



APPROVED AUGUST 2022 MINUTES
AUGUST 15, 2022

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, August 15, 2022 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 Tarbutton-Springfield & Commissioner Carney.
Commissioner Laufer joined the meeting at 5:52 p.m.

ALSO PRESENT: Cara Leiper; Jack Redman; Sharon Kimble; Attorney Tom O’Connor; Kaitlin Hanning; Keith Walsh; Amanda Huertas; Danielle McColgan; Mia Weibel; Angel Sadlowski; Angela Santaniello & Gwen Nabad.

TENANT COMMENTS

Angela Santaniello Salvo #425 – police reports from the neighborhood watch have gone down drastically. We get maybe 2 or 3 calls a week now instead of pages of calls so we are doing a lot better in that realm. I also want to thank the Housing Authority, they task the neighborhood watch in overseeing the front flower beds in the building and I don’t know if any of you have had a chance to drive by Salvo but you should take a little gander at it because I think the flower beds look great out front. Between Housing and all the residents who worked together to get that done, it looks great this year. I want to say thank you for all of that.

Gwen Nabad – Hampshire Heights # 19D - I want to report that our community event went really wonderfully the other day with the corn cookout. We had a great time and we are hoping to do that monthly. Also would like to request a bulletin board.

STAFF COMMENT

Cara – we accidentally deleted the Executive Director Report off of the agenda line item, so if it is amicable to you I would like to present it under the staff comment if that is all right.
Chairperson Richards – yes, please.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Cara read the ED report to the Board with updates and events. This month Dr. Michael Coby visited all 5 of our elderly/disabled sites and provided podiatry services to 31 of our residents. He has agreed to continue this service for our residents and will be coming back to each site every 2 ½ months. This will allow residents to bill their health insurance for their visits and if a resident is without insurance they can still see the doctor for a \$25.00 fee. Residents who utilized this service over the past month have reported their feet feel much better and look forward to seeing the doctor again.

Grow Food Northampton has a market table with free produce every Thursday at the elderly/disabled sites. RSC’s continue to deliver food bags from Grow Food Northampton and the Northampton Survival Center to Cahill and Forsander each week and volunteers deliver at the other 3 sites. RSC’s picked up 21 brown bags from the monthly Brown Bag Program at the Senior Center and delivered them to the resident’s doors. We have also been staffing the lunch time for the summer eats program every weekday

for the past month at both Hampshire Heights and Florence Heights. This program ends this Friday August 19th.

We hosted an arts and crafts night with the elementary school principle where the kids chose a name for each of the gardens on the property and painted a sign for both of them (the community garden and the woods garden).

We hosted the first community meal for the first time post COVID. The event was sponsored by Grow Food Northampton & Northampton Housing Authority. Resident's grilled corn and chicken, shared recipes and played games outside.

We were able to obtain confirmation of a donation from the Easthampton Community Center that we will receive 80+ backpacks stocked with school supplies to offer to residents before the start of the school year.

PUBLIC COMMENT

NONE

APPROVAL OF THE JULY 2022 MINUTES

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

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield & Commissioner Cancel.

ABSENT: Commissioner Laufer

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the July minutes.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I am abstaining from voting because there was a lot of it and it wasn't as clear and concise as I remembered it so I am not saying it is right or wrong but I will just abstain from that.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Items that were tabled:

Corticelli Street Update

Hampshire Heights & Florence Heights Basements Update

Training Update

G drive Update

Public Television Update

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION – Accept FY22 Quarterly/Year End Financials, Certification Top 5 Compensation document & Certification of Compliance with Lead Paint notification laws as prepared by Gary DePace.

Cara read a letter from Fee Accountant Gary DePace.

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

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

ABSENT: Commissioner Laufer

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

DISCUSSION

Correspondence

Cara read a letter from a McDonald resident, Deb Charow addressed to Cara and Jack regarding the Board meeting of June 27, 2022.

Chairperson Richards – read her response to that letter.

Cara – On Monday August 1, 2022 at 11:46 a.m. per the prior meeting instructions I sent an email to Christine DeVore and Sara O’Leary – Sara is the Attorney at DHCD and Christine oversees the housing division regarding Commissioner Tarbutton’s alleged conversation with them. The subject was clarification needed, and if they has spoken to Commissioner Tarbutton and stated that wrongdoing had occurred. She then read the email that she sent and the response from DHCD which indicated that Commissioner Tarbutton had not in fact spoken to them about the issue she claimed, and further that nothing had been done wrong by the Chair or the ED.

Cara then read a letter from Louis Dugatto a resident at MI08 Forsander regarding the new mailboxes that were recently installed and how much he appreciated them.

Chairperson Richards – thank you Executive Director Leiper. I am going to open this to discussion but I would like to say this is an important issue and as far as I know everyone on the commission is dedicated to the residents in their own way. My hope is that all residents can feel comfortable in attending our meetings and that we can come to an understanding with legal issues and procedures.

Commissioner Carney – I was curious to hear this actually as an item under New Business for discussion although when placed in context it did make sense given there was a request for some confirmation at the last meeting. It is unusual though because it comes up right on the heels of a letter we heard from a resident regarding the level of contrariness in our meeting and I just read in some of the chats from another commissioner too that it might be better for us to address a lot of the details of these - and I know we don’t have the access to because of open meeting law executive session or anything like that but I think in the context of training that was referenced by the Chair in terms of team building and those things. It seems as though we got some answers based on questions that were raised at the last meeting and I don’t know whether the original case is worth us hashing through in discussion here so in my limited minutes I just ask that we think about that in terms of the general tenor of the residents’ letter.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I think it is a really good idea that you are bringing letters from tenants and reading them. Actually I have gotten notices from people who say they have written to you, to Jack and to Cara and many times they felt like you haven’t responded to them. I think that I feel like this is being a little bit of a targeted thing. I actually do know the tenant who wrote the letter. I have to say if that person is listening I apologize for my behavior and the way I was acting, I think she was talking about the June meeting so I do recognize that and I do think that we are an example for the tenants. I think that should be an exhibit and I think the Chair should be able to exhibit control including the Executive Director and the Attorney, not just the people here. If you ever see me in person I am like this in person, so I will tone it down if need be. I just want to say I feel this is in bad taste to bring this up particularly when the person said let’s do it private, but special sessions that is what they are for

but also because we have somebody who is supposed to help us go through this, so it feels like it is a punch that you got this out and then you say to us to respond in only two minutes. But I want to clarify I never said it was illegal, I said it was improper, unprofessional and coercive and I said it made me say yes under duress. What I got from the letter from the Executive Director - that is not what she said. She called and said I need your assurance that you will vote for Marilyn and not for Elizabeth Silver because she is a mean ole bully and poor old Marilyn is so nice, she is thinking of leaving the Board if she doesn't get the Chair, so do I have your assurance. That is not what she said, what she wrote. I don't want to get into the legality if there was a legal thing about it, it would have already happened. But there is a thing we can think about that I don't want to get into this now but I don't know why we are bringing it up but there is a legality if there are certain board members for whatever reason who are treated differently based on race, sex and class and age. There are some things that may be a legality that is not something I was pursuing because we were going to be dealing with this and this is like a slap in the face again. The Chair is the one who makes up the schedule and agenda and we have some real important things that we should talk about so we are going to bypass that not that what tenants have to say is important but if you are going to pick and choose because there are lots of tenants who have things to say that are - we will get back to you, we will get back to you, and then you pick up this one to bring because it is targeting a particular board member but I have nothing but love, and thank you.

Commissioner Laufer - I will just say that I would still strongly encourage us as a Board to do diversity and equity trainings. There might be some cultural differences in terms of tones and the way that issues are presented and I think it would serve us all well to be on the same page just so it doesn't look so much like we are targeting one of the few people of color on our Board and I will leave it at that.

Vice Chairperson Brooks - I really don't like some of the comments made about me because I hold so many offices on the Board but at the same time I understand new people wanting to become involved in the Board and I accept that. So I had to accept that they thought I was running some kind of conspiracy or something and that wasn't the issue at all. I am a very competitive person so usually when somebody wants me to run for a Board I run for it or try to and I really don't like to feel that people think that I am some sort of dictatorial person because I am not.

Commissioner Jones - there was a difference of opinion as far as how the open meeting laws apply so I can understand the clarification we heard tonight. The other thing would be on the tenant's comments the practice is that we as the Board are not going to respond right then and there with a few exceptions but basically we are not going to reply right then and there. Perhaps if we could get the following meeting the following month, if we could get in the Executive Director's report a follow up saying it was raised last month about whatever, parking problems, and this is what we did to try to address that and this is where it is and we don't have it fixed yet. Something like that so there is more public presentation that yes these issues are being dealt with. We are encouraging tenants to make comments and I think it is important to demonstrate that we are following up on those comments as best as the Authority can. I just think it is a better way to go forward and I will leave it at that.

Commissioner Cancel - I look forward to the days when everybody is valued - Commissioner Cancel was in the car and we could not hear what he was saying, he kept fading in and out.

Chairperson Richards - we will take these comments very seriously and put them into our plan.

Vice Chairperson Brooks put forth the motion to adjourn the August meeting at 6:11 p.m. seconded by Commissioner Carney.

