



JANUARY 31, 2022
JANUARY MINUTES
APPROVED March 21, 2022

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, January 31, 2021 at 5:30 P.M.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 5:31 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 & Commissioner Carney.
ALSO PRESENT: Cara Leiper; Jack Redman; Sharon Kimble; Attorney Tom O’Connor; Kaitlin Hanning; Angel Sadlowski; Jose Cruz; Keith Walsh; Amanda Huertas; Danielle McColgan, Mia Weibel, Gary DePace; Angela & Joe Santaniello; Anna Gilbert; K. Chapman & Cheryl Cardinale.

MOTION TO APPROVE 2ND QTR FINANCIALS FY22 AS PRESENTED BY FEE ACCOUNTANT, GARY DEPACE

This is for quarter ending 12/31/21 for 400, 689 and MRVP – standard reports done in the past and we are at the halfway point of the year. The only thing that looks a little off is the Maintenance Contract costs. There were items expended in that line item – we had health and safety funds that were awarded that we haven’t used that we are saving for our security system. Since that time we have received additional funds for security from other resources. We are going to re-allocate some of those items that we have spent to those health and safety items bringing the budget back in line. Next month there will be a journal entry taking it out from one source and putting it in to the other.

Commissioner Cancel – question – what is the line item you were talking about?

Gary DePace – Account # 4430 – Maintenance Contract Costs in the 400 program. We expended \$246,573.00 where the budget line item is \$304,120.00. So if we were at just half we would be at approximately \$150,000.00 spent. We are about \$90,000.00 over. The Health and safety items would reduce that amount.

Cara – we are re-allocating some invoices that were coded to that line item (4430) to a different line item.

Vice-Chair Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Carney.
VOTING YAY: Chairperson Richards; Vice Chairperson Brooks; Commissioner Jones; Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Laufer and Commissioner Carney.
VOTING NAY: NONE
ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield
Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

DISCUSSION

DHCD PHN 2022-02 REVISING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SALARY. APPROVE NEW FORMULARY CALCULATION BASED ON DHCD REVISED SCHEDULE.

Cara – the Executive Director’s salary is based on a salary calculation worksheet. Whenever the administrative line item increased in the budget, the ED got the same increase because they were considered administrative. They did a salary freeze for ED’s in 2019. For 2020, 2021 and 2022 the base remained at \$130,386.00. They hired an outside contractor to do a salary evaluation and compare it with 8 states. Massachusetts ED’s were under by about 10%. They did a 5 year plan which did a 5% increase in the first 2 years and a 2% increase for the next 3 years but only to the base salary. The new calculation puts the base salary at \$136,905.00 which is a difference of a little over \$6,000.00. It requires the Board to approve, but then each year for those percentages, to sign the new calculation worksheet by the Chairperson. The calculation for full salary is as follows; Base - \$136,905.00 then the program factor because we manage more than 10 programs adds an additional \$16,500.00; the family factor is added because we have 92 family units, which adds \$2,500.00 which brings the salary to \$155,905.00, for a full time LHA calculated salary maximum. We have a management agreement because we run another housing authority, that adds another \$8,582.00 for a full time LHA salary maximum including all the sources of \$164,487.00.

Chairperson Richards – A salary study was done – when we approve this motion are we approving the future years also?

Cara – the motion asks that the board approve DHCD’s formulary calculation for 2022 and that they approve you to sign whatever the DHCD formula is for each of the following years indicated in the notice which are 23, 24, 25 & 26. Each year they will release a new sheet that we have to complete, but it will be based on a 5% increase in 2022 and 2023 and then 2% or ANUEL calculation whichever is less for the next 3 years. So that we don’t have to go through this process every single year, and if everyone is in agreement, it would be to allow the Chairperson to sign the formulary calculation worksheet as DHCD distributes them each year.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – in light of the pandemic and all the stuff that is going on is this still being implemented? I thought maybe there would be a pause in light of what is going on nationwide and statewide.

Cara – they put a freeze on ED’s salary for three years. On 1/26/2022 they released these new guidelines. They increased it based on ED’s not having salary increases across the Commonwealth for 3 years and over the next 5 years they would get incremental increases to a portion of the calculation that calculates their salaries.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – the freeze happened before the pandemic or is it just something they did like putting a freeze on it so nothing happened as a result of the pandemic to say this is something we can table at a different time because we have a lot of stuff we have to do. That wasn’t a consideration?

Cara – ED’s salaries is something DHCD clamped down on when everything hit the fan in Chelsea, Ma. They really clamped down on how salaries were calculated, how you hire an Executive Director, what they are paid based on experience, etc. In the Chelsea HA instance the ED was being paid over a half a

million dollars. ED's across the Commonwealth we up at arms because they felt they were being underpaid and petitioned for a salary study, however, I did not participate in this. DHCD decided to hire a company to do a salary study which took 3 years to complete. The salary freeze happened while they completed the study to see where people should be. This notice in my opinion is a way to make people whole over a period of time so as not to ding Housing Authorities in giving such a huge lump sum all at once. This is why they did it over 5 years. They will re-evaluate it again in 2026.

Chairperson Richards – salary studies are a very good thing, it keeps us competitive. If we ever had to recruit an ED, it keeps us in the ballpark competitively.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – my concern right now with what is going on nationwide, if Congressmen and Senators were saying oh we had this thing a while back but we need to consider our raises, these people would say right now – can we do this right now? Not to say this doesn't need to be done. Maybe some people were working double because they were working from home, but we here at Salvo were kind of half staffed for a long time in light of what was going on.

Gary DePace – when we presented the budget a few months ago using the budget guidelines from DHCD, one of the components was that the ED salary schedule was not complete at the time, but they did not want us holding up the Budget process. DHCD, at the time they issued the guidelines back in October, said we would have the new salary schedule the end of November or the beginning of December. We didn't get the schedule until January 26, 2022. It is something we presented to the board and knew that was on the horizon. They issued it for a 5 year period – they will give this calculation every year for the next 4 years to be updated. The last 3 years is a 2% increase, but it is 2% or whatever the annual budget increase is for that year. If in FY25 we get a 4% increase for the ANUEL – then the ED increase would be the 4%, not the 2%. This is how it is done to calculate the ED's salary. Every Housing Authority in Massachusetts now uses this formula.

Commissioner Laufer – I thought we approved a raise in the ED salary specific to COVID. It makes me skeptical to approve a budget for the next 5 years knowing that there are conditions that we would approve. Obviously Cara, you work very hard, you deserved a raise during COVID, but I feel like we approved a raise already in her salary this year and then we are doing it again. What is happening with the non- executive management – are they also getting raises? How does that sort of look in terms of just, equity?

Cara – you approved a one- time bonus COVID pay out which was for vacation time that I wasn't able to use, it was not a raise. If you recall the board approved unused vacation time to be paid out to all staff. DHCD required that it be done differently with the ED, and so required it to be paid as a bonus. I simply got paid an amount of money that was equivalent to my unused vacation. I haven't had a raise in salary since the last calculation worksheet in 2019. In regards to the staff, I completed the performance appraisals and salary increases based upon the appraisals for all staff last week. The collective bargaining unit has the potential to earn up to a 6% increase (2% is automatic, 2% is performance based & 2% is only if they meet the vacancy quota). The administrative line item was approved for a 4% increase to the bottom line. Administrative staff were given increases based on their performance appraisal.

Commissioner Laufer – you mentioned across Massachusetts there were some agencies that were below – was your salary below and by how much?

Cara – Yes. Based on their salary study, and based on the 28 page document. It is less by \$6,519.00. The DHCD Calculation Worksheet does the calculation for you, as you fill in certain boxes, the sheet does the formulary calculation behind the scenes. My salary was a formulary calculation increase by \$6,519.00. Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – the ED and staff were working very hard during COVID, but as a tenant I am seeing how services were skeletal in some ways. I went over the 28 page document and I still have questions.

Cara – this has nothing to do with COVID – it has to do with the ED salary calculation sheet, the Salary study that DHCD conducted and paying your ED, whomever that is, up to what an industry standard is and was done based upon the Salary Comparability study they did.

Chairperson Richards – questions or feedback on the last few years or the year moving forward, that is a whole different issue that will be dealt with in the performance evaluation process – this is to only bring us up to industry standards.

Commissioner Jones – regarding the situation in Chelsea – I think the ED was getting over \$300,000.00. It was so one sided and the Board members were getting \$20,000.00 a piece which I just find unbelievable. The reaction of the State at the time was to lock everything down. That is where I see this coming from now- an adjustment spread out over 5 years. I don't see this as a COVID type budget issue. I appreciate the comments, this is certainly a once in a lifetime pandemic.

Commissioner Cancel – what is your current salary now Cara?

Cara – the current base is \$130,386.00 plus \$16,500.00 for the program factor, \$2500.00 for the family factor and then management agreement of \$8,390.00 = \$157,776.00. The proposed worksheet salary is \$164,487.00 which is a difference of \$6,711.00.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – the other agency, you said there was another salary. Is this part of your salary or are you going to go through this with the other agency also?

Cara – The board meeting with the other agency was held last week and they approved their portion. Their portion is reflected in step 6 of the calculation worksheet, and it is already part of the total salary.

Commissioner Cancel – I propose we table this and vote next month as it was a lot to look through the 28 pages during the weekend prior to the meeting. I am also not comfortable of having one individual to sign for the next 5 years for and Ed to get a raise. A vote to allow the Chair to sign for the next few years – it feels like we are paying somebody before they actually do the job – does that make sense?

Cara – it is not the Chair who makes the decision about the formulary worksheet, it is required with the budget. DHCD is making the determination of the maximum increase. What is before the board is if you want to approve the increases and allow the Chair to sign off on the formulary worksheet each year. I would be happy to go over this with you via zoom. It is not being proposed that the Chair decides the salary, because that is decided with the budget and DHCD, but rather she could sign off on the form each year when it is released based upon the fact that the numbers are already there.

Commissioner Jones – Gary, at the end of the day, aren't we pretty much locked into these numbers?

Gary DePace – yes, but I want to point out, right from page 5 of the PH notice and I hope everyone looks at it, this calculation that we just talked about for Cara is the maximum. We can't pay more than that in the salary. Your determination of what you pay is based upon the same way that Cara determines how she will pay her employees with evaluations and reviews. DHCD is saying that we are giving you a formula you can't exceed. What you've determined to vote on can't be more than that. If you want to decide to pay less than that you can. That is where your Chairman was talking about staying competitive within the industry. If Cara left tomorrow and you had to hire a new director, the first thing they will do is say the salary range for a new hire should be the lower side of 85% of the maximum up to that amount based upon experience. You have a director with 7 years' experience so you determine as a Board what that salary is.

Cara – I have 7 years' experience with NHA, but I have 37 years' experience in the industry.

Commissioner Jones – I thought Gary, the maximum salary is \$189,000.00.

Gary DePace – Yes. That is the maximum cap no matter how many units or programs. The numbers in the sheet you were presented is based upon the number of units, programs and other factors that Northampton has as the maximum calculation.

Commissioner Cancel – this is a guideline, it is what we can go by, but it is not that we have to. Otherwise, what are we here for, if DHCD is going to decide for us how much to pay our ED. We aren't currently paying the minimum, according to DHCD we aren't paying the maximum. The biggest piece for me is the 5 years – I think that we can continue to go each year and do raises each year rather than take this formula. I see it as a guideline, not a mandate. I don't feel we are locked in to these numbers.

Chairperson Richards – I think that is correct, we are not locked in and the Chair, no matter who it is, is not dictating the Executive Director' salary – that is a very good point. For me it is about the market study that they've done, obviously 28 pages, they put some time and thought into it and I think it is important that we stay well within the market. If we had to recruit, we really want to get someone with the caliber that we are used to.

Vice-Chair Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Chairperson Richards.

Commissioner Cancel – I suggested we table this.

Vice-Chair Brooks – we can't, we have to vote on it at this meeting.

Chairperson Richards – we need to vote on the motion.

Commissioner Cancel – why do we have to vote on it at this meeting?

Chairperson Richards – because the motion was made.

Commissioner Cancel – but my motion was first, can we vote on that first?

Commissioner Laufer – Edgar had asked to table it well before Jim made the motion.

Commissioner Cancel – I don't feel that we have to be pressured to vote on any item on the agenda.

Vice-Chair Brooks – I don't feel pressured.

Commissioner Cancel – I'm glad you don't, but I do.

Vice-Chair Brooks – well then you state your case, so let's vote on the motion.

Chairperson Richards – I am going to call the question and the question is to approve, and if you don't approve say no.

Commissioner Cancel – Marilyn, I did ask a question when I had my turn, if we can table it until next month to give us time to read this 28 page document.

Chairperson Richards – that was for discussion.

Commissioner Cancel – I am happy with the work that Cara is doing. I have the concerns I have expressed and I don't think that's a lot to ask to table the motion. Can we vote on that motion first?

Chairperson Richards – No, we are in discussion Commissioner Cancel.

Commissioner Jones – following that Edgardo, I have a question for Attorney O'Connor – if you have been following this, which particular motion are we considering right now? Edgardo did make a motion to table it but I don't recall if there was a motion at the beginning of all of this to approve it one way or the other. I am a little bit confused, I don't want to do anything out of order and then get caught in some open meeting law parliamentary mistake.

Attorney O'Connor – I agree, there is Marilyn's motion but Edgardo moved to table it and there wasn't a second, there was not a vote on that. We could proceed that way – if there is a second a vote on that and if it is tabled, it is tabled and if it's not, it's not and proceed to the agenda item to vote on the motion Marilyn has put forward. As the Chair, Marilyn is totally entitled to proceed with the vote on the motion and go that route. I don't think either way is incorrect, I think it is a decision for the Chair to make.

Commissioner Laufer – I'm confused, I heard Edgardo say he wanted to do a motion to table, but you have set the precedent to say a motion has been set forward. Can we have a second? I was waiting for that to happen and then all of this happened. So that's what I'm saying – I would like his motion to be recognized.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I am expressing my concern about asking questions and voting. That's what I thought the Board was here for. I am seeing stuff that is leaving a pit in my stomach. Nobody is saying anything about Cara's performance. This is the guideline we still have to vote on whether the ED gets a raise or not. Is that correct? We need some coins, etc. basic necessities at the Housing, I am hearing about other places that may be different. I don't like all this negativity, I feel like I don't have a voice.

Chairperson Richards – I would like to vote on the motion. If you don't want to vote on it, either abstain or vote against it, and then we can entertain another idea.

Attorney O'Connor – I don't believe there was a second for the motion.

Chairperson Richards – I did second it.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Richards; Vice Chairperson Brooks; Commissioner Jones and Commissioner Carney.

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Laufer, Commissioner Cancel and Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.
Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

Chairperson Richards- maybe we could do an education session for people who have questions.

Cara – I would be happy to do a zoom and explain the calculation sheet, just reach out to me.

Chairperson Richards – I would like to show my appreciation to people who spoke up, this is the kind of dialogue that we want to have.

Commissioner Cancel – It is also a form of shutting me down. I don't need an explanation of this, numbers are numbers, what I need is time, I just wanted to put that out there.

Chairperson Richards – this is not an attempt to shut you down, the motion did pass. It was an attempt to move the meeting along and also offer a consultation with Executive Director Leiper so she could go into more detail and have you understand. I am sorry if you interpreted that I was trying to shut you down, I am trying to keep the meeting moving.

At approximately 6:22 p.m., Commissioner Cancel left the meeting.

TENANT COMMENTS

Anna Gilbert – Salvo #704 - My camper was towed yesterday and it was unnecessary to have it towed, there was not enough snow for that to happen. I have lived here for 4 years and it was never a problem with management to have it winterized and parked out back. I now have a \$250.00 towing bill.

Salvo #425 – Joseph Santaniello – I understand on the agenda there is a Pet Policy. I am offering my services to help re-write the policy. Angela Santaniello – yes, he is a licensed animal inspector for the Commonwealth of Mass. and an animal control officer and was in law enforcement for many years. He is willing to work with NHA to make the policy more enforceable. The Salvo Neighborhood watch was recently working with the Northampton Board of Health and they provided us with quite a few test kits and masks. We put up signs at Salvo, Cahill and McDonald for anyone needing masks. There is a lot of COVID going on in the buildings. If any property managers have elderly who need test kits feel free to let us know and we will get one to them. We are also helping them sign up for the free test kits. Regarding the Pet Policy – I got a copy of the pet policy that every owner is supposed to sign and agree to. The biggest issue is enforcement of the policy, it is hard when you don't have the staff available. Would you allow Joe to help enforce? Specific breeds are not allowed and any kind of animal with a pit bull mix should not be allowed in any NHA property because the temperament of the dog can change at any moment. Also emotional pets need to follow some of the same guidelines as to the regular pet policy. On the snow policy – maybe develop a tenant committee from each property to help develop this policy. This last snow storm did not go well, it wasn't well organized.

Cheryl Cardinale – Salvo #623 – on the pet policy there is a big uproar on emotional pets. People are getting bit. An emotional support dog is a regular pet, and people are taking advantage of it. I appreciate that you are stepping in to enforce these rules. We have to live in fear of our dog getting hurt or killed – I have to worry about this every single night. An emotional support dog needs to be registered with the ADA, people need to know that too. Maybe someone could call ADA and get more information on emotional support dogs.

STAFF COMMENT

NONE

PUBLIC COMMENT

NONE

APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 2021 MINUTES

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

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield –on the minutes - K at McDonald - during the tenant comments, stated that she had to ask to plan things – should it be plant things?

Vice-Chair Brooks – she talked about planting.

Cara – it should say plant instead of plan.

Chairperson Richards – change to plant and call it a scrivener’s error.

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSENT: Commissioner Cancel

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the December minutes with the correction.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Corticelli Street Update

Procurement Posted to Northampton Housing Authority Website

1/27/22 – Gazette Advertisement run for Marketing Services

1/31/22 – Advertisement on Central Registry Run (required)

Next Steps

2/10/22 – Gazette Advertisement Schedule for minimum 7 days before bid opening.

2/18/22 – Bid opening at 11:00 A.M.

2/28/22 - Board Meeting to accept lowest/qualified realtor

Submit request for proposal for the sale to DHCD based for approval. Estimated completion date of 3/1/22.

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSION – PET POLICY

Vice-Chair Brooks – the policy is clear but it seems there are new issues with people who want and need pets and maybe we do need to clarify it. Maybe Mr. Santaniello can help.

Cara – unfortunately people who want pets just get them and don’t ask permission. Once we are told about it we can address it. Oftentimes someone that says they have an emotional pet may be just telling people that. We require the office to have a picture of a pet, inoculations and the weight restriction to be in writing from the vet whether they are a service animal or not. If you think you need to report a pet ownership we can check to see if they are registered in our system. If they aren’t we can meet with them to discuss. This will go out in the March newsletter and will have updates.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield - The policy needs to be updated and I think 3 or 4 people at Salvo have pets that are not registered. There are dogs that are bigger than 35 pounds and dogs here that I am frightened of. I wish people would clean up the animal droppings. I think it is going to get worse before it gets better.

Commissioner Laufer – I like the policy, I think if residents are offering to help and put in their professional input, I would love to see that happen. I suggest maybe make a “live” policy meaning you have links to certain things that you are requiring that might make it more easy and accessible for

residents to get the proper documentation. Or go to an area to make appointments for them to be registered every so often. Having a pet is expensive and a lot of people might not be keeping up with certain things because they have to pay annually. Having those resources available to them, maybe link them to the Dakin pet clinics and making sure we are providing them with resources to keep pets healthy and residents healthy. Maybe residents could pull up a link with a checklist.

Chairperson Richards – pet policy – seems a lot goes to enforcement and the ease of coming in to fulfill our expectations. Can I turn this back over to the staff and have you look at the policy and update it and bring it back to the Board for approval of the revised policy if necessary?

Cara – I would like to note although it says it was written on November 1, 2021 it did have amendments and resolutions #845, 897, 912 and 983 over the years. I will have the Salvo property manager reach out to the Santaniello's and ask for copies of the documents showing Mr. Santaniello's certifications around these items. I will take a look at the policy and see where it can be fine-tuned and bring it back when I can.

Cara – the next meeting is February 28, 2022. March meeting is the 21st. However, in April I need to change it to the 11th and in June to the 27th because of holidays. I will send out the grid I have created with all the dates tomorrow.

Also, please know that I run this agency as if I was to fall off the planet tomorrow, that someone else can keep the boat afloat. I have a very competent staff that I rely heavily on and I couldn't do this without them. I have reflected that in their reviews and raises last week. I may only be available by phone for a few days or may not be in the office, but we have a good staff and plan in place.

Vice-Chair Brooks put forth the motion to adjourn the January meeting at 6:52 P.M., seconded by Commissioner Laufer.