

1

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

January 13, 2025

(Condensed Minutes of Taped Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Of Newton Housing Authority – 5:15 P.M.)

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT:

Chairman Richard Bitondo
Commissioner Karen Crossley
Commissioner MaryAnn Carlson
Commissioner Joseph Ricciardo
Commissioner Wendy Vandermaas

ABSENT: Commissioner Mark Fiedorczyk

FLAG SALUTE

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by the filing of an Annual Meeting Notice with the Municipal Clerk, posting on their official bulletin board and delivery of same to New Jersey Herald & Star Ledger on December 10, 2024. The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend meetings of the public bodies at which business affecting their interest is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions in 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 welcomed and encouraged by the Newton Housing Authority to comment during the public comment portion of the meeting. There will be two public comment sections in the meeting. Residents can address the Board of Commissioners on the Agenda items during the public comment agenda items portion of the meeting and general subjects of interest during the Public Comment General

Items portion of the meeting. That's for items that are not 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 give 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.

ANNUAL REORGANIZATION (Election of Officers)

Motion made by Commissioner Crossley to nominate Rick Bitondo as Chairman; 2nd by Commissioner Ricciardo.

There were no other nominations and nominations closed.

AYES:	Commissioner Bitondo	Yes
	Commissioner Crossley	Yes
	Commissioner Carlson	Yes
	Commissioner Ricciardo	Yes
	Commissioner Vandermaas	Yes
	Absent: Fiedorczyk	---

Motion made by Commissioner Carlson to nominate Karen Crossley as Vice-Chairman; 2nd by Chairman Bitondo.

There were no other nominations and nominations closed.

AYES:	Commissioner Bitondo	Yes
	Commissioner Crossley	Yes
	Commissioner Carlson	Yes
	Commissioner Vandermaas	Yes
	Commissioner Ricciardo	Yes
	Absent: Fiedorczyk	---

Chairman Bitondo noted importance of Building & Grounds Committee this year because of RAD Conversion and Capital Needs Assessment NHA will be undergoing soon. Previously, Commissioners Ricciardo, Fiedorczyk and I served as B&G Committee. When would those meetings be as two of us are retired, but still working. ED Snyder emailed architect today and will contact B&G Committee when architect answers. Wednesday is a good day for ED Snyder. Commissioner Ricciardo requested if it is Wednesday, that it is always a Wednesday due to his work commitment; knowing date

a week in advance will be helpful. Chairman Bitondo's availability would be best after 3:00 PM; Commissioner Ricciardo can request early shift. We'll reach out to Commissioner Fiedorczyk to see if he's still interested and available.

Resident Advisory Committee is Commissioners Crossley, Carlson and Vandermaas.

ED Snyder: It might be advisable to have a Finance Committee. It's mostly sending documents (budget and audit) to Chairman Bitondo, discussing them. Commissioner Crossley: It's my forte and wheelhouse, I do contract negotiations for unions, Port Authority, Prevailing wage certified. ED Snyder will reach out to Commissioner Crossley when necessary.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – ED Snyder

Annual recertification for everyone's income will begin soon; notices for 2nd floor should be going out within next 10 days. Please get your information together. You will be notified when the process will begin. We are looking for an intern; Sussex County College was no help. Another college Karen reached out to will get back to us.

December 10th, Liberty Towers received a Certificate of Appreciation for being a "tobacco free champion". It will be framed and hung so everyone can see it. County thinks we are doing a good job.

Roof replacement: We replaced roof; final payment is on Agenda, which was subject to Carlisle inspection, inspection by Newton Building Department, submission of warranty agreement and final close-out documents and approval by architect. We have all of that with exception, because of weather, wall damage in front has not been repaired. We received an estimate for \$4,200, which I think was high. We told architect to take \$5,000 out of final payment and we're withholding until weather gets better and wall repaired. There is a question of putting back the way it was OR cut it back. Company going to repair it, looked at it, would repair it, but they never came to do repair. They were informed if they do the job and it doesn't meet with our satisfaction, we're not paying. Just let us do it. It's a subcontractor that hit it, contractor doesn't want to pay, making sub do it.

Resident Advisory meeting with tenants will be on February 10th. At that time we'll go over RAD Program, where we're at in terms of items we're possibly putting into NHA.

At end of December there was a water main break. One resident actually mentioned we send out a boiling water advisory notice that we got from Water Company, which was sent out. Apparently water was coming out cloudy or not very good.

Our budget is done and adopted last month. On actual RAD Program, Capital Needs Assessment – which is document at center of doing financing. It was handed out

tonight, keeping a running tally with Committee. Our residents that raise issues at meetings of things that they think should be done, for example, automatic doors in here. I sent that today to architect and told him we need meeting to update Capital Needs Assessment; like to see many of these items incorporated. At which point B&G Committee will go over it. I gave you the list and if anyone thinks I missed something, please let me know and we'll add to list.

I'll be working on numbers to see what we actually can finance, how many millions of dollars and at some point we will prioritize first as we do have a lot of work.

We conducted two more Resident meetings because HUD required in switching from Streamline Conversion to RAD Program – 1 on October 6th; other November 25th.

They're done. Applications went in. We received a CHAP – **Commitment to Enter Into a Housing Assistance Payments Contract**. That's approval of the application. Next step is called a **Concept Call** with HUD. We can't have Concept Call until we have another Resident meeting. Meeting is scheduled, and Commissioners have copy of Power Point I prepared for that meeting, which is on the January 29th. Once that's done, we will have Concept Call with HUD; explain what we're doing. Now in process of doing financing plan. Next meeting there will be authorization for hiring professionals we need: one to do a PAR 58 Environmental; need to bring an architect to do public bidding documents for work we're actually going to be doing at end of this; need to prepare financial pro forma; need to have a budget; insurance stuff. Today I prepared my check list, working on that already. The approval that we got on HUD website says the financing plan has to be submitted by September 13th/a Saturday.

Once that goes in and I'll explain to residents on the 29th, next phase is – once they approve financing plan, part of which is I'll look at banks, reaching out to people I deal with, to get term sheets to see best possible deal in terms of interest rates, loans. We'll get a loan commitment as part of that to borrow the money to make all improvements to building, goes in financing plan and then they issue a RAD Conversion Commitment (RCC). Once we get that they tell us we have so many days to close, which is where special attorney comes in. He'll prepare all opinions, title work, everything he needs to go to closing. Closing should take place within 60 days, but I've seen one done in 60 days with HUD. Let's say 60-120 days.

Once we close, theoretically we are still in Public Housing Program to the end of fiscal year. After that fiscal year ends, then we go to Section 8 program. Even though we're technically Section 8, we still get Capital Fund money, Operating Fund money. We don't get higher rents to next full year that we go into that. We may need an appraisal and I'll talk to HUD about that. That's where we're at. I did Power Point for residents.

By next meeting after Concept Call, I hope to have more information on work that we will be doing so I can share with residents, more honed down, here's our list and what we're proposing to do. Meeting will be at 2:00 PM, January 29th.

ED Snyder told attorney for Cliffside Park HA, agreement that NHA submitted was for Streamline Voluntary Conversion, technically different from Project Based Voucher

Program; same agreement, but all statutory citations are different. I told them take all Streamline Conversion out of there, so we can get this to them, because if they're going to approve it, I want it approved right after the fact. It's moving along slowly. I reached out to Field Office Director of Public Housing Division, Howie Cumming (ph.) stating he was on it. We'll see what happens.

Activities: Applications for assistance for food stamp has been posted on bulletin board. On January 16th there's a Game Stop social scheduled in Community Room – flyer has been posted. Bingo continuing. In September 2025, there will be a bracelet making class here – flyers to be distributed; Christmas in July craft event on July 9th – flyers to be sent out. Still looking to do a CPR class from Sussex County or first aid, etc.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – Agenda Items

There were no questions and/or comments on 3 resolutions to be voted on this evening.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 18, 2024 Special Meeting

Motion to approve minutes of December 18, 2024 Special Meeting made by Commissioner Crossley; 2nd by Commissioner Vandermaas.

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

OLD BUSINESS

ED Snyder said Congress passed legislation 7 years ago – HOTMA – Housing Opportunities to the Modernization Act. HOTMA changed many things that go into recertifying tenants' incomes. It's been delayed for a long time. Current implementation date is end of July 2025. With new administration, we don't know what's going to happen, and many of these things have to do with – if someone comes in and tells you what their income is, just write it down and accept that. Now some think its fine, no one commits fraud, etc., and other people think you should be documenting everything. I gave document to our secretary, Debbie Alvarez, to create new document with changes and incorporate it; send out to all Commissioners, red line for what these changes are. Some are discretionary, some are mandatory. On new admissions, you could actually extend to people living here – it's discretionary – I don't recommend doing that as once you're living here, you don't want to bother existing tenants, there's going to be an asset limit, \$200,000. If you have assets in excess of that when you're initially being admitted, you're no longer eligible. There is a difference in living in Oklahoma with \$200K and living in New Jersey with \$200K. It changes the way people who certify these things go about it. It could be implemented in July, but not now. It's on hold. Recertifications are not being done here; they're being done by my staff. At conference coming up, we'll be training people on how to do HOTMA.

NEW BUSINESS

We get inspected here by HUD, and we do our own inspections, which we're required to do, but HUD comes in and does inspections under protocol UPCS – Uniform Property Condition Standards. That's now been changed – NSPIRE – new standards are more focused on apartments, however, since we've submitted an application for RAD and submitted application into HUD portal to take us out of Public Housing Program, right now we don't get inspections done. NSPIRE – National Property Inspection Reporting.

RESOLUTIONS #2025-1 THROUGH & INCLUDING #2025-3

1. RESOLUTION #2025-1 – APPROVAL OF BILL LIST FOR JANUARY 2025 MEETING

Motion to approve \$139,783.95 bill list made by Commissioner Ricciardo; 2nd by Commissioner Crossley.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

Absent: Fiedorczyk

2. RESOLUTION #2025-2 – APPROVAL OF CONTRACT FOR LEGAL SERVICES **AS AMENDED**

ED Snyder spoke with Terry Corrison (ph.) at the firm. Terry has agreed to continue that outset number without coming here at an hourly rate. When he does work, he'll just bill NHA hourly. Bill was less than \$5,000 for entire year. It won't be \$1,000/month. It will be hourly. It was mostly Civil Rights.

Motion to approve Resolution #2025-2 **as amended to not exceed \$12,000 annually and billed hourly rate of \$175** made by Commissioner Crossley; 2nd by Commissioner Vandermaas.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

Absent: Fiedorczyk

3. RESOLUTION #2025-3 – APPROVAL OF PAYMENT FOR NEW ROOF

Motion to approve next to last payment on new roof in amount of \$95,410, withholding of \$5,000 for wall repairs, made by Commissioner Crossley; 2nd by Commissioner Carlson.

Commissioner Ricciardo believes \$5,000 withheld is not enough to repair wall. ED Snyder said NHA already got estimates from contractor who did garden area outside. Ed searched for matching rocks for the project, found them and they are here. ED Snyder might have a ballard installed, painted yellow, to distinguish the area.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

Absent: Fiedorczyk

PUBLIC COMMENTS – General Items

PHYLLIS - #5M – At end of driveway, it is very dark, people can't see division between the two. Is it possible to have some laser lights at end where rocks are, perhaps stuck on utility pole to light up that area? Chairman Bitondo suggested reflectors. Discussion about a motion light on the building, perhaps paint it yellow. Commissioner Crossley has a motion detector, battery operated, at top of her driveway and can be tilted. They have solar ones also.

KATHLEEN – Will they ever put bricks in trash cans outside? ED Snyder: Pavers are in there and they still blew over. Ed will put 50# bags of concrete in there.

CELESTE - #4J – Thank you for all you have done last year and during the holidays. Commissioner Crossley requested they have party same time next year so she can bring the big decorations.

KAREN - #3J – The clock out front can't be read, could it please be changed. Chairman Bitondo: Submit a Work Order to the office, you don't need to wait for a meeting. Fill out a Work Order and the problem will be addressed in a timely manner. Rather than a complaint, just submit a Work Order.

ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

Absent: Fiedorczyk

Meeting adjourned at 6:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Alvarez
Secretary/Transcriber