



# NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

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Approved –December 10, 2018

## MINUTES

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met in Regular Session at “McDonald House” at 49 Old South St. Northampton, Ma. On Monday December 10, 2018.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

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

**PRESENT:** Vice Chairperson Brooks, Commissioner Budgar, Commissioner Richards, Commissioner Laufer and Chairperson Jones. .

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cara Clifford; Maria Walton; Deb Dunphy; Keith Walsh; Tom O'Connor; John Wyda; Roy Martin; Toni Parizo; Joseph Santaniello; Angela Santaniello; Jada Tarbutton; Barry Grimes; Lynn King; Susan Henderson and Betsy Medina.

**Public Comment:** NONE

### EMPLOYEE ISSUES

Employee Issues: None.

### TENANT ISSUES:


John Wyda – Salvo – Apt. 103 is posting things on the hallway wall and nothing is being done about it. He took pictures, this has been going on since December of 2017. Tenants were told they can hang nothing on the walls, if maintenance removes items, tenants will be charged. Jack is supposed to write a letter. Chairperson Jones – the wall on the hallway? Yes. Mr. Wyda - regarding the speed bumps – what is the status? Cara – still waiting for one city department to get back to us. Could be a liability issue. John Wyda said the Fire Department says it is ok as long as there are signs, as well as the Police Dept. Cara will follow up. Also, the front door of Salvo on the right – leaking from the ceiling from the overhang. John will email a picture to Cara. There are vehicles in the parking lot that are not road worthy – There has been a motorcycle there for three years that is not registered. Nothing is being done. Cara – Maria will go to Salvo tomorrow to check. Cara had Lisa go over the properties and she said everything is fine.

Roy Martin – Salvo – There are two trucks and a motorcycle – Eric said they are his and he wrote a letter to Jon Hite. Cara – Maria talk to Cara about this person. Roy - Tenant throws trash outside her door and Maintenance takes it away. Not right. Also Apartment on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor had their bicycle stolen – Ethan – from the front post outside. Cara – was it reported to the Police Dept.? Roy said yes, today. Roy thanked Lynn King for the Thanksgiving Party as well as Cara and Maria. Also, Larry White is in the hospital, maybe send a card to him. Roy covering the TV room for him. In the TV room there is someone hollering at 3:00 in the morning. Also - when is the Tenants Association coming back? Cara – up to the residents. I will get you a copy of 760CMR609. Brenda Thompson – McDonald – wants a copy also.

Angela Santaniello - Salvo – Thank you for the Thanksgiving dinner. Lynn and her family did a great job. Salvo is having their first Northampton Circle meeting from 6-8 p.m. Thursday, December 13<sup>th</sup> in the Community Room. Cara – can you put something in writing about the dinner? We like to put it in the file.

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Susan Henderson – G69 Cahill – ceiling has fallen into her bathtub. She called it in at the beginning of November. Also, sent letters and nothing has been done. Also, no new lease yet – paying the rent increase. Cara – Have you met with staff? Susan – I keep asking. Maria will talk with her on Tuesday. Give Maria copies of the letters you dropped off please.

Toni Parizo – McDonald – thank you for paying attention to issues in her apartment. The new machine is killing spores but dead spores are more toxic. Machine that Go Green had was ok except they were missing the charcoal and filter part. Those 3 parts needed in order to keep the air clean and healthy enough for her. It is affecting her feet, hands, face. Has information stating NHA needs a certain machine. She was in better shape while staying in the Hotel. Toni submitted a mold report from Walt Bensinger – she is concerned for everyone that lives here and the workers of McDonald.

Joe Santaniello – Salvo – spoke with the Fire Department and they were very helpful. Police Department – a liaison will come to Salvo for the neighborhood watch. Fire Dept. asked about “oxygen in use” signs on the doors of tenants using oxygen. Joe will drop signs off at NHA for approval. Cara – companies will provide signs.

Barry Grimes – Salvo 104 – There is a resident that is using oxygen and smoking in the apartment next to him. Highview Nursing Home was closed down because of this issue. This is a safety issue and needs to be addressed. Cara – put something in writing and she will check it out. (Apt. 103).

Barry Grimes – there is garbage in the hallway. Asked the maintenance man carrying two bags of trash – Allen Wheeler – says he does it daily for disabled tenants. Cara will check on it Tuesday.

Roy Martin – Christmas Trees are downstairs – can someone bring them up? TV room had a table and now it is gone, may be downstairs. Cara – put in a work order and have the trees delivered to Roy. The maple table is gone as NHA bought new furniture.

#### Approval of the November 2018 Minutes

Commissioner Budgar – on page four of the November minutes there needs to be a change – “scribner” should be “scrivener”. Following page, 5<sup>th</sup> line from bottom – .05 acre, “any ramifications “if” we don’t give it, not “is”. Also can they take it by eminent domain, not imminent domain?

Chairperson Jones- are you satisfied with the way the minutes are written?

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

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Jones approved the November minutes.

#### OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Budgar asked about the cameras for Salvo. Cara – it is still with DHCD, trying to figure out the money as we need to reallocate because of the Hampshire Heights mold in the basement issue. Commissioner Budgar asked for an update on that issue. Cara – The Waterford group did tests on some units, preliminary tests are back, and DHCD wanted further information. Final report has not come back yet.

Commissioner Laufer – Is that on the mold? Thought you were talking about backup.

Cara – are you talking about the sewer backup or the mold? Commissioner Budgar – sewer backup.

Cara – sewer backup. The situation has been remedied, all tenants have moved back in to their units.

Food stipends were given to the tenants. One resident is getting her things out of a POD that was rented. A resident is making incorrect statements. A Red T-Shirt, two diapers and a towel were flushed which caused the backup in Building 12. Someone in that building flushed those items that caused the backup

But we don't know who. . Our maintenance men were in there gloved up and cleaning but DHCD made them leave when they came out and then we hired Go Green.

Commissioner Budgar – Land update for McDonald? We haven't heard from Wayne Feiden yet. Any update on the Forsander Lock situation? Cara – had a meeting with the residents today, placed an order for an initial set of intercoms. Pete will install them when they come in.

Commissioner Budgar – Resident Advisory Board Update? Cara – can you tell me what you specifically mean? Well we have one Resident advisory Board and I don't know if it is State or Federal but I wanted to have another one so the folks can be equally represented. My recollection is that it is something that you would look into. Cara – Maria would reach out to Feds and see if there are some guidelines we can follow. Maria have you heard back from them? No, we have Federal, but don't have State. Cara - remind me to follow up on that tomorrow.

Commissioner Budgar – Last one I have is the Website update. Cara – we have been steadily giving them information daily to go to the next step with questions and information. Commissioner Budgar – what is the expected date it will be up and running? Cara – doesn't want to overpromise and under achieve, I don't have a go live date, but we are working on it.

Commissioner Richards – Air Conditioner Policy – is this tabled indefinitely?

Cara – did not bring it back on the agenda, because we had some new people leaving and coming on to the Board, and it wasn't summer time anymore, so it is up to the Board to discuss or table. Ms. Richards suggested that they start working on it. My recollection is that we were going to look at the, I forget what you call it, the thing that stabilizes the air conditioners? Cara - Sleeves. Cara replied that it is not conducive, too much money. Involves cutting into the brick and mortar. Brenda Thompson, McDonald tenant, stated that she got brackets for her air conditioner. Cara responded that this is a REAC inspection year and hopefully we don't fail. Hoping that this new bracket will be ok with REAC. But they will be the ones making the final determination.

Commissioner Richards responded that there is progress being made. Cara – A little bit, I am worried, but a little bit.

Commissioner Budgar – we should start soon because the weather will change, and it will probably take us a while to go through it and discuss it. Cara – if the brackets are acceptable we won't need a policy.

Budgar - Ask before REAC gets here if the brackets are acceptable. Do we have a sense of what other Housing Authorities have done? Cara – REAC inspection is tricky, it depends on the person inspecting and what their interpretation is, and it is a snapshot in time. Example – tenant has an air conditioner and it stops working but they leave it in the window. It is not the Authorities property but it becomes an EHS failure safety issue because you have an appliance that is no longer working. You may get an inspector that won't write you up for it but if they go by the black and white of the law, we would be cited for it. If you get a new inspector that goes by the book, or a QA person that follows them that could be a problem too. It is a very sticky wicket and the solution with the portables is what they recommended. Cara will look further into this, my intention was to see how they deal with the brackets. In New York they haven't allowed it, but I feel let the chips fall where they may instead of flagging us as saying “Oh they may have an issue”, because they will think we may have an issue.

Commissioner Budgar – Do you have a sense of what any other Housing Authorities who have gotten into the same situation as us, what they did to correct the issue?

Cara – She hasn't taken the time to do the research. Been dealing with inspections and audits.

Commissioner Richards – even if they accept the brackets a policy will still be in order, saying that all air conditioners be installed with the approval of the Executive Director.

Cara – Will have to draft a policy - do you want the liability of staff putting them or do you want the residents have a family member or they hire somebody put them in. As a group do you want the staff putting them in and taking them out?

Commissioner Laufer – why is the staff liable? Cara – It is not our equipment so if we break it, we are responsible for it and if they get hurt putting it in it is a workman's comp. liability, which we have had happen.

Commissioner Budgar – what have we traditionally done? Cara – Maintenance used to put them in but someone got hurt and REAC inspected. It was a cumulative effect. Most Housing Authorities don't have their staff put them in. She will lean towards what the Board wants.

Commissioner Brooks – There is really only one complex that is having air conditioners put in and that is McDonald, isn't it? Cara – Also, Salvo. Either we do it for all, or we do it for none. If we do Salvo we are putting them in sleeves, right? Cara – not always, if they want one in their bedroom or kitchen window, it is a window unit. Mr. Brooks did not realize air conditioners could be put in elsewhere without sleeves. Cara – that was part of the issue, it is a fire hazard as it is blocking an egress. And that is what we get cited with. One of the people that went to the newspaper and said we wouldn't allow air conditioners, was actually someone who had an air conditioner in a sleeve, but wanted another window unit in a room that had only one window, and it was a fire hazard, but they are doing it now because we are not enforcing anything.

Commissioner Brooks - We should make it part of the lease, that only sleeves are allowed.

Cara – I will look at samples of what other housing authorities use. Take a look at what things apply to which properties and have the Board take a look at it and see what you think.

Commissioner Richards – table for now, but continue to work on it and that we are in compliance with what you come up with as a recommendation.

#### Motion – Approve Fall clean up at sites - \$10,145.00 – Spring Valley Landscape

Cara – went out to bid with Spring Valley, Omasta, Dunphy Landscaping and several others and the combined total was \$10,145.00. Putting forth the bids for approval.

Commissioner Budgar stated that the bids were not sent out until November 28<sup>th</sup>. Could they be done earlier next year? Cara- Vendors bid is good for only so many days, some are 15 or 30 days, and we did not have an approved budget, and she didn't want to waste time. If you ask people to bid, then ask them to keep these prices, and they say no, can you re- bid, then you can't get vendors to bid at all. It is a difficult process knowing we are trying to implement the Budget in two months.

Commissioner Budgar put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Richards.

Whereupon Chairperson Jones approved the Fall Clean Up.

#### Discussion – Section 8 Payment Standards

HUD 2019 rent standards came out and they have gone down. Section 8 properties - it would mean the voucher wouldn't cover the rent – so for example a landlord in Northampton rents an apartment for \$1,000 and the voucher is only \$807, then they will only get an \$807. 00 apartment. Asking HUD to make exceptions to HUD rules. NHA is currently working with HUD to ensure that residents being serviced by this program have the best payment standard allowed.

Commissioner Budgar – if HUD says no, will we have people not able to stay in their apartments?

Cara – A landlord is held to the term of the lease, so they can't say you are out of here, but they would be able to say they won't renew you at this rate. HUD is trying to work with us to find a way around it.

Commissioner Budgar - Have rents really gone down? Cara- yes, rents have gone down. We use 108% of that which is \$798.00 – going down to \$758.16 in 2019. It is going down by a difference of \$40, \$58, \$60, \$77 and \$114.00 according to bedroom size. It is a considerable decrease. You would think that when people are figuring out this stuff, they would take that into consideration, it is not. After meeting with HUD during our audit, and showing them that we really need that in this area to support local people living locally, she has been very receptive to the help I have been asking for.

Commissioner Richards – not automatically market adjusted? Cara – No, Fair Market rents are done by HUD and it based upon all these different variables and adjusted accordingly. They really don't look at the real data. Kaitlin is very good to us, and we are of a like mind, and I am hoping that it will go fine.

Commissioner Budgar – At what point do you have to have a decision made on this?

Cara – they are the ones who pay us, they won't stop paying us.

Commissioner Budgar – Not causing disruption to some of our tenants?

Cara – there won't be any disruptions, it will be status quo. Trying to see if they will fund us with these higher payments so that the burden doesn't go to the resident. If they fund us then all it will be is an adjustment for the landlord.

Commissioner Budgar – If they say No, is it possible to appeal that decision?

Cara – No. You have a percentage of 110% of fair market rents. On the spreadsheet there is a section that says 110%. We asked HUD to say we have a payment standard of 110% in order to live in this area. We looked at 115% - which is the green area, except for the 5 bedrooms which would still be in the negative. We are asking for a designation of a small area FMR2 because that will help. Where you are, and the census and all the stuff they use to calculate, doesn't calculate for us. We fall in the same category as the Springfield Housing Authority and that is not going to work here.

#### By Law Update

Commissioner Richards thanked Commissioner Brooks for volunteering to help us and he has read the information, which was a lot. They have a meeting Thursday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> at 3:00 p.m. at McDonald. Please post it. Cara – will post it tomorrow, if there are any changes let her know. She is leery of email communications so please text me. If you all can do that it would be great.

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

Went over the rents collected, re-certifications, waiting lists, etc.

"Homelessness in Western Mass" seminar was attended by ED and a Section 8 staff member on 11/16/18 at Greenfield Community College.

On November 17<sup>th</sup> Salvo and Cahill had their November Holiday Party coordinated by Resident Services Coordinator Lynn King. There was a great turnout and residents were very happy.

The State Inspector and KONE were on site to test the elevators on 12/3/18 at Salvo – all three elevators passed. The fire alarm testing was completed by Wel-Design at McDonald House on 12/3/18 and at Salvo on 12/4/18, no issues were reported. A test intercom system for Forsander has been ordered, hoping to have it installed within 4 to 8 weeks. There was a meeting on 12/10/18 at Forsander Community Room to update and address any concerns with the building doors.

Titan Tree was at Cahill on 12/7/18 to remove three trees that lined the parking spaces. These were trees that Smith College did not remove or trim during their recent work. Titan Tree was previously out for tree trimming in April 2017 and August 2018.

Commissioner Budgar put forth the motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Brooks.