



NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

Approved – JULY 18, 2018 MINUTES

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met in Regular Session at “McDonald House” at 49 Old South St. Northampton, Ma. on Wednesday, July 18, 2018.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 6:36 PM.

Upon Roll Call, those present and absent were as follows:

PRESENT: Commissioner Brooks, Commissioner Hebert, Commissioner Budgar, Commissioner Richards & Chairperson Jones.

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Cara Clifford; Deb Dunphy; Jack Redman; Maria Walton; Sharon Kimble; Keith Walsh; John Wyda; Tom O'Connor; Larry White; Edgardo Cancel; Brenda Thompson; Roy Martin; Rosa Figueroa; Christine Haigney; Heidi Sousse; Joella Tarbutton-Springfield; Erika Krause; Diane Mader, Pat Sullivan.

Chairperson Jones held a moment of silence in memory of the passing of John Andrulis who was a past Board Member.

EMPLOYEE AND TENANT ISSUES

Employee Issues: None.

TENANT ISSUES:

Lisa Sargent – Salvo #627 – question regarding the article in today’s Gazette. Chairperson Jones said he was asked by the Gazette to comment on the article but he is still trying to figure out what the article means. I do not have anything more to say.


Heidi Sousse – Salvo # 628 – Has PTSD, NHA has poor customer service, lack of communication. Somebody threatened to shoot me because I stopped him from committing a crime last year and he ended up going to jail. He is out on parole and is living at #712 Salvo and is not on the lease. Nothing has been done about him and he is going to shoot people – he has a handgun and is shooting birds. Name – Frank Orlando.

Marianne Labarge – Ward 6 Council Representative – She spoke about NHA rounding up some money for people who are hard of hearing. She is here for the air conditioning problem – why did it happen? Board members knew nothing about this, they should have been involved. She would like to see transparency and communication. Cara replied that the Board does not get involved in the day to day operations. According to HUD and DHCD that was a day to day operation, and there was no change made to a policy, nor was a policy created. My decision was a safety issue – she has documentation where there was an accident and a lawsuit ensued, and it only takes one accident. We did not take away air conditioners, we provided them with an option of buying a new type of air conditioner with a 2 year payment option. NHA is not required to provide air conditioning according to the EPA. Ms. Labarge suggested NHA have an attorney on the board – Ms. Clifford responded we have an in-house Attorney.

Someone noticed Edgar Cancel from Hampshire Heights videotaping the meeting. Chairperson Jones allowed it. Lisa Sargent said she did not want to be videotaped.

Jada Tarbutton – Salvo – Thanked us for having copies of the agenda for the meeting. She appreciates the Maintenance guys and everything Cara has done and the progress that has been made.

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Don Moran – Salvo – “Cara, you are doing a wonderful job.” Lynn King is a tremendous asset.. He has lived at Salvo for 23 years and at one time there was a part time security guard, and police officers which NHA paid for. Is it possible to get security? Cara said the cameras will help – she has been working on getting the cameras installed since her first year here.

Barry Grimes – Salvo tenant -There are still smoking issues and people getting into the building who are not authorized. Tenants who have been evicted are back in the building. Cara said overnight guests should be reported to the office. If you tell her where they are staying she can try to catch them. Cara has also bought an ID system but has not been able to implement it yet.

Jude Sidney - #303 McDonald – I have never spoken against you, Cara, but I am concerned about my neighbors regarding the air conditioners. You told us on May 2nd that NHA was not going to have maintenance install the window units. It took you six weeks to decide to have the Air Conditioners. NHA should replace the air conditioners that tenants go rid of. You need to apologize to the tenants.

Wayne Milo – McDonald # 308 – He went to the Mayor’s office and asked to be on the Board – he has had only one call back. The Mayor turned his back on Cara – Board needs to have some transparency.

John Wyda – #420 Salvo – Questioned when the security cameras will be installed. Locking Community Room? Glass on the candy machine was smashed. Cara asked Jack to write a memo to the tenants about locking the community room and laundry rooms. There is also a non resident living in the building. Snuck in with a dog and he was asked if he knew someone at Salvo. Tenants are throwing down their keys at night to let people in. Also a wheelchair bound gentleman coming in with a gun. Cara asked Jack Redman to set up a meeting with the Chief of Police and Fire department for a meet and greet at Salvo. Regarding the speed bumps, the fire department is concerned having them at Salvo.

Larry White – Salvo – said there was a girl on a phone trying to get into Salvo saying that she works there.

Roy Martin – Salvo –wanted to apologize to Marianne about people getting in her face. The A/C’s are not required to be provided. Cannot lock the community room, they tried before and the Fire Dept. said no. Cara will check with the F.D. On the 7th floor Lorraine is staying in an apartment illegally. There are cigarette butts everywhere.

Jane Morrison – McDonald – There is a difference between making a mistake and making intentional actions that can be misconstrued as to harming the tenants. Cara has good intentions – the A/C was not handled well but she believes that Cara cares about everyone and gives her credit.

Erika Krauss – McDonald – Cara is doing a good job but it is hard to please everyone. We all make mistakes and we should help each other out. Jack is doing a good job too!

Tom Britton – Salvo – I am not a fan of yours Cara, and I am not impressed. You are making bad mistakes and they are threatening lives. Cara said they are experimenting with a sleeve air conditioner in Heidi Sousse’s apartment – these A/C’s are costly and we are working on getting them at a lower rate. We are trying to get donations, or other funds to try to help people out.

Shelley Neumann – Cahill – people should calm down, and she will bring up issues at another time.

Joe Santinello – Salvo – Thanked Jack Redman for his help. They have lived there for two months and the staff has been very helpful. They have a portable air conditioner and it is freezing them out.

Toni Parizo – McDonald – she has submitted in writing several times that there is mold in the building. She took photos of her apartment which was a mess, health department was informed about getting the mold cleaned in the vents. States that she is dying because of this stuff and Cara does not care that she is sick from the mold. Ms.

Clifford responded that she has had Toni's apartment tested multiple times and there was less mold than the outside. The ventilation cleaning cost is around \$16,000 and they are working to find a cheaper company.

Ron Terren - Forsander - wrote a letter to Jack regarding the orange clown mulch and has not received a response. Ron gave Jack a name for the mulch with no artificial ingredients - why is it a different color this year? Jack apologized for not getting back to him as he was busy doing other things. Ron has an appointment on August 3rd with Mr. Redman.

Peter Cushing - Forsander - Regarding April inspections - a lot of things are not getting done. In Bldg. Q there is a tenant whose toilet has not flushed for six months. Cara said that has not been reported to NHA, and we are still working on inspections. Peter said that the benches are getting old and shabby. Cara asked him to put it in writing to Jack for the benches. Peter noted that someone recently passed away in Forsander and that is the second time someone has died in this unit. Jack said we are waiting for the police dept or Medical Examiner to give the final signoff then we can send the tenant to Legal. Peter is working with the health dept. to get Narcan and would like a meeting with NHA. Thanked Cara for doing the vision lines.

Brenda Thompson - McDonald - Seems like there are a lot of issues - Cara is only one person - maybe Cara needs a second person to help divide the work so she is not overwhelmed. Thinks Cara is doing a good job and maybe a sub-committee to help out with issues. Cara responded that once there is an Association in each building then we need to meet with each of them. The code of Mass that governs the tenants association is #760cmr609 which helps staff and tenants.

Mrs. Santenello - Salvo - Fire Alarm went off in Salvo - not very loud and she didn't really hear it and no one went out during the alarm. The Alarms go off often but not sure why they aren't louder. Also, they are new tenants and they did not know there was lunch provided in the Community Room. Jack will get new move in orientation. Air conditioner works good but needs to be emptied frequently and it can sometimes be difficult as her husband is disabled. Maintenance of this type of unit may not be right for the elderly.

Wayne Milo - McDonald - When you call the front office and are put on hold - the tenants hang up and are feeling neglected. Cara is looking into a new system.

Don Moran - Salvo - Regarding the fire alarm - system is changed and alarms used to go off in the apartments. Police say tenants don't have to leave their apartments. Also, can he get a job description for NHA employees?

Heidi Sousse - Salvo - Cara hasn't had a fair shake since she's been here. The Air conditioning was not handled well - but likes the time payments with no interest financing.

Lisa Sargent - Salvo - asked about the email she sent.

Chris Palamas - is on Disability Commission - Pressure on public housing has been raised - he is trying to sort out what happened.

Larry White - Salvo - People are on the computer in the community room checking out porn. Comcast? He also has a portable air conditioner that is also a heater and you don't have to empty it.

Chairperson Jones - 8:30 p.m. - Going to Public Comment

Elizabeth Brown - started the petition. Basically a lot of people were not given proper air conditioners - did you meet with the public housing staff? She and Sacred Elder met with Jack and Lisa - the tenants are confused about the additional fees for electricity - some are paying and some are not. Some tenants were not given refunds. Cara - Lisa Donoghue is notifying tenants regarding the air conditioners. Elizabeth and others went into some of the apartments and temps were in the low to mid 80's and someone tripped on a cord. The portable air conditioners are

not working well and some tenants returned them. Ms. Clifford responded that if we do not hear from residents we would not know if something is not working, or not right. When we are here during the day, it was fine. It was in the paper that we checked on tenants and supplied water and Gatorade. Also, the Community Room was 76 degrees and there are now three air conditioners in the room. Ms. Brown said there is definitely a clear break of communication and that this is a burden to the elderly. Ms. Clifford responded that nursing homes are using the same units we have. It was taken into consideration to provide alternative air conditioners and by giving tenants a credit or a payment plan. It was a danger to have the units in the windows, they weigh about 40 lbs. and could really hurt someone.

Elizabeth Humphrey – wanted clarification about regulations in McDonald and is the A/C situation directly a regulation of HUD? No one is allowed to have window A/C's? Cara stated that Federal properties are inspected yearly and if the A/C is not properly installed or blocking a window, it is denied. HUD states they do not want window A/C's. Cara spoke with the EPA and it is not in the law to provide A/C. Elizabeth said they care about the residents and need to know the law about it. She will look at HUD and Mass. General Laws.

Elizabeth Brown - She was appalled that tenants had 100 degree apartments for a number of days. She visited with tenants and let them know that they are being heard. The hallways are very warm also. A/C was offered only after the petition was started.

Cara responded that the Federal Government was disappointed that I offered A/C's.

Ron Hebert – McDonald – did not get a notice until May 2nd after I asked to have my unit put in. I had to remove my 2 units which he sold and his brother bought him a portable unit. Maria came up during the heat wave – had the A/C set at 65 and it was 87 degrees in the kitchen and his bedroom was 79 degrees. Tried to add fans but could not get the temperature down. He is getting a second portable for the other bedroom. He has been on the board for 15 years and the Board was never informed of this situation. As far as other things, Cara has done a great job. This is one situation that I disagree with.

Public Comment ended at 8:54 p.m.

Approval of the June 2018 Minutes

Chairperson Jones asked the Board if there is any discussion of the minutes.

Commissioner Hebert put forth the motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Brooks.

VOTING AYE: Commissioner Brooks, Hebert, Richards, Budgar and Chairperson Jones.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Jones approved the June 2018 Minutes.

OLD BUSINESS:

NONE.

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION TO APPROVE THE HIRING OF AN ENGINEER FOR A COST ESTIMATE OF ELECTRICAL PANELS

Inspected by Risk Mgmt. and they found that the electrical panels throughout the apartments and basements are not in compliance with the fire code. Priority that we replace all electrical panels.

Commissioner Budgar asked what kind of price range? Cara - Salvo had some issues - \$423,000.00. Commissioner Budgar asked if there is any imminent danger. Ms. Clifford said it has been like this since the 40's. Commissioner Budgar asked what the time frame was to get this started? Cara - If approved in the Capital Fund Grant, then it may move quicker. Commissioner Budgar asked if there was a possibility of losing Insurance next year? Cara – not sure, they may give us a higher premium. Commissioner Budgar – is there anything else in the audit that gives a price range? \$83,000 - \$120,000.00 for all units. Commissioner Richards – how long will this take? It first goes to HUD- start after approval.

VOTING AYE: Commissioner Brooks, Budgar, Hebert, Richards and Chairperson Jones.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Jones approved this motion.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE CERTIFICATE OF FINAL COMPLETION FOR FISH # 214101
HAMPSHIRE HEIGHTS DHW TANKS

Certificate of final completion - \$4229.00 - final payment which agency has approved.

Commissioner Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hebert.

VOTING AYE: Commissioner Brooks, Hebert, Richards and Chairperson Jones.

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Budgar

ABSTAIN: None

Whereupon Chairperson Jones approved the motion.

MOTION TO APPROVE SELECTION OF WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT VENDOR

Received three quotes – Planetaria was the best one for \$11,550. Boston Housing Authority is letting us use their template for No Charge. DHCD gave us \$10,000.00.

Commissioner Budgar asked if all the work has been done internally. The Mayor's office gets a lot of calls re Housing. Can the City IT look at this website to see if it will help alleviate calls? Jack Redman did check with the city and one reason we want Planetaria is they are fully functional with the Disability Commission. Commissioner Budgar – date to be up and running? Once NHA purchases the domain there will be a soft launch and totally up and running by end of year. Commissioner Budgar – can it be updated by staff? Yes.

Commissioner Hebert put forth the motion to approve seconded by Commissioner Budgar.

VOTING AYE: Commissioner Budgar, Hebert, Brooks, Richards and Chairperson Jones.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Jones approved the motion.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION TO ADOPT SECTION 8 UTILITY ALLOWANCE

Resolution # 1171 – Utility Allowance. Utilities are included in rent, HUD then gives tenant credit, which lowers their rent.

Commissioner Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hebert.

VOTING AYE: Commissioner Budgar, Brooks, Hebert, Richards and Chairperson Jones.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Jones approved Section 8 Utility Allowance

MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION #1172 – FY18 Capital Fund Grant

To improve federal aided housing – financial acceptance grant of \$295,000.00. McDonald Elevator replacement – 2 phase – definitely needs to be done.

Commissioner Budgar – any part of this going to a project engineer?

Commissioner Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hebert.

VOTING AYE: Commissioner Brooks, Hebert, Budgar, Richards and Chairperson Jones.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Jones approved the Motion to approve Resolution #1172.

DISCUSSION

Request board signatures for Lead Paint Certification

Providing lead paint form and booklet and insuring Section 8 is in compliance of these regulations.

Signed by Board Members.

DISCUSSION

General Depository Account – Federal Government Requires. Bank secures our funds beyond the FDIC. We are with Peoples United Bank – no longer with FSB for Federal Projects.

DISCUSSION AND DECISION:

Air Conditioners and if there should be a policy.

Board Members can decide if there should be a policy.

Commissioner Richards – yes to having a policy and NHA stands behind it. This process makes us look bad. I have worked in Healthcare and sometimes things go wrong – analyze the process and come to a decision – the process was flawed, we can do a better job and provide a safe place for residents.

Commissioner Hebert put forth the motion to table.

Commissioner Budgar- was disturbed over what happened. His life was turned upside down by the heat when he lost consciousness in his car last summer which has affected the use of his kidneys. This issue hit him hard. What was done was not thought out, the Board was not told about this issue before it was implemented. He says Yes to having a policy and wants better communication between NHA and the Board, especially when tenants are involved. He read an article “Manage, Control & Govern Authority”.

Chairperson Jones stated that this started because of the reality of failing the REAC inspection, who will fail the Authority and income and subsidies could be cut. Adopt a policy and make it clear that is a Board Policy so that the ED does not get taken to the woodshed.

In the interim, maintain things as they are, window units stay in – explore sleeves at McDonald and what the cost would be. We are sitting on the \$374,000.00 which should be spent on A/C or other issues that are important. HUD has not given us any directions on how NHA can use the money.

Commissioner Brooks has a sleeve with a 10,000 BTU air conditioner and it cools his apartment.

Commissioner Richards – Is it possible to find out the cost of the sleeves before they meet for implementing the policy? We need to work as a team – residents, board, Cara.

DISCUSSION

Buddy Alarms at McDonald.

Right now there is a cord in the apartments which can be pulled if in trouble – however, it does not go to the Police or Fire Department which gives tenants a false sense of security. When the cord is pulled and someone does not check on tenant the light stays on and trips the breaker in the basement. DHCD wants them removed upon turnovers. Commissioners Hebert and Brooks both say that when the cord is pulled people do go out into the hallway to check – the Buddy system has worked. Commissioner Budgar asked if this is widely known in McDonald. Do other properties have the Buddy System? Can you have a tenant meeting? Commissioner Richards – how much would it cost to have Lifeline?

Cara – Salvo, McDonald, maybe Bridge St. and Forsander have Buddy system. On the state projects they are being removed during a turnover. Only Federal Properties are not having them removed during turnover.

Elizabeth Humphrey - tenants like the Buddy System – isn't that more important? Cara responded that DHCD is telling Housing Authorities to remove them. The state and HUD publishes articles on the Buddy System – can be read online.

At this time, the Executive Director's Report Was Read

Ms. Clifford went through the total rents collected, recertifications and work orders for the month. NHA held an ice cream social at Hampshire Heights to promote the Mass Leap Program. Mass Leap met their quota with tenants who signed up. Special thanks to Edgardo Cancel for his assistance and team work with this event. Also, on the hot and humid days, the Public Housing Staff delivered care packages and did wellness checks on residents. Also the Salvo Dedication to the Budgar Family will take place on August 4th.

At this time, Chairperson Jones asked if there were any questions or any other Business.

Commissioner Hebert put forth the motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Budgar.