



# NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

---

## APPROVED –AUGUST MINUTES

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met at “McDonald House” at 49 Old South St. Northampton, Ma., on Monday, August 26, 2019.

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

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

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Jack Redman; Deb Dunphy Smith; Sharon Kimble; Tom O'Connor; Maria Walton; Keith Walsh; Peter Cushing; Brenda Thompson; Cindy Tobin; Joseph and Angela Santaniello; Vito Corleon; K. Messina; Cindy Drake and Nickerson.

### Presentation of FY19 End of Year Financials

Gary Depace, NHA Fee Accountant stated that last week he had a meeting with some of the Board members explaining financials. Tonight the Board will certify the state programs and the five highest paid salaries. Mr. Depace went over our reserves. Stated that 689 housing is not subsidized, revenue is what we collect from Special Needs tenants. State is finally coming around on increased funding for Housing Authorities. Section 8 funding is by units which puts a strain on the reserves. When guidelines come out, hopefully this will be addressed.

Commissioner Silver thanked Gary for the training. Question #1 - The specific excess funds from Federal – can these be used for the state? Gary – yes the funds are from HUD, not through the program, money was not put into a federal fund. Question #2 – On the guidelines cover letter (big paragraph) what is “difference” referred to?

Cara – it is calculated out – 58% goes into federal program.

Gary – 4110 line item – Mass NAHRO is working with DHCD – here is an increase but you can only go up 4%,

Commissioner Silver – is this a common issue for Housing Authorities?

Gary – it is due to lack of appropriation from legislature – DHCD guidelines.

Gary – Board to vote and certify 689 MRVP and 5 highest salaries. Needs to be in by August 30<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Laufer – Where is a copy of the five highest salaries?

Chairperson Richards asked for a motion to approve the financials.

Vice Chairperson Brooks put forth the motion, seconded by Commissioner Jones.

**VOTING AYE:** Commissioner Jones, Silver, Laufer, Vice Chairperson Brooks and Chairperson Richards.

**VOTING NAY:** NONE

**Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.**

Chairperson Richards thanked Mr. Depace for the financial training meeting.

## TENANT ISSUES

Cindy Drake, daughter of Delia Watts who resides in Tobin – took her Mom on vacation and someone from Maintenance entered her apartment which was not according to policy. Cindy made a phone call to NHA and has received no response yet. There was stuff left in the apartment and they could tell someone had been there.

Board – provide copy of policy to tenants and Maintenance.

Hildegard Freedman - Cahill – There are problems in Building B – Johnny Hernandez, Rosa's son in living there unauthorized. There is a tenant that is going after her, is there something NHA can do?

Cindy Tobin – Forsander – She received a letter on July 25<sup>th</sup> that she owed \$39.00 in rent. She went to Lisa Donaghue and was told not to worry about it. Cindy has copies of all her checks and doesn't understand why she received the letter. On July 30<sup>th</sup> her daughter wrote a letter to NHA and has had no response. Regarding her neighbor – it has been a year since she has had problems, NHA says things are going to be done about it and nothing is done. NHA office does not respond. She likes Cara, she has helped her out on a few situations.

Pete Cushing – Forsander – still waiting for the intercom system. Thanked NHA – Cara took care of some problems today, Maria helps out as well. Satellite office is helping.

Angela Santaniello – Salvo – Salvo is safer and more peaceful. The office is great, but after hours and weekends when no one is there, there are still issues with unwanted visitors. She is looking forward to the cameras.

Joseph Santaniello – Salvo – Chief Casper assigned Sgt. Sadlowski to have a meeting with Salvo regarding the neighborhood watch committee. Maria Walton to attend also.

STAFF COMMENT – NONE

PUBLIC COMMENT - NONE

## Approval of the July 2019 Minutes

Vice Chairperson Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Jones.

VOTING AYE: Commissioners Laufer, Silver, Jones, Brooks and Chairperson Richards.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the Minutes.

## The Executive Director's Report

Went over rents collected and work orders, move in's and move out's.

Our Senior/Elderly Resident Services Coordinator, Lynn King, hosted Community Health Fairs at our elderly properties the week of August 19 – 23<sup>rd</sup>. Attending service providers were Mercy Life Pace Program, A Caring Heart, Assurance Wireless, Med Minder, and Xfinity. Sixty residents completed free phone applications with Assurance Wireless. Several residents signed up for Med Minders elderly friendly automated pill dispensers as well.

NHA submitted the Community Preservation Eligibility based on our intent to apply for CPA funds for 16 Corticelli Street New Housing/Preservation of existing condemned building and for additional funds for the Hampshire Heights playground. We plan on moving forward with submission of the full application by September 15, 2019.

Our Family Resident Services Coordinator, Netanya Ortiz, collected backpacks for back to school for both Hamp Heights and Florence Heights. Asst. Executive Director Maria Walton joined Netanya on August 15<sup>th</sup> where they helped stuff over 500 backpacks at the Easthampton Community Center. A total of 80 backpacks were distributed to our Northampton Housing Authority students!

A Block Party was held at Florence Heights on August 25, 2019. A big thanks to Edgar Cancel, former resident of Hampshire Heights, for continuing the tradition he started a few years ago. Netanya Ortiz, our Family Resident Services Coordinator worked very closely with him as well as our sponsors Healthy Hampshire, Northampton Police Department, Hoop Nerds Academy, Valley Bike Share, Arnold's Meats, Grow Food Northampton, and DJ Warren. The families were able to spend time with staff, build relationships with the Police Department and enjoy a great family Sunday Fun Day! The block party for Hampshire Heights is scheduled for Sunday, September 15, 2019.

Commissioner Laufer said the backpacks distributed were really nice and the distribution was a smooth process, the first time this has happened. She is really happy to see it.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – NONE

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION – BULLETIN BOARD POLICY DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL

The Board asked if there were any written comments sent back on this - Cara replied None.

Vice Chairperson Brooks put forth the Motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Laufer.

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

MOTION – APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO SUBMIT REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF THE 40% RENT CALCULATION REQUIREMENT.

This pertains to our VASH vouchers. Their rent cannot exceed 40% of their gross income and it is causing issues when trying to get them apartments. They receive Chapter 115 after they are approved but the 40% causes them to not get housing. Chairperson Richards asked if we can do this offline. Cara - NHA is asking for a waiver of the 40% rent calculation. Commissioner Silver asked what happens if Chapter 115 is denied to the Veterans. Jack - do adjusted income, apply for another apartment that is cheaper, or maybe get a job. Jack went into detail with Commissioner Silver on how NHA tries to calculate the rents for the Veterans and what they do to try to help them in this situation. Commissioner Laufer asked if NHA is going for 50 or 55%. Cara replied 55% as other Housing Authorities are successful at 55%.

Vice Chairperson Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Laufer.

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the Motion

MOTION TO APPROVE PAYMENT STANDARDS FOR THE HCV PROGRAM

This is for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. No Discussion.

Commissioner Jones put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Vice Chairperson Brooks.

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR 25 MAINSTREAM VOUCHERS TO HUD

Cara - NHA decided to apply for 15 vouchers instead of 25 as it was felt it would be hard to handle 25.

Commissioner Laufer asked what they were. Cara – contract with a Service Agency. The tenant needs to receive services in order to get a voucher.

Commissioner Silver – Community Action, Service Net, etc.

Vice Chairperson Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Silver.

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

#### MOTION TO APPROVE 2019 FEDERAL FLAT RENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH HUD

Residents have the option if the 30% of income is more than the flat rent, they can choose to go with the flat rent option.

Commissioner Silver – Can resident's choice change year to year? Jack – yes and Housing helps them on which to choose.

Commissioner Jones put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Vice Chairperson Brooks.

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

#### RESOLUTION – CERTIFICATION OF THE SECTION SEMAP SUBMISSION

Cara explained what it involved, no discussion.

Vice Chairperson Jones put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Jones.

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

#### DISCUSSION:

- A. Mobile Work Order Platform – NHA looked into the Mobile software app. Maintenance would get a work order on their device and it uploads it into our computer system. The cost for the product software is \$2,660.00 and the services to learn the system is \$1350.00. Commissioner Laufer stated that now you call NHA and a work order is done up and given to maintenance. Cara – with the new system the maintenance person can put the work order right into their device. Commissioner Laufer – “how can you prove that the tenant called it in and it's done?” What does Maintenance think about this? Cara – they have mixed feelings. Commissioner Laufer would like to table this until the Board hears from Maintenance. Commissioner Jones stated that he feels it is the prerogative of the Executive Director. Cara – will survey the maintenance staff and have it at the next Board Meeting. Commissioner Laufer also asked if NHA could change the card Maintenance leaves to make it bigger and also add a date.
- B. Check Scanning and Online payments for residents – Cara – it is \$400.00 for the module and \$150.00 for training. There are also fees associated with this system. If it is done by ACH the tenant is charged \$1.00; Cash Pay Fee \$4.00; Credit Card – 3%. Commissioner Silver – credit reporting – can increase credit score if paid online. Can we alert tenants to this? Can the credit report portion be turned off? Commissioner Jones – can you go over where the tenants can go to do this? Walmart and Select Stores? Walmart under pays their employees, doesn't pay a living wage and is anti-union. Why are we using Walmart? He cannot support them.

- C. Software Module for Above.
- D. CDBG Funding – Hampshire Heights Playground – we will get \$150,000.00 and we are in the process of submitting the paperwork. Commissioner Laufer – where will the playground go? How does NHA know if it is set in stone to get the funding? Cara – we fill out the paperwork. Is the Basketball area included? Cara – we will see what we can afford. Commissioner Silver – is there a deadline? Cara – not at this time. Commissioner Silver – has the designer met with the tenants? Cara – there is a cost for them to come out. Jack and Cara would put out the schematics and then have a question and answer time with the tenants. Commissioner Laufer – is the playground committee involved? Cara – yes.
- E. DHCD’s New Application Process & Software – Champ website for people to get on a waiting list.

Chairperson Richards – Website update?

Jack – it is due to be up the second week of September. Chairperson Richards thanked Cara for the Roberts Rules book and the new Commissioners Handbook.

Vice Chairperson Brooks put forth the motion to adjourn the August meeting at 8:15 P.M., seconded by Commissioner Laufer.