



NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

JUNE 2021 BOARD MEETING MINUTES APPROVED JULY 19, 2021

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, June 21, 2021 at 5:30 P.M.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

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

PRESENT: Chairperson Richards; Vice Chairperson Brooks; Commissioner Jones; Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Laufer & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

ALSO PRESENT: Cara Leiper; Jack Redman; Sharon Kimble; Attorney Tom O'Connor; Heather Maxwell; Lisa Donoghue; Jose Cruz; Kaitlin Hanning; Donyael Galland; Angela Santaniello & K Chapman.

TENANT COMMENTS

Angela Santaniello – Salvo- Kudos to the Maintenance Dept. they are doing a great job keeping the property clean. Especially Mike for keeping the hallways and entranceways clean. Previously, you had approved the outside of Salvo being power washed – any update on that?

STAFF COMMENT – NONE

PUBLIC COMMENT -NONE

APPROVAL OF THE MAY 2021 MINUTES

Vice Chairperson Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield. .

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Richards, Vice Chairperson Brooks, Commissioner Jones, Commissioner Cancel and Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Laufer

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the May minutes.

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSION

Updates from Community Preservation & Housing Partnership Board Appointees

Chairperson Richards said that she would like to receive updates on a quarterly basis.

Commissioner Jones stated that the CPA is now in summer recess. There are two sessions – spring and fall. One significant happening is that people should have seen a press release on April 1st regarding a \$250,000.00 grant for affordable housing – 24 units at Hospital Hill Development. Also, via a bill from Representative Sabadossa, the City will tear down a dilapidated building on Burts Pit Road to be turned over to Habitat for Humanity for 2 or 3 houses to be built. That money is secured in part through the support of the CPC & Valley Community Development, who is a big player up in the Hospital Hill Development for affordable housing. Good to keep that in mind. Another property CPC funding was shown through a zoom opening on June 16, 2021. One thing I would bring to the Board's attention is the update on what the CPC might do regarding Corticelli St. There has to be a way to get it moving

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faster – we don't have the resources to fund this project but the CPC could play a role in getting some leverage.

Chairperson Richards – would you like it to be on the agenda for next month as an update?

Commissioner Jones – yes, I would like to see us finish this project.

Chairperson Richards – Commissioner Cancel do you have any updates?

Commissioner Cancel – the Housing partnership deals with everything housing in the City. We try to promote affordable housing and support landlords and Valley CDC to continue to create more affordable housing. It supports landlords by doing workshops, and also do tenant advocacy. This is one of the things that attracted me the most to be on the NHA Board because I grew up in housing and have been an advocate for tenants and low income housing. Some of the things we have been working on at Housing Partnership is the small area fair market. I forgot to tell Chairperson Richards to put in on this months' agenda. If it can be put on next month, that would be great. At the past months meeting we discussed emergency housing voucher programs that the State is offering. Pittsfield denied their allotment – where is NHA on our allotment which is 17 I think? NHA should seriously take part in this, if not done so already. If this has not been discussed yet, I would like it put on next months' agenda as well. I know that tenants must be referred or connected through the program through the COC. There are a lot of details I would like to share to promote/support this. We do a lot of supporting of a lot of different organizations in the City before they come before the City Council and the CPC. Folks come through the Housing Partnership asking for support and we provide support to the landlords and organizations that are doing this type of great work. Last year we advocated funding for the Hampshire Heights Playground. I was really excited about the update we received from Jack last month. This project is close to my heart. Growing up at Hampshire Heights there was no playground. My parents worked to get us a handball court and basketball court. The current tenants brought up the thought of doing a mural on the wall at Hampshire Heights. Northampton Youth Partnership did an awesome presentation on advocating for housing in Northampton, universal family housing and updates on environmental justice. Look out for their involvement.

Chairperson Richards – would love to have them come next month for the Public Comment. Please encourage that. Email what you want on the agenda. We are lucky to have you from Housing Partnership, it creates a closer bond. We appreciate your update very much.

MOTON – APPROVE JUNETEENTH HOLIDAY ADDITION TO PERSONNEL POLICY.

Cara - “Juneteenth Independence Day” is now an official Massachusetts state holiday. Governor Baker signed the holiday into law on July 24, 2020 to recognize “the continued need to ensure racial freedom and equality.” Juneteenth is an annual celebration that commemorates the emancipation of the last slaves in the former Confederate territory on June 19, 1865, a full two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

Cara – I need the board to decide if they want to add it to the list of paid time off for the staff.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I am originally from Texas and have been celebrating this most of my life. I am proud of Massachusetts making this a holiday and I am in favor of this. I have been on speaking engagements talking about this. I still have relatives in Texas. I strongly support this as a legal holiday.

Commissioner Laufer – Is it a federal holiday now?

Cara, yes it was passed into law on 7/24/20 and became a federal holiday after I sent out the board package.

Commissioner Laufer – if it is a federal holiday then it should be recognized by NHA.

Chairperson Richards – we need to decide now if it is going to be a paid holiday.

Cara – The Board decides what holidays the staff gets.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – Is Patriots Day a paid holiday?

Cara – yes, it is a state holiday.

Chairperson Richards – the issue is do we want it as a paid holiday or just a federal holiday.

Cara – There is a provision in the current policy that allows me to give time off that has been recognized by the Mayor of Northampton or the Governor. This year the holiday occurred before the Board Meeting and I authorized June 18th this year as a paid holiday, and I allowed for paid time off. Today, I am going before the Board to ask you officially approve and adopt it as an official paid holiday for all staff and for the future I bring before you a motion for the Board to officially recognize the continued need to ensure racial freedom and equality and as such add June 19th as a paid holiday for all staff.

Commissioner Cancel agreed that it should be a paid holiday.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield put forth the motion to approve Juneteenth Independence Day celebrated on June 19th, seconded by Commissioner Cancel.

Commissioner Jones – Cara, is it your intention that in the future if it falls on a Saturday it would be recognized on a Friday?

Cara – Yes. According to your policy, whenever any of the approved holidays fall on a Sunday, the succeeding Monday shall be observed. Whenever any of the approved holidays falls on a Saturday, the preceding Friday shall be observed as the holiday. This will then be added to the list of holidays and handled in the same fashion.

Commissioner Jones – great – some employers are trying to slip out of it, if it falls on a Saturday.

Cara – when I originally wrote the union contract, the one we carried over, I made sure that the union employees get all of the same days non-union employees get by referencing the approved holidays.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Richards, Vice Chairperson Brooks, Commissioner Jones, Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Laufer and Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

MOTION TO APPROVE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CONTRACT AMENDMENT

WHEREAS: the Authority wishes to amend the contract for the Executive Director with a Rider 1 to reflect a one-time hazard payment. Which states:

This is an amendment to current contract which expires 6/30/2023. This amendment applies to Section 8 (9) and is subject to DHCD approval.

The rider 1 allows for a one-time bonus for hazardous duty pay during the COVID 19 Pandemic.

The Office of Personnel Management (“OPM”) sets out the pay increases applicable to certain types of hazardous work for federal workers. OPM has published guidelines for federal employees during the current health crisis, reminding employees that a 25 percent hazard pay differential is authorized for employee exposure to “virulent biologicals,” defined as “work with or in close proximity to . . . materials of micro-organic nature which when introduced into the body are likely to cause serious disease or fatality and for which protective devices do not afford complete protection.” Federal statutes also provide hazard pay for specific types of work performed by federal employees and contractors.

The period covered is 7/1/2020 – 6/15/2021.

Although the OPM refers to a 25% differential, this only a one time amount to be paid is 8.85% of the Northampton Housing Authority portion of the contract which equates to a dollar amount of \$13,220.66.

This one time hazardous pay is due to the following:

The executive director is a front line employee who faces significant exposure to COVID 19 due to her duties some of which includes: Frequent interaction with residents and staff; Supervision of staff, including maintenance unit members who received hazard pay; Interviewing Employees for Open Positions; Collection of rents; Oversight of Common Area Sanitization; Inspection and Coordination of Emergency Work Orders; Conduction and Oversight of Health and Safety Inspections; Oversight and Participation in Pest Control at Properties; Weekly Food and Care Package Delivery; Collection of Mail; Resident Leasing of Units.

VOTING AYE: Commissioners Richards, Brooks, Jones, Cancel, Laufer & Tarbutton

VOTING NAY: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

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

Commissioner Cancel – seems clear cut.

Chairperson Richards – I appreciate all that the staff has done during the pandemic, they deserve kudos and anything they can now get.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Richards, Vice Chairperson Brooks, Commissioner Jones, Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Laufer and Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

RESOLUTION #1190 – APPROVE FEDERAL FY22 BUDGET PLACESETTER

The NHA wishes to submit a Place setter for the Federal FY22 budget. This is submitted to HUD to comply with the HUD guidelines on budget submission. This is then in place until the budget guidelines come out from DHCD for the State Budgets which will allow an official Federal Budget to be submitted.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Commissioners of the Northampton Housing Authority does hereby approve the rollover of the current approved FY21 federal budget to FY22 until the new guidelines come out and NHA has an approved FY22 from the state.

Further, that the Authority, and Executive Director in their name, shall be authorized on and after the execution of said contract to do and perform on behalf of the Authority all acts and the things required of the Authority to perform fully all obligations of the Contract Amendment and be it resolved that this Resolution shall take effect immediately.

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Richards, Vice Chairperson Brooks, Commissioner Jones, Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Laufer and Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Resolution.

MOTION ACCEPT LOW BIDDER OMASTA LANDSCAPS FOR HAMPSHIRE HEIGHTS PLAYGROUND PROJECT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$185,188.50.

Cara – Berkshire Design published the public notice and accepted the sealed bids. Five bids were received and Omasta was the lowest bidder. Berkshire Design has used Omasta for three similar projects in the past years and have been pleased with their work. I bring before you a Motion to accept Omasta Landscapes as low bidder for the construction of the Hampshire Heights playground project in the amount of \$185,188.50 and that the authority and the Executive Director in their name shall be authorized on and after the execution of said contract to do and perform on behalf of the Authority all acts and all the things required of the Authority to perform fully all obligations of the contract.

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Richards, Vice Chairperson Brooks, Commissioner Jones, Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Laufer and Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

MOTION AUTHORIZE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO ENTER INTO MOU WITH THREE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR EHV VOUCHER COLLABORATION

Cara – I am happy to announce that we were awarded the Emergency Housing Vouchers. We were officially notified that we got 17 vouchers. We are required to enter into a memorandum of understanding with our local continuum of care to accept referrals from their waiting list. For these vouchers we are not allowed to issue to anyone from our existing waiting list. They must come from their coordinated entry list. Additionally, the MOU spells out the same services they offer us for our Mainstream Voucher program that our board previously approved. Therefore, I bring before you a motion to allow the Executive Director to do all things necessary and proper to enter into an MOU with Three County Continuum of Care.

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

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I am confused by this. When we got residents from the Northampton Lodge was that emergency housing vouchers?

Cara – No.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – If these are not from people on our waiting list where do they come from?

Cara – the COC has their own waiting list because they provide specialty services so that people can remain housed once they are housed. This becomes our MOU that we will give vouchers to people off their list and they will provide specific services in turn to those people. HUD requires it to be able to manage these vouchers.

Chairperson Richards – Through a private landlord, right?

Cara – vouchers through private landlords, nothing to do with your bricks and mortar properties.

Commissioner Cancel – agreeing with my understanding of it.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Richards, Vice Chairperson Brooks, Commissioner Jones, Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Laufer and Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

Chairperson Richards had a reminder to the Board – if you haven't sent me anything for Cara's evaluation, I am working on it and it is almost complete. A couple of people haven't sent me anything. Again, the new people don't have to do the grid because you weren't here. I am interested in what you would like to see happen in the future. Please send me something so I can wind this up, I would appreciate it very much. If you have, thank you, thank you.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield put forth the motion to adjourn the June meeting at 6:09 P.M., seconded by Commissioner Laufer.