



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

February 26, 2024

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

**ROLL CALL:**

Present: 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 6, 2023. 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 or members of the public could be subject to a civil lawsuit for damages. The individual making such statements will be personally liable for any monetary damages resulting from their statements.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS – nothing at this time**

MARY - #3D – Is it a new company? So we won't see the same people any more.

## **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Motion made to approve minutes of January 22, 2024 meeting made by Commissioner Crossley; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Ricciardo.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT – Executive Director Snyder**

Recertification and income process will begin on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to 5<sup>th</sup> floor. Second floor is April 1<sup>st</sup>, then May 1<sup>st</sup>, June 1<sup>st</sup>, July 1<sup>st</sup>. Second floor finished with exception of 2 residents. Notices sent to tenants on other floors – please get your income information ready; it is a HUD required process done on annual basis.

Resolution required in New Jersey to solicit public bids in order to award contract to lowest responsible bidder. Lowest responsible bidder was not previous pest control company. They did a thorough job and always available. New company will be monitored; if they do not fulfill requirements of contract, documents will be sent to them. If they don't work out, we can contact 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest bid – company we previously had.

Summary of all policies with explanations and suggesting some revisions sent to Commissioners. Biggest policy is **Admission Continued Occupancy Policy**. HUD required document discussing everything that goes on in a public housing building: how you get on waiting list, how are you taken off waiting list, what income requirements are for getting into building, if you want a transfer from one to another, how many people in a certain size apartment, etc. That document has been updated through Nan McCann Associates (experts dealing with these policies). Policy is about 4" thick. We have it electronically for Commissioners.

**Procurement Policy** (last time updated 2009) – was sent to NHA attorney Terry Corrison, Esq. He looked it over, said NHA policy is modeled after initial policies developed for everyone in New Jersey; he will suggest some other recommendations and bring it to Commissioners.

List of other things made in **Summary** are being suggested. Once cleaned up, recommendations brought to the Board, Board will have to pass on those items. Policies updated and will be put in 3-ring binders for all Board members and one in the office. As changes are made, we can update documents in Word; also available online to anyone.

Contract register was previously completed.

Residents will be notified about annual apartment inspections as required by HUD. These are NHA inspections done in-house, giving us opportunities to see what's going in our building, make sure everyone is maintaining their apartment in a proper way; make sure apartments are being maintained so when we have HUD inspection, if there are problems, we try to address them.

Inspector does give us a list of every resident he thinks is smoking in their apartment. We are getting complaints again that people are smelling smoke in hallway and marijuana, etc. If you are a heavy smoker, there is no way to hide that.

There are 4 vacancies: 2 have signed leases; 2 were finished February 26<sup>th</sup> with extensive new tile work in bathroom; now calling people in and leases signed. One resident passed away, brother is cleaning it out before end of February. Another resident is going to assisted living facility; haven't vacated yet and will keep until end of March to clean it out.

Last month I said 1 elevator needed a new clutch, part came in, now fixed and it was \$8,100, elevator back in service.

Residents using gazebo for smoking requested NHA put plastic around the outside because of winter winds. Fire Department Inspector came, said it couldn't be put around it, perhaps Plexiglas panels, but they would be difficult to attach.

February 6<sup>th</sup> residents had no heat for 6 hours. Elizabethtown Gas shut it off in the street – told us it would be 10-15 minutes, but 6 hours later heat was turned back on.

Maintenance man Ed has repaired tub drains in 5 apartments. Tail piece that goes down into trap – Ed was able to look up into the wall in an apartment, saw tail piece is rotted at that point. Now he knows what problem is. We think the leak on porch is finally stopped; drywall and ceilings will be fixed. With renovation we are contemplating, we hope to replace all piping here.

TGM came in, installed 6 ball valves in certain areas of NHA heating system so they can be bled better and drain better as it was difficult bleeding many units.

Air handler in hallways that's required to pressurize corridors is still out of service because needed parts aren't here. Ed replaces all filters every 3 months as a resident made us aware that where ductwork is; return line in hallways was very dusty. We had them cleaned out, now replacing all filters on a regular basis.

Streamline conversion – NHA has done everything that can be done in terms of application, communicating with HUD Field Office – Special Application Center in Chicago. They are asking for minor things already submitted 2-3 times. FLC – Field Office Certification comes from Newark that goes to Special Application Center – once they get that, NHA will be approved. We are still waiting and hope to get it soon. Part of it at the end is to spend NHA reserves, working with architect who is preparing bidding documents for 2 things: replace roof - architect will give us preliminary cost estimates for replacing roof with tapered insulation so water drains properly to drains; 2<sup>nd</sup> to install air-conditioning system in all apartments. It is a package air-conditioning unit allowing residents to control their own a/c. No moving a/c in/out of windows. We'll know cost in a few months. Let's replace roof as we have over \$1 million in reserves that has to be spent down; balance put towards air-conditioning – if a/c too much, we'll do whatever we can afford. After conversion, we can secure private financing because of increase in rents. We'll go to bank to get money to complete a/c. In putting in new a/c, electric has to be upgraded, new circuit breaker boxes in all apartments increasing amperage. Switch gear coming from street into building distributed to apartments is capable in size enough to handle additional load.

## ACTIVITIES

United Health care here on December 15<sup>th</sup> to discuss Medicare plans. Sussex County of Senior Service is doing their Matter of Balance; also doing Game Shop Social on March 5<sup>th</sup> @ 3:30; April 30<sup>th</sup> @ 3:30 – also holding Move and Groove Class May 22 and June 26 from 1:30-2:30. Division of Social Services is good with bringing programs in here.

Department of Health/Division of Nursing got COVID vaccine here when we needed it during pandemic; did blood pressure clinic on January 26<sup>th</sup>; heart presentation on February 9<sup>th</sup> and doing nutrition presentation on March 1<sup>st</sup>. Senior Spring Musical – Adams Family will be held on March 21<sup>st</sup> – 2:00 P.M. with lunch served and reservations are required. Notice will be on bulletin board to sign up.

COMMISSIONER CARLSON: Re: air-conditioners. People with 1-bedroom will there be 1 or 2 air-conditioners? We'd have to have portable. ED SNYDER: It is being discussed and a matter of money. There should be 2. We have mostly studio apartments; 25 1-bedroom apartments.

COMMISSIONER CROSSLEY: March 16<sup>th</sup>, Saturday is St. Patrick's Day Parade. Rec Commission will have a bus if residents want to go, with pick up, you can stay on bus or get off; it will park in front of GMS. Free coffee served and little treats. They will bring you back. Parade starts at 11 A.M., pick-up will start about 10 A.M. going all over town.

CHAIRMAN BITONDO: Concerned about the 2 big projects – if approved for Stream Line Conversion, how quickly does NHA have to act upon it as a housing authority? ED SNYDER: They say as long as funds are obligated, you have 2 years to actually spend that. That's why I want bidding documents; go out to bid; award contract and contract states obviously we design it subject to availability of funds. Funds for roof are there so we move on that; put in per unit cost for air-conditioning and have contract in place. Important that **funds are obligated** meaning "signed contract".

COMMISSIONER RICCIARDO: Incident Form – what happens if they don't sign it? It states here if they are going to report it, **it has to be signed**. ED SNYDER: I didn't want to dissuade people without having their name, but if somebody put their name to it and it's anonymous, it does not get same credibility as somebody coming forward with a name and making a claim. This happened here: Person sent it to State Division of Criminal Investigation and it was because of violent harassment and threats to residents of building and corruption between Federal officials at HUD and local officials here in Newton with no specifics. Someone came forward and said threshold by front sliding door, cement was cracking up. Somebody tripped on it. As soon as we knew, we had that repaired. We are meeting here Wednesday, 5:15 P.M.; Kathleen is on Resident Services Advisory Committee. I will bring file with all suggestions and forms and go over them. Karen will take notes and report back to the Board as to what's going on; hoping to get some good suggestions: a/c, repairs needed to building, concern for other residents who don't have much family involvement – health is declining. In that regard, we would delicately approach family noting resident could use assistance, etc. Much will be resolved through this committee meeting quarterly.

#### **OLD BUSINESS – nothing at this time**

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Two Commissioners have terms expire at end of April 2024. Officials in Town need to be aware and get Commissioners approved again for another term through Mayor & Council – Maryann Carlson and Joseph Ricciardo. Please contact Terri Oswin, Municipal Clerk.

CHAIRMAN BITONDO: Does NHA ensure that all contractors have up-to-date Certificates of Insurance? ED SNYDER: It will be checked out, but I'm sure they are. Karen is asked to put the Certificate in their file when we sign contract.

#### **RESOLUTIONS #2024-7 & #2024-8**

1. RESOLUTION #2024-7 – APPROVAL OF BILL LIST FOR FEBRUARY 2024 MEETING

Motion to approve bill list in amount of \$73,796.71 made by Commissioner Crossley; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Ricciardo.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

2. RESOLUTION #2024-8 – CONTRACT AWARD – EXTERMINATING

CHAIRMAN BITONDO: They listed a generic amount to other services for \$125 where some other contracts made items explicit. Not to hold up approval of the bid; could we go back and ask what their specific charges are – for rats, mice, emergency?

Motion to approve contract with Nature Plus Pest Control @ \$349/month made by Commissioner Vandermaas; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Crossley.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

**COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS – ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA**

CELESTE - #4J – Thank you for fixing the sidewalk quickly out front where I fell.

PHYLLIS – #5M – There is a hole out front in the macadam where the buses stop, you can put your foot in it. ED SNYDER: It is a difficult time to get asphalt to fill holes. We can fill it with stone for now until it can be patched.

MARY - #3D – Water accumulates in a hole on the driveway near the double doors, it could ice over. ED SNYDER: Parking lot is a mess, doing our best to repair front section from street coming in. Because of cost, part of big renovation work being proposed in future will include taking all asphalt out, re-milling it, redirecting drains to make sure they're proper, then resurfacing everything. We listened to you all: looking at redirecting traffic in front of building as concern about ambulances coming in and not getting out. It's part of big job and change front also. We will patch holes. COMMISSIONER RICCIARDO: Consider contacting DPW as they have "hot box" and can heat product and fill hole.

GEORGE - #2P – When you do the new air-conditioner package, would you consider grandfathering people who have lived here longest and do their a/c first. CHAIRMAN BITONDO: We'll bring it to attention of architect and engineer, if that is possible, and give it some consideration. ED SNYDER: Replacements would be done section by section, running new electrical wiring to apartment and upgrading apartments.

MARK - #3N – I don't understand Streamline Conversion. Section 8 – it will be for seniors and disabled? ED SNYDER: It will be same as it is now, no different, exactly the same. MARK: Is it possible to get a microphone in the room? It is difficult for many to hear what Commissioners are saying.

Many voices comment how difficult it is to hear Commissioners and ED Snyder when they are addressing those in the room or giving a report. They requested a microphone and amplifier.

**REPORT ON 2023 FINANCES**

CHAIRMAN BITONDO: Requested reports on financial statements received from Policari, where NHA stands financially.

ED SNYDER: Policari did their 12/31 Interim Financial Statement, which are unaudited, and done before Accountant makes adjustments. There are notes 1-7 on spreadsheet indicating readjusting items to certain accounts.

On **revenue side** \$164,000 was budgeted in revenue; \$216,000 was subsidy from HUD. Note says we don't budget for capital fund money that we get in every year. NHA had additional subsidy that HUD gave us. A formula comes out with a number, generally that number comes out after you prepare your budget, so NHA got a bit more money. On **revenue side** we had more actual revenue by almost \$200,000 and that's resulted in additional subsidy and Capital Fund money that we don't budget for. At State budget that brings things together more with a section that has Capital Fund money in State budget, which is budget we use now in terms of approvals. HUD doesn't approve a budget any more; they just approve a subsidy form called Operating Fund Formula telling NHA how money we'll receive. Accountant inserts that into State budget; that tells us theoretically how much we'll get. Budget is merely a planning tool.

On **revenue side** NHA is up by a few hundred thousand dollars. Expenses were broken out to explain more in accordance with Policari's notes. NHA on Administrative Expenses had less than what was budgeted by \$20,000; Tenant Services – no tenant services - \$5,200 to benefit; Utilities - \$15,000 in hole. Gas was almost \$56,000 – budgeted \$45,000. Also water and sewer fees paid. It will be adjusted this year. Utility budget is based on last 3 years. Material & Contract Costs – over there, but Note #6 – lot of Capital items reclassified. Alpine Roofing, A&A Contracting, the generator, flooring, etc. The reason we were over on that. Policari will reclassify into Fixed Assets so when Auditor does audit, it will show being close to what it ought to be.

Protective Services – we don't have any, but it is budgeted for each year - \$3,000 we did not spend. General Expenses over by \$542,000. Result was at year end: **Total Revenue - \$872,000** broken down looking at Policari's sheet in detail. **Total Expenses - \$699,000; Increase in Unrestricted Net Assets - \$172,000.** This is unaudited. Policari uses Trial Balance. It was a good year for NHA and this is unusual for a Housing Authority.

## COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS – PART 2

PHYLLIS - #5M – Asked about fire alarm box with phone in hall and recent AT&T problem across USA. If phones weren't working and there was a fire, would that fire alarm box work? ED SNYDER: Yes, police and fire department would show up.

SUE - #4B – She's lived in building 12 years and her apartment has never been painted, but new people moving in get new paint and flooring. Do residents here a long time ever get upgraded? ED SNYDER: As part of big renovation work we're doing, that is one item being looked at – new flooring. When we turn over a unit, it needs to be upgraded, but if you multiply that times 70, we just don't have money to do that.

Building & Grounds Committee of Chairman Bitondo, Commissioner Ricciardo and I are looking into it and will have more meetings with residents to go over items that are proposed, and understanding logic that went behind it. There will be a list of priorities: roof, elevators, mechanical systems and beyond that: kitchen cabinets, bathrooms, etc. We can look at those things, but matter of dollar and cents.

MARY - #5M – Will heating come along with air-conditioning? ED SNYDER: We will look at everything.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Alvarez  
Secretary/Transcriber