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

November 20, 2023

(Condensed version of taped minutes of Regularly Scheduled
Monthly Meeting of Newton Housing Authority
Commencing at 5:16 P.M.)

ROLL CALL:

Present:

Vice-Chairman Richard Bitondo
Commissioner Mary Ann Carlson
Commissioner Karen Crossley
Commissioner Wendy Vandermaas on Cell Phone

Also Present:

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

Excused:

Chairman Maria Fiedorczyk
Commissioner Joseph Ricciardo

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 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. All members of the public should be cognizant of the rights and feelings of any individual they feel compelled to discuss at an Open Public Meeting. General Comments and statements should be made in a calm and civil manner. Comments that violate the rights of employees, residents, members of the public could

be subject to a civil law suit for damages. The individual making such statements will be personally liable for any monetary damages resulting from their statements.

STATEMENT PREPARED BY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF NEWTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

VICE-CHAIRMAN BITONDO: The Board of Commissioners convened in response to petitions that were submitted at October 16, 2023 meeting. Commissioners requested to submit thoughts and/or ideas they had in terms of response to petitions. This is the compilation of what was discussed as well as what was provided by Commissioners in writing to Executive Director William Snyder.

“Please be advised that the Board of Commissioners and Staff of the Newton Housing Authority have always and will continue to have the best interest of the residents as their main goal. We strive to ensure that we improve the quality of life of our residents by:

- 1. Maintain our buildings and grounds in a neat, orderly and clean condition;**
- 2. Addressing all work orders in a reasonable amount of time – 24 hours for emergencies and routine work orders within 72 hours;**
- 3. Investigating programs and methods to make capital improvements in Liberty Towers to ensure long-term viability of the building;**
- 4. Providing excellent customer service to the public and residents by enhancing communication with all stakeholders;**
- 5. Maintaining safety and security of the property to enhance the residents' quality of life.**

In an effort to improve our customer service and communications, we are establishing a Resident Services Advisory Committee. The Committee will be comprised of the Executive Director, 2 Commissioners, 2 Resident Association Members, (1 officer and 1 at-large member and 2 non-members). Initial meeting will be held to discuss issues of importance for the Housing Authority and its residents. Thereafter, meetings will be conducted on a quarterly basis; a schedule will be established for the 2024 meetings and distributed to the members. Concerns, comments, suggestions of the Housing Authority residents will be considered at these meetings and taken into consideration by the Board of Commissioners as potential policy revisions in the future.

It is the goal of the Committee to foster a partnership with its residents in approving the overall quality of life at Liberty Towers.”

PUBLIC COMMENTS - AGENDA ITEMS – nothing at this time

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – October 16, 2023

Motion to approve Regular Meeting minutes of September 11, 2023 made by Commissioner Crossley; 2nd by Commissioner Carlson.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Excused: Fiedorczyk/Ricciardo

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SNYDER

1. RFPs were issued for and due November 22, 2023 – awarded at December meeting.
 - a. Waste and recycling currently done by Waste Management
 - b. Financial Audit for year ending 12-31-23
 - c. Snow removal services
 - d. Flooring

e. Painting

2. Two contracts were awarded and completed for Streamline Voluntary Conversion. One to conduct a new land survey; other was to do Park 58 Environmental Assessment. Both completed and submitted to HUD with Streamline Voluntary Application. Waiting for a response from HUD.
3. Policies upload to the Cloud; now look at them and suggest possible changes.
4. NJNAHRO CONFERENCE IN ATLANTIC CITY. One topic was HOTMA – **Housing Opportunities Through Modernization Act**. HOTMA Program is going to require changes to Admission and Continued Occupancy Policy. It doesn't really affect tenants here, but for new people coming in. One policy, which hasn't been in effect for 40 years, is an asset limit. So if you apply and have assets in excess of \$100,000 that alone will deny you. ED Snyder will draft a change to that policy with consideration and time for its implementation with HUD. It is a regulatory requirement.
5. An issue was raised recently of security deposits, saying they haven't gotten a statement. It was ED Snyder's understanding bank was sending statements directly to tenants. Bank said they were, but when checked, they were not. Now ED Snyder has online access. In January a statement for the year will go to the tenants. Bank doesn't do it anymore because of cost involved in it, issuing checks to all tenants. Average interest check for last year was 4-6 cents. Bank said many checks when sent out were not even cashed. Bank was informed it is a requirement that tenants get statement. Tenants in January 2024 will know what they initially deposited and whatever interest has accrued on those accounts.
6. Another issue: As we painted here, signage on the doors with tenant's name and apartment number had to be replaced. Now they have name and apartment number on the doors. Hooks were taken off doors, which were used for decorations during different seasons. Notice will be delivered tomorrow; there will be a sign-up sheet on NHA bulletin board, if you want the hook and we'll do it in waves – 10-20 a day as it requires drilling new hole in door; hook placed under door knocker. Signage on each floor is back up.
7. Conference in Atlantic City was attended by Commissioners Crossley, Vandermaas and Carlson. In addition to HOTMA session, they attended INSPIRE – new HUD protocol for inspecting the buildings. Tenants know that once a year or every few years so many apartments are inspected. That will be changed and INSPIRE Program, NHA does inspections (ED Snyder's son is inspector). He got his certification there. Old inspections paid attention to mechanical systems and outside of the building – foliage next to building, condition of sidewalks, asphalt paving, etc. New protocol will focus more attention to units and condition of units.
8. VACANCIES – currently there are 4 vacancies, 2 units are ready, 2 need work done.
9. RESIDENT ASSOCIATION – One issue: residents are coffee time in Community Room in the morning. There was a conflict with cleaning service, who requested coffee time be changed. Cleaning service time changed so no conflict with social activities. Resident Association having Christmas Party on December 20th in Community Room at 12:30 P.M. There will be a sign-up sheet.
10. Problem here with removal of bulk items, i.e., couch, chair, appliances – tenant must make own arrangements. ED Snyder reached out to Newton, which does not have bulk pick-up. Homeowners/renters have to do on their own. As many of our residents don't have that capability, a name (Mary Gerbish, ph.) and phone number put on bulletin board that does do those things. ED Snyder spoke with her today – heavier items she gets help, only charges what it costs at dump, maybe \$10 or a little more depending on what item is. Commissioner Crossley noted Newton DPW does it once a year - \$35.

11. ELEVATORS – One just went down now. Elevator Company is very responsive, they already know and will be here first thing in morning. Rollers, etc. were just replaced, probably an adjustment that needs to be done.
12. SHED: Maintenance cleaned it out; tenants' shovels in there for snow removal. Maintenance will put them outside before Thanksgiving.
13. PLUMBING: Plumbing problems with heat, many complaints from residents. Maintenance staff at TGM spent time going to everyone's apartment bleeding (some 3 times). There are bleeder valves in the boiler room that need to be bled as well. Hopefully, next year it will be better; just asking for everybody's patience – one person would not let maintenance man in. System works this way: there is a riser pipe going up to each floor. In that floor it loops to apartments that are laterally next to it. If the first apartment in that loop has an air lock in it, no heat goes to other apartments. We went apartment-to-apartment. Because units are so old, there was an issue where valve broke, lot of damage, valve replaced. We believe we have system working, but if you know someone not having heat, please call Office and we'll respond quickly.
14. SEWER LINE ISSUE: We've had issues with this and back-ups in the past. Everything was snaked out from roof down last year. Now plumbing and sewer contract came in, put a camera in the main line; found an area that was broken, now fixed and jetted out all the grease, etc.
15. AIR HANDLER ON ROOF: It was finally fixed and new filters installed, will be running continuously now. When we make major renovations to NHA, hopefully, we can add heat into that as one complaint is that it blows cold air on residents. By code it must be working.
16. STREAMLINE VOLUNTARY CONVERSION: Program which will enable NHA to make major repairs to this building. Before we get there, we'll meet with residents again to discuss what needs to be done: roof, elevators, air-conditioning in the apartments. Someone moved out – there are 80 apartments, 77 people agreed to Project Base their voucher, which is what was needed. Now we have 78 people, 2 people refused to do that, and we can still move ahead with it.
17. WINDOW REPAIRS: All window repairs completed except for a few apartments where air-conditioning units have not been removed yet.
18. GAZEBO IN BACK: Last month someone said it's falling apart – roof coming off. We are looking at prices to get it repaired. Request received from Tenant Association today to put plastic on "smokers gazebo" as it's very cold in winter; reached out to Fire Chief, who is looking at that and will get back to Office by end of week to make sure it isn't a Fire Code Violation – people lighting inside a wooden structure with plastic around it. If it is allowed, we will do it.
19. HOLIDAY PARTY: Housing Authority sponsoring free Holiday Party for all residents, providing catered food. Board Members are invited to attend also – December 6th – 4 P.M. Entertainment hopefully and perhaps Santa Claus will make an appearance. Already 42 people have signed up.
20. UNITED HEALTH CARE: Annual enrollment going on now – they are here every Wednesday until December 6th.
21. SUSSEX COUNTY DIVISION OF SENIOR SERVICES: Their program – **Matter of Balance** – starts January 4 and ends February 29, 2024. They will be dropping off a card for every apartment – **Secret Santa/Snowman Card**. They had a Game Shop Social here on November 2nd, very well attended. If you'd like, we can talk to them and see if they'll do it on a regular occasion. Some programs they have here are not well attended; if event is well attended, they'd be willing to do it more often. In May through end of June, **Move and Groove Class** will be in afternoons.

22. SUSSEX COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE: They've reached out to NHA to do a community service project. Karen will be meeting with them to see what it is and we'll try to help them with it.
23. Leaks in the building – showing pipes to some of you, that the pipes have rotted in the walls, which will continue until we get to the point where we can replace the entire infrastructure. For now, holes are cut in the walls and pipe is repaired. We had a leak in 2D, where resident had a Notebook Computer, which I have and keyboard is destroyed. Resident is asking NHA to replace it. NHA bought 2 Notebook computers, they are not used, possibly we will replace damaged one with one we have, if acceptable to resident. Other leak was in 2P where a valve blew off as it was being replaced on heating system on the loop. In that particular unit, it probably wasn't working for years. Black soot shot out and all over everything. Maintenance staff did good job of cleaning it up; I inspected it today. Still more cleaning needs to be done; we will have to replace destroyed vanity and perhaps floor, if cleaning people can't do it. Resident did try to clean it, but in bad shape. Lampshade destroyed; painting needs to be done. We assured him today we will do everything we can to get it back. Carpeting was in there when they moved in; it did shoot out into hallway outside bathroom so we will rent steam cleaner, drying it out and hope to clean it up.
24. On December 1st at 1:00 P.M., Decorating Committee that does our building is looking for volunteers to help decorate tree and whatever else tenants do, coffee will be available.

APPROVAL OF EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES – OCTOBER 2023

Motion to approve Executive Session Minutes made by Commissioner Crossley; 2nd by Commissioner Carlson.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Excused: Fiedorczyk/Ricciardo

OLD BUSINESS

Vice-Chairman Bitondo noted there is a Commissioner opening, which is Governor's appointment. In light of barely able to get a quorum, this should vigorously try to get that position filled. If a Commissioner here present has connection to Sussex County Democratic Party, please speak up. Commissioner Vandermaas knew of someone in the party, but doesn't know who is in charge. It was determined Chairman Fiedorczyk knew somebody. ED Snyder said he would follow up on that.

NEW BUSINESS

Vice-Chairman Bitondo asked Commissioners for comments on the Resident Services Advisory Committee. Commissioners Crossley and Carlson both agreed it would give both parties a say. The Committee will be comprised of Executive Director, 2 Commissioners, 2 Resident Association members (officer and at-large member) and 2 non-members. Initial meeting and thereafter meetings on a quarterly basis with schedule forthcoming for 2024 calendar year. Commissioners Crossley and Vandermaas said they will do it. Time and day will be determined soon. ED Snyder discussed with Joan that it will be 1 officer and they can select 1 other person from Resident Association. NHA Committee representatives will select 2 non-resident Association members.

Commissioner Crossley ordered another red canvas wagon for residents as one on porch disappeared. ED Snyder will get a permanent marker and print **Property of Liberty Towers** on canvas.

RESOLUTIONS #2023-34-#2023-35

RESOLUTION #2023-34 - APPROVAL OF BILL LIST FOR NOVEMBER 2023 MEETING

Motion to approve Bill List for November 2023 totaling \$103,080.58 made by Commissioner Crossley; 2nd by Vice-Chairman Bitondo. Commissioner Carlson recused herself for check for reimbursement for Convention; Commissioner Vandermaas recused herself for check for reimbursement for Convention.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4) with Abstains from Carlson/Vandermaas regarding reimbursement checks to each of them. Excused: Fiedorczyk/Ricciardo

RESOLUTION #2023-35 – INTRODUCTION OF 2024 BUDGET

Motion to approve Introduction of 2024 Budget made by Commissioner Crossley; 2nd by Commission Carlson.

ED SNYDER: Two-step process – introduction process where you see it. Budget as presented has revenues of \$714,000, an increase over last year. Appropriations/expenses of \$627,325, which results in budget surplus of almost \$87,000 – not 100 percent accurate as cell antenna funds lost and not mentioned. NHA will still be in a surplus position. Not many housing authorities, let alone government these days are running a surplus. It shows where NHA is operating through September 30th for 2023 also. NHA in good financial shape. This now goes to Department of Community Affairs; they review it, any questions or comments they will come back to us. ED Snyder would respond. If none, they'll approve it and NHA will be adopt at next meeting, if we receive it back in time. V/C BITONDO: What about no anticipation of Capital Fund/Operating Subsidy in budget. ED SNYDER: He doesn't put that in the budget, but it is put in financial statement. \$180,000 is anticipated for HUD's Operating Subsidy, which is part of total revenue. V/C BITONDO: Have maintenance lines been increased to reflect over-expenditures in 2023? Maintenance/Operation - \$119,000 – budgeted at \$109,000 and already \$32,000 in hole. ED SNYDER: A lot was Capital Improvements, and getting paid out of Capital Funds – lots of repairs, especially windows. We have a surplus, and if needed, it's not a problem. V/C BITONDO: Utilities over-expended because water meter not having been read for years. There were no questions from Commissioners.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4) Excused: Fiedorczyk/Ricciardo

PUBLIC COMMENTS – GENERAL ITEMS

CAROLYN - #4M – At last meeting talked about blinds, but didn't say at that time, she'd purchase her own blinds. V/C Bitondo said she should speak with ED Snyder. ED Snyder will come look at her apartment.

KATHLEEN - #2L – Asked if Commissioners get paid to attend conference in Atlantic City. V/C Bitondo said Commissioners are reimbursed for their expenses – hotel accommodations, traveling expenses, meals – standard practice to reimburse them for incurred costs while attending Housing Authority business. Commissioner Carlson explained those attending sit in classes all day learning HUD rules and regulations from experts in a particular field.

MARILYN MILLER - #4L – Requested petition that was read by V/C Bitondo is posted so residents not attending meeting can read it for themselves. V/C Bitondo said certainly it can be posted on bulletin board.

SUE DE HOPE - #4B – Asked if ED Snyder had read her letter, did he read it. ED Snyder said yes, some of the items will be discussed with new committee, better communications with residents, to listen to residents and residents to listen to "our" side also.

PHYLLIS - #5M – Spoke with woman that was here from United Health requesting a printout of warning signs for heart attacks and strokes, which she laminated, put them on bulletin board and in elevators, and told by someone they are depressing. V/C BITONDO: That's valuable information that everybody should take a look at it, thank you. We are hoping that when lines of communication are opened up, things will improve with everyone.

V/C BITONDO: Wished everyone in the Community Room a HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn meeting made by Commissioner Crossley; 2nd by Commissioner Vandermaas.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Excused: Fiedorczyk/Ricciardo

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Alvarez
Secretary/Transcriber