park Housing Authority, which is on our next agenda; we'll send an agreement to there. There has been issue in the past with HUD approving any type of arrangements with cross-county. Attorney handling that for them back in the day no longer there. We will try to get around that. If we can't get around it, we're back at square one – then when we go to close, that money is used as part of closing costs; just moved forward into a reserve to use in the future. If NHA able to borrow money, we just it to that and make that part of budget. Chairman Fiedorczyk: NHA has no choice as NHA is only housing authority in Sussex County. ED: That's what I explained to them in my letter. There is Interlocal Services Act – interlocal agreements between counties crossing county lines. It will probably require legal opinion. Commissioner Bitondo: NHA needs unanimity – all 80 residents have to agree/consent. Tough goal to reach. Any strategies to employ to help build that unanimity? ED: First we find out what unanimity is – if it's only a handful of people, there are ways to bridge that gap. If 50%, NHA is out of luck. We will go tenant by tenant or another meeting. Tenants here are probably tenants here at meeting today. Tenants very interested and concerned; some people who don't care. ED may call them down one at a time or see them in their apartment; we'll do our best. They have 30 days, and during these 30 days, we'll be reaching out. SLVC only pertains to housing authorities with less than 250 units – smaller end of things. It's been done in 2 other places – all good. We ask those that said no, why? Explaining if enough people say no, then there is another direction; other direction will not get as much modernization and rehabilitation. Commissioner Bitondo: Perhaps meeting on each floor. Today 50 people were here. ED: We could be talking \$8 million or \$2 million. What do you want to do? \$8 million is kitchens and bathrooms. \$2 million is new roof and elevators, maybe some sidewalks; asphalt parking lot.

(Secretary Debbie Alvarez asked to speak regarding all ED Snyder did at Hackensack Housing Authority; difference there is night and day. Hackensack has senior/disabled; several family units. You cannot tell they are public housing. What ED Snyder accomplished through RAD Program is marvelous. Hackensack HA is held as one of the best in New Jersey out of 80-90 public housing authorities.) Commissioner Crossley: Look at the improvements ED Snyder has done so far without this program. Expand your imagination to what can be done with this program with him at the helm. Improvements that have already happened will be exemplified and magnified 100 times. MARY – 3D: More has been done since ED Snyder came here than what was done in past 20 years. Very encouraging. MARILYN MILLER – 4L: As seniors, we're all afraid of changes and not understanding something is worse fear. More explanation, more questions that tenants have answered, makes them more comfortable. ANN: How long will this take – 30 days to sign papers. When will work start around here? ED Snyder: NHA will move quickly. Put application in, but hesitant to give time lines. HUD is notoriously slow – HUD shuts down around October as people have to use their vacation time. HUD won't do closing from October-December. Just their way and working from home. When NHA gets application in, it will be about 12 months – we close and get mortgage at bank, done pretty quickly as pro formas are put together. PHYLLIS: Some tenants here have physiological issues; won't that hold things up getting them to sign? Chairman Fiedorczyk: Whoever is not signing, ED Snyder would meet with them personally to help them understand better what they're signing and what purpose is. Commissioner Bitondo: Should NHA speak with local officials, could they influence speed at which HUD regards us? ED Snyder didn't think so, but if needed, he'll speak with Commissioners. In some instances, it doesn't help. We are shooting for 100% signatures. We'd get full funding but balance of units would not be tied to those few apartments, if somebody has a voucher, they could move out with their voucher and no subsidy for that apartment. Bank asks how you will pay mortgage for those apartments and we say HUD guarantees payment for those apartments.

NEW BUSINESS – nothing at this time.

RESOLUTIONS #2023-9 AND #2023-10

1. RESOLUTION #2023-9 – APPROVAL OF BILL LIST FOR MARCH 2023 MEETING

There is a payment for field survey going through some apartments and common areas.

Motion to approve payment of \$90,852.81 made by Commissioner Ricciardo; 2nd by Commissioner Carlson.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

2. RESOLUTION #2023-10 – RENEWAL OF CONTRACT FOR MANAGEMENT SERVICES

This is contract renewal with Executech – ED William Snyder; exact same amount as last time for 12 months. Next year RFP will be required.

Motion to approve Resolution #2023-10 made by Commissioner Crossley; 2nd by Commissioner Bitondo.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

MARILYN MILLER – 4L: Anything new about Planet Network? ED has reached out to owner, but basically entire building would have to be rewired – right now he's not going to do that. It could be a project under RAD. People paying for high definition, but if tenant is down the line, it's diminished. We might consider it under Capital Improvement and install new conduit, etc.

ANN WILLS – 5N – What about washers and dryers? When are they coming in? ED: Bids will come back on March 29th – 2 companies so far, hoping to get more. Commissioner Bitondo: Bid accepted, they order product and install.

CELESTE – 4J – Will the machine get fixed that we put our money in? ED: Card machine will be compatible with new machine. Money was jammed and not working correctly. If that happens, come to office immediately – don't put in any more money; return your money, if you lost it.

PHYLLIS – 5M – Door in Community Room and dog door, close too fast. Please adjust pressure as it hits people's feet when they're trying to come in. Also, in bathroom the orthopedic bars next to toilets are on wrong. I had mine changed when I broke my hip.

LAWRENCE – 2N – Someone mentioned about walk-in showers. Would that be feasible? ED: If we do bathroom renovations, there is the ability to do "cut outs" on tubs, waterproof insert goes in. If you need as walk-in, insert comes out and you walk into your shower. Buildings & Grounds Committee will look at all of these things and make recommendation as to what we actually can do.

MARK – 3N – Defibrillator – Chairman Fiedorczyk: You have to be certified to use it. We will talk about it and see what the risks are. Discussion about why doesn't NHA have a defibrillator. ED: Most senior buildings don't have them. Commissioner Bitondo: Believes all police cars now have the AEDs. Concern would be liability of anyone operating an AED. You must be recertified every year.

ANNABELLE – 3M – We need new shopping carts; once now have broken wheels and taped together. ED: We will look into it. Discussion about size of carts, how many needed. Have looked at several styles.

GEORGE – 2P – If we ever get cable back in Community Room, could TV be turned back on?

MARY – One coin machine very close to washer and people hitting their heads on the coin machine. Can it be put in another location?

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Ricciardo; 2nd by Chairman Fiedorczyk.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Alvarez
Secretary/Transcriber