



**APPROVED JUNE 2020 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” meeting on Monday, June 15, 2020.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

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

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cara Leiper; Deb Dunphy Smith; Keith Walsh; Sharon Kimble; Lisa Donoghue; Heather Maxwell; Jack Redman; Tom O'Connor; Joseph & Angela Santaniello; Alex Jarrett and Heather Culver.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Alex Jarrett, Ward 5 City Councilor for the City of Northampton spoke about phone calls he has been receiving. At Forsander there are reports of drugs on the property. This is an on-going issue with no resolution. Question- what is the process when they witness a drug deal? What is NHA's process? Another concern from tenants was staff not coming in to the satellite office. Also, hallways are not being cleaned but once or twice a year; drains are plugged with leaves and the water is up to the basement door. What product is being sprayed to disinfect?

Chairperson Richards – thank you so much, we appreciate the City Councilor's involvement.

Cara Leiper – regarding witnessing a drug transaction – they should call the Police, if there is an arrest, we would be notified. We cannot get involved since we are not law enforcement. We would consult with Attorney O'Connor to see what steps we can take. The public housing managers are going to the properties twice a week, and they walk the properties and check it out. Also, Maintenance is there cleaning regularly. Property managers are taking calls. We have also provided safety data sheets on chemicals used. The hallways are being cleaned about once a week. If there are any problems, residents can contact the property manager.

Alex Jarrett – the property manager should have the information on the chemical that is being sprayed?

Cara – yes, we have a safety data sheet, people have called saying they are having a reaction to the chemicals. We provide them with the MSDS sheet and ask them to call their Doctor to see if they are allergic. There is very little chemical in the product being used.

Jack Redman – Heather, property manager at Forsander has sent out safety data sheets to some residents. We use a fogger which is the safest chemical we can use. Alex I can email you the information.

Alex – residents want increased communication and memo's posted on the Board.

Cara – The Boards are in the community room which is closed at this time per DHCD. Memos have been delivered to all residents.

Alex – Thank You.



Chairperson Richards – I am thrilled that you are involved. We welcome you to join our meetings. Any questions please call NHA. We are also doing no evictions at this time per Governor Baker.

Commissioner Silver – there are exceptions to evictions, it is not across the Board.

Cara – True, if there is a police report, the managers are sending a notice to the tenant, which will give us information towards an eviction.

Chairperson Richards – Thanks to the staff for all that they are doing. She appreciated the lovely Ad in the Daily Hampshire Gazette recently.

EMPLOYEE ISSUES: NONE

Approval of the May 2020 Minutes

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

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

VOTING NAY: None

Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the May 2020 minutes.

NEW BUSINESS

ADOPT THE HUD FY21 BUDGET PLACE SETTER- RESOLUTION #1187

Authorizing the approval of rolling the current federal budget FY20 into FY21 until the FY21 guidelines come out from DHCD and NHA has an approved FY21 Budget from the State.

Chairperson Richards – When do we get the full budget? Cara – sometimes it is 10 months into the year before it is approved. Depends on when they release the guidelines. Cara read the resolution.

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

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

VOTING NAY: None

Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

MOTION

ACCEPT FEE PROPOSAL FROM GREEN RIVER ARCHITECTURE FOR FISH # 214119 SALVO  
COMMON AREA CARPETING

The DHCD House Doctor Administrator has approved the fee proposal of Green River Architecture for the project in the amount of \$132,734.07. This motion is to approve the Executive Director to execute the design contract, Fish #214119 for the carpet and flooring replacement at Salvo.

Commissioner Jones – do you know if there were other bids?

Cara – DHCD is responsible for this, not the housing authority. She can ask DHCD for the bids.



Chairperson Richards – was this the lowest bid? Cara – yes, there is a site that DHCD goes on that is the same site we go on. In this instance, it is the lowest bidder.

Commissioner Jones – we need to know the bids so we can do our due diligence as a Board to see who the bidders are. Cara – sent a work order with the board package. If you want specific bids I can ask for them.

Commissioner Jones – it is important for the Board to understand what they need to do. Copy should be given to all the Board members.

Jack Redman – had a call with DHCD about this. Green River was selected by DHCD who is on the pre-approved House Doctor List. This is for the design phase only – once we do bids for the work, then we will get all three bids.

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

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

**VOTING NAY:** None

**Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.**

### MOTION

#### APPROVE THE FY20 EMPLOYEE BENEFIT BALANCES DUE TO COVID-19

Cara Leiper - The current policy is a “use it or lose it” for Vacation and Personal time with the discretion of the ED to roll over unused time. In the past that has been done rarely and with the stipulation of use by no later than March. Due to the pandemic employees have not been able to utilize their benefit time. As you know we are in the last month of our Fiscal Year. Employees will lose their benefits. Providing even a one year extension would be detrimental to the Housing Authority since many employees are long term and therefore get a large amount of time off. The agency cannot operate efficiently with employees being out for some instances 2 months.

According to the virtual meetings within the industry we have been attending, the documents relating to the monies we have will be able to offset the pandemic costs. In consultation with Gary Depace, the proposed motion would be covered by the Cares Act and FEMA as an allowable reimbursement.

If passed, this would appear on the compensated absences line of our budget, not salaries. Therefore I ask the Board to approve the motion to pay out remaining unused employee benefit balances and to do so prior to the end of the month.

Chairperson Richards – this would remove the liability from the books? Cara – yes.

Commissioner Silver – this is across the board, including the union? Cara – yes, the union employees can buy back up to 2 weeks’ vacation on their contract now.

Commissioner Laufer – it is helpful to employees at this time, especially with the uncertainty of jobs.

Cara – it will help the employees, it is a good faith gesture to show how we appreciate them. It is the best practice for the employees not to lose their time.

Commissioner Laufer – when does the New Year start? Cara – July 1<sup>st</sup>. If the pandemic continues, we may have to re-visit this again.



Commissioner Silver – anyone who used time during the pandemic – are they getting screwed by the payout? Cara – this is from July 1, 2019 until the end of March, 2020 when we closed down.

Commissioner Silver – what if someone took vacation time during the pandemic? Cara – no one has taken any time.

Commissioner Jones – I have been bargaining a similar agreement; I am all for it.

Chairperson Richards – the better we treat the employee, the better they treat us.

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

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

**VOTING NAY:** None

**Whereupon Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.**

Chairperson Richards – what are the re-entry plans?

Cara – waiting for DHCD and HUD. The property managers are taking calls and going out to the properties. Potentially in Phase 3 the Family sites will open, Phase 4 will be the elderly/disabled sites.

Chairperson Richards – What does that mean?

Cara – Elderly residents are more at risk. The Family sites – Florence Heights, Hampshire Heights would open. Right now we can only do emergency work orders, per DHCD.

Chairperson Richards – what does it have to do with visitors and gardening?

Cara – we are not able to keep people at a 6 foot distance. Northampton Gardens doesn't have the liability we do – we could get sued. Plants have been given to tenants who are growing them on their decks and porches.

Commissioner Laufer – I had someone ask about gardening at Hampshire heights. There is a list of people who garden individually at the garden beds. The hose is connected to her apartment, people are asking to use it. How about having specific gardening times?

Cara – will have a meeting with the residents. Regarding Salvo, there are a certain number of plots and in the past we have done a lottery but we are not allowed to do that now. Residents can call to discuss.

Commissioner Laufer – is there an agency who can organize the garden? We know who wants to garden they can go to them and discuss. There is a gardening club at Hamp Heights.

Cara- They have helped distributing seeds, plants, etc. Has to be offered to all. There are not enough plots for every tenant. Staff has been working to get fresh fruits and vegetables delivered to tenants.

Chairperson Richards – what agency?

Cara – Jack, who are the agencies?



Jack - Grow Food – Lisa and Netanya have worked with Healthy Future also- they could talk to residents. Jack to deal with the hose at Emily’s apartment, needs outside spigot. Also, if we allow gardening times there is no one to monitor the residents and the hose, etc. would need to be disinfected after each use.

Cara – if one or 3 people go to the garden and one has COVID and touches the area and tools, then people can get infected. The agency has concerns.

Chairperson Richards – I have had several phone calls on this. One gentleman called her and she explained the issue. I am saddened by this but she encourages Cara to stick by the guidelines given.

Commissioner Silver – can someone check with the City of Northampton and see if they have any unused plots that the residents could use? Cara – the RSC’s can help tenants with resources for the use of these gardens. If and when the family sites open, then we would allow gardens.

Commissioner Laufer – at Hampshire Heights there are 5 to 8 people that are passionate about gardening and they have signed up for plots. If it was offered to all tenants, you probably would only get about 10 tenants.

Commissioner Brooks – Sacred Elder continues to garden his flowers along the fence line and Don Mihalak is taking care of the roses along the fence and planting flowers. Also, numerous people are not wearing masks – especially visitors coming in to McDonald.

Cara – spending \$5,000.00 a week for Police Detail – it is hard to keep people out – they now know when to come in after the Police are gone.

Commissioner Brooks – One officer talked to Sacred Elder during the morning while he was gardening.

Cara – if you see people violating our guidelines, please let us know. I have spoken to the 4-5 people about gardening. Fair Housing says what we do for one, we do for all. We can’t allow the same people to garden as the year previous, it has to be open to all. We are allowing certain things like gardening in the backyard, etc. It is one of my priorities.

Chairperson Richards – Thank you, hope we can do everything we can – patio gardening, indoor gardening, etc.

Commissioner Silver – Can we put something on the NHA website about getting garden plots with the City?

Cara – RSC’s and property managers will continue to work with the tenants on this issue.

Commissioner Brooks – there is nothing on the website. Cara to Jack – anything on the website or have flyers been sent out?

Jack – Not at this time, we can add. Netanya however did connect a resident with the Community Gardens.

Chairperson Richards- maybe we can put something on the website to help. Thanks for going by the guidelines.



TENANT ISSUES – 4:15 P.M.

Joe and Angela Santaniello – Salvo – is there an update on the Salvo Security System?

Cara – certain processes have been put on hold. Jack – there has been an extension to the contract – DHCD halted construction work. It looks like within the next two weeks we will get guidance to do the work in the common areas. We will be able to re-start the cameras as it doesn't entail going into units.

Cara – timeline doesn't always happen – we can't do anything until we are directed. Police detail will go for another two weeks.

Mr. Santaniello – the records person at the Police Dept. said the Police coverage at Salvo has reduced the number of calls to the police by 30%. Sometimes the Police ask them to watch the front door while they run to the side door. Cara – you can stand at the door if you want, but I don't recommend it. The Police can look at the cameras.

Heather Culver – Florence heights – would like to be a member of the resident's advisory board.

Cara – it is on hold right now due to the pandemic – will send out updates, I appreciate your willingness to help.

Heather – I know there are Police at McDonald and Salvo, I spoke to Maitty regarding police at Florence Heights – there are parties, fireworks, and lots of people. Are we able to call the Police? How do we address this?

Cara – if there is an issue, call the police then notify us so we can address the issue in house. It is difficult to have the Police at the Family Sites as there is no one building they can be in.

Heather – Trash receptacles – people from the outside are using our dumpsters and filling them up. What can be done? Can bars be put on them?

Cara - Trash Company has put a lock on the top but people are cutting them. If you see anything, call us ASAP.

Heather - Cody has been amazing!

Cara - if a trash bag could be opened up and found someone's name we can file it with the Police. Heather – smoking signs – people are not smoking 25 ft. from the Building, They are smoking on their porches and the smoke is getting into her apartment.

Cara – we did put up smoking huts. If you see people violating the rules, let us know and we can address the issue.

Heather – Rent pickup – are there designated days? Worried about leaving my rent check.

Cara – rent is picked up daily – Maitty sometimes goes there on weekends also. Do you have a debit card where you can pay online? Ask Netanya, she can help set you up for online payment through your Bank.



Heather – When can the basketball hoops be put back up? Cara – we need to follow the guidelines. Will do so when we can. Heather – I am happy to attend the Board meeting through zoom – I can't always get to the board meetings. Cara – we appreciate your call.

Chairperson Richards – thanks Heather for your involvement, and yes, please bring your baby to the meetings!

Chairperson Silver – regarding Bill # 2753 following house bill # 4735 on the reporting of COVID cases. Feels it should be reported to help other tenants.

Cara – the law imposes reporting obligations on housing complexes and rental units that offer housing to the elderly. As a Housing Authority we have no role in health care or access to our tenant's health information. We will now be required by law to report on whether residents have COVID-19 as of June 8, 2020.

A dialogue began between commissioner silver and Cara started. Attorney O'Connor interrupted the dialogue reminding all that this is not a topic on the agenda and advises it be put on next month's agenda for discussion if Chair feels it is needed.

Commissioner Silver put forth the motion to adjourn the June meeting at 4:56 P.M., seconded by Commissioner Laufer.