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

Monday, January 22, 2024

Condensed version of taped minutes of Regularly Scheduled  
Monthly Meeting of Newton Housing Authority  
Commencing at 5:15 P.M.

**ROLL CALL:**

Present: Vice-Chairman Richard Bitondo  
Commissioner Mary Ann Carlson  
Commissioner Karen Crossley  
Commissioner Joe Ricciardo

Also Present: Executive Director William F. Snyder  
Newton Deputy Mayor Helen LeFroise  
Deborah Alvarez, Secretary/Transcriber

Absent: Commissioner Wendy Vandermaas

**FLAG SALUTE**

**MOMENT OF SILENCE – IN MEMORY OF KEITH KEOPPEL**

Vice-Chairman Bitondo informed the audience Mr. Keoppel had passed away on Christmas Day 2023 and was to have been sworn in this evening to serve his second term as Commissioner on the Newton Housing Authority, but God had other plans for Keith. Keith was a gentleman, smart, easy to talk to, a man of unwavering faith and great vision. He had a special place in his heart for this town and this place we call Liberty Towers. Please join me for a Moment of Silence for our neighbor and friend, Keith Keoppel. There is a memorial service at the First Presbyterian Church of Sparta this coming Saturday at 11 A.M.

**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 6, 2023. 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 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.



5. RESOLUTION #2024-5 – RENEWAL OF CONTRACT FOR ACCOUNTING SERVICES contract with Policari & Company for annual fee of \$20,400
6. RESOLUTION #2024-6 – AUTHORIZATION TO REBID MANAGEMENT CONTRACT (Executive Director Manager Contract – current Executech expires 5/31/2024) RFP is basically the same as that approved when ED Snyder's contract was approved with a few changes, adding in scope of services "any other item as requested by the Board of Commissioners." It also reflects changes in increase in hours for clerical and maintenance; removal of custodial services as we contract services out now, and addition of preparation of our Minutes as a separate item.)

Chairman Bitondo asked if there were any public comments or questions regarding the Resolutions #2024-1 through #2024-6. (No response.)

Motion made by Commissioner Ricciardo that Resolutions #2024-1 through and including #2024-6 be approved; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Crossley.

ROLL CALL:	Commissioner Carlson	Yes
	Commissioner Crossley	Yes
	Commissioner Ricciardo	Yes
	Chairman Bitondo	Yes
Absent:	Commissioner Vandermaas	---

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Absent: Vandermaas

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 11, 2023**

Motion to approve minutes of December 2023 made by Commissioner Crossley; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Carlson.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Absent: Vandermaas

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT – ED WILLIAM SNYDER – postponed this evening**

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION – MARIA FIEDORCZYK REMEMBRANCE**

Commissioner Ricciardo recognized Newton Deputy Mayor Helen LeFrois.

CHAIRMAN BITONDO: "You all know that we lost Maria Fiedorczyk on Thanksgiving Day. I was first introduced to Maria when I came onboard as Commissioner here six years ago. During this short time, Maria has left a lasting impression on me as a person and as a Commissioner. Those of you who knew Maria, I sure saw her much the same way as I did. She was smart and talented. She was loyal and reliable. She was a worker bee. If there was a difficult task to be done, Maria was the one. She possessed a loving and emphatic spirit. She adored her children, Adam and Alyssa. Maria had nothing but admiration and reverence for her husband Mark and her brother Kevin.

What most of you do not know is the role Maria played here as a Commissioner, particularly during these past six years, which has been a time of transition and at times quite tumultuous for the Newton Housing Authority. At the end of the last decade, HUD dramatically slashed funding to housing authorities across the nation, necessitating major reductions in staff. When I arrived here six years ago, Liberty Towers was operating with a skeletal staff, including a part-time Executive Director. Within a few weeks after being sworn in as a Commissioner, that part-time

Executive Director abruptly resigned. Maria was the Chairperson of the Board. We were functioning, perhaps illegally, trying to survive without an Executive Director. I remember being handed the emergency cell phone as the Commissioners rotated "24-7 on call" duties and 9 out of 10 times, we deferred to Maria.

Maria was successful in negotiating a shared service partnership with the Phillipsburg Housing Authority for Executive Director and management services and for the next few years we managed, but the Phillipsburg Board of Commissioners was not ready to establish a long-term commitment. They pulled the plug and there we were again looking for an Executive Director.

Again, Maria led the search and we were tremendously fortunate to land Executech and Bill Snyder. None of this would have been possible without Maria's leadership, her loyalty, her persistence, her empathy for the residents, her drive to keep Liberty Towers alive and well.

During this transition time, Maria has brought Liberty Towers from trying to survive to beginning to thrive. Now we have the unenviable task of sustaining what Maria started WITHOUT her stalwart leadership.

Alyssa, Adam, Mark and Kevin, we share and feel your loss, but in no way can we match the magnitude of what you all are experiencing. Your mother, your wife, your sister will remain alive in your hearts as she will always been in our hearts here at Liberty Towers."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SNYDER: "I'm probably the one who knew Maria the least. I've been here now just over two years, but I can tell you that – I've had the opportunity in my career, some of you know this: to work from as far south as Penns Grove, New Jersey, which you actually see the Delaware Memorial Bridge, up to Newton, New Jersey, which is the northernmost Housing Authority in New Jersey. In fact, the Newton Housing Authority is the only housing authority in Sussex County. It's one of the few counties that have one or no housing authorities. So during my travels throughout the State, I'm fortunate to meet a lot of local officials, a lot of Board members, staff people and it's interesting because in my travels, and I'm doing this in the Housing Community Development industry for nearly 50 years now. That's how long I've been doing this.

I've met hundreds of people and out of those people, there's certain people that leave a lasting impression upon me, and those are the good people, the people that volunteer. What I always say is that good public policy is about doing the right thing, and MARIA FIEDORCZYK was one of those people who left a very lasting impression upon me. She was not one of those people that I do meet occasionally that are in this for themselves, what they could get out of it. She was a pillar of the community; it's very obvious. I'm a Hudson County guy, We're an urban area. We have a population of over 700,000 people there and we have almost 16,000 people per square mile. I come here and I think you've got 250 per square mile. This is a very small country type community and it was culture shock for me and it was Maria from Day #1 who introduced me to this community and led me to understand that the best things about towns like Newton are not the services; it's not the things that you have, it's the clean air, the water. All these things that everybody knows is great about Newton. It's about the people that make it great, and MARIA FIEDORCZYK was one of those people who helped make this community as great as it is. And she from Day #1 took me under her tutelage to show me about Newton and to get me to understand the people, the people at Liberty Towers, the people in the community and how wonderful a community this is.

It was a magnificent experience for me to meet her and work with her, and I know her brother Kevin knows this, but one of the first things I had to do here was to get access to the Subsidy

System for HUD so we could draw down money to pay our bills. That requires a notarized Form B completed and submitted to HUD. So I told Maria, this is over a year ago, I said Maria this process takes a little while, shouldn't be a big deal, but it's got to be notarized, and obviously Maria was a Notary, I'm not, so we had to find somebody who notarizes forms. She says I have people I know at Lakeland Bank, I'll go with you. So I picked her up, I went to Lakeland Bank and we got the thing notarized, I submitted it to HUD and about a week later I called her and said, Maria, the form was rejected. I picked her up again, and we did it again. Well, I think in total, I did that eight times. It kept getting rejected and Kevin was probably saying to her, who is this idiot who keeps bringing this form in and getting it signed. But one of the things it told me about her, she never got annoyed at me. She had tremendous patience and again, one of the things that she really always emphasized was her concern for the people at Liberty Towers.

As Rick mentioned, one of the things that we're starting is this major rehabilitation program, which hopefully when we get done, is going to make wonderful improvements to this building. Maria was behind that. She was one of the people who understood all the time that what she wanted was a little bit better quality of life for the people living here. She had such a big heart. She had patience and, again, one of the few people that I've met that I could truly say was a person of top character, real integrity and an honest person, a caring person. So I will miss her in terms of her guidance and tutelage and helping along and understanding what's going on in the community, and I know all of us will miss her because she was, as Rick said, one of the guiding people behind getting things organized and getting us moving in the right direction.

Right before Thanksgiving, Maria came in to see me and she called me first, and said to me at that time she was ill and I did not know how ill she was, but she shared to me at the time, unfortunately, was going to have to resign to take care of herself. It was shortly thereafter after she told me that, actually I talked to Rick about it, we talked about making a presentation in December, and unfortunately in that time or shortly thereafter she passed. It was shocking to me as it was to all of you. That's just a little remembrance I have and again, I want to express my condolences to the family, Kevin, Mark, Alyssa, and Adam – who is not here. We all miss her and I know you're going through hard times now, but remember that, you know, while she's gone, she's not lost. As long as you're thinking about her and one of the things I could tell you, in those 8 trips I made to the Lakeland Bank with her, it was a good opportunity to talk about some personal things: family and friends and at that time I think her mother, Norma, was ill and she wound up passing and she was telling me and I told her some issues I had with my mom that had previously passed away, but one of the things I got out of that was that we had a symmetry in terms of our thought process of our priorities of life. And her priorities were very similar to mine, which was family first, friends second and then business. And I saw in her obituary, and I remember her telling me this because I have the same feeling, which is I feel happiest when I'm with my family and that's how she felt. She really felt that you didn't have to give her anything as long as she could be with her family, she was happy.

So again on behalf of the Housing Authority and myself, I want to express my condolences to you and let you know she was well loved here and we will continue on in her memory and the work that we do here will be done always, every time something's done, we will all look at that and say "we'll remember Maria".

ED Snyder introduced Deputy Mayor Helen LeFrois.

DEPUTY MAYOR LE FROIS: Extended her condolences to the family on behalf of the Mayor and Council to Maria's family: Mark, Alyssa, Adam and Kevin.

Every time she interacted with Maria, she had such a smile on her face; her love of the town coming from a family of service, truly a family of service, from Kevin – your father and having the business and your Mom always being in town. We just want you to know our heartfelt condolences for Maria's passing and just want to recognize and honor her long-time commitment not only to the Housing Authority and all the residents, to this building and to this town and Kevin, as former Mayor, (inaudible) would come and go and were elected, but it's truly the volunteers and the people who live in the Town of Newton who have made this their home generation after generation; all of our volunteers that give us their love and their service because of their love of the town, that is what keeps the town going since 1751.

Maria always had a kind word, to remember stories and names and truly she's already missed. I just want to say thank you to her family, because it's not easy to be a volunteer and out for meetings, events, answering phone calls and having the phone ring, people calling at all hours of the night, but it's her family that supported her in her volunteer efforts and her love of this town that she was able to do that work. Again, I just wanted to be here today to honor and remember Maria and to express our thanks and appreciation on behalf of the Town Council and the town and all of the volunteers on the Commission for her long tenuous service, and for more than anything her love of the residents here in the building and for the Town of Newton.

CHAIRMAN BITONDO: Requested Maria's family join him in the front of the room, reading inscription on the glass plaque: **"Newton Housing Authority Appreciation Award presented to Maria Fiedorczyk for loyal and dedicated service as Chairperson Commissioner, December 11, 2023.**

(5:39 P.M. - At this point in the meeting, recess taken for refreshments with family, Commissioners and public. Public Meeting will reconvene later.)

**(6:10 P.M. – Public Meeting reconvened.)**

CHAIRMAN BITONDO: Meeting reconvened. Commissioners asked if they have any OLD BUSINESS or NEW BUSINESS to be discussed this evening. (No comments.) ED Snyder did not have anything further to be discussed.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

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

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Absent: Vandermaas

Meeting adjourned: 6:11 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Alvarez  
Secretary/Transcriber