



NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

APPROVED SEPTEMBER 19, 2022 SEPTEMBER MINUTES

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, September 19, 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.

ABSENT: Commissioner Carney

ALSO PRESENT: Cara Leiper; Jack Redman; Sharon Kimble; Attorney Tom O'Connor; Kaitlin Hanning; Amanda Huertas; Danielle McColgan; Mia Weibel; Jose Cruz; Heather Maxwell; Angel Sadlowski; Mary Chapman; Angela Santaniello & Gwen Nabad.

TENANT COMMENTS

Angela Santaniello Salvo #425 – No updates – everything has been going pretty pleasantly around here. It hasn't been near as bad as it used to be. As far as the Neighborhood Watch goes, everything is great. I want to thank NHA for the tenant appreciation that you held here. I think it was widely appreciated and I have heard very good things from the ones who attended. Thank you very much.

Mary Chapman – McDonald #201 – regarding intercoms here. It has not worked but maybe a couple of months and I have been here a little over 3 years. When HUD came to inspect, the sign saying out of order was removed for some reason but it still did not work. I think the intercom is pretty important that it works especially with this key policy that is so much trouble for all of us. As usual WIFI is a necessary utility. I realize we can get help from Danielle to get the lower cost internet but for whatever reason a lot of people don't want to deal with you. I am sorry, they just don't. We took a tour of all the gardens at the NHA properties and at Salvo we were tickled to learn the gardeners there received a \$100.00 stipend for what they did. Other gardeners at other properties are wondering how we can get in line for those \$100.00 stipends. Are we going to get them as well for all the improvements we have done on the properties? The most important thing is the intercom especially with the key policy.

Gwen Nabad – Hampshire Heights # 19D - bulletin board situation. A multi season type bulletin board that people can post things like what is going on in the City and Community. I am really shocked to find out about the \$100.00 stipends for the gardens for work, because we have lost so much there.

Chairperson Richards – there was a recommendation by Commissioner Jones after reading the minutes to cut a report on resolutions that have been made during the month. Remind me of doing that for the next meeting.

Cara – I have actually added it after our last meeting. I added a section to the Executive Director Report called resident comment follow-up which is already on for this month.

STAFF COMMENT

NONE

PUBLIC COMMENT

NONE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Cara read the report and gave updates. NHA hosted 7 resident appreciation events in September which were well attended. We had 7 raffles put together by my granddaughter and I, the staff put a ton of effort into the events and all residents that attended were very appreciative. I received several calls and thank you letters/cards from residents.

Our dedication of the Hampshire Heights playground was a huge success. Once again, I would like to thank Northampton CDBG, Northampton Community Preservation Committee, Northampton Housing Partnership, Peg Keller, Commissioner Edgardo Cancel, Berkshire Design Group and volunteers, the residents of Hampshire Heights and staff of Northampton Housing who participated in funding applications and design.

We had Family Fun Event at Florence Heights, many families came out to enjoy in the day's activities. Special thanks to Bike for All for coming out and fixing up residents bikes for free, to the New England Handball Association for educating and teaching resident youths the game of handball and to Northampton Public Schools Early Childhood Center for coming out with free books, learning games and information for families.

Chairperson Richards – I just want to say that we were excited to welcome the Mayor and State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, Councilor Jim Nash and Councilor Stan Moulton and the City Council President attend the Hampshire Heights Event.

Resident Comment Follow-Up – No comments necessary from the August 2022 meeting.

Chairperson Richards – thank you to staff and thank you everyone who put the resident appreciation days together and the dedication of the playground. I saw one little girl come up to the playground and squeal with happiness and I was so pleased to hear that, so thank you everyone.

APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 2022 MINUTES

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

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

ABSENT: Commissioner Carney.

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the August minutes.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – Cara read a letter from someone in Forsander – did that not happen? At the end of the meeting you read a letter from a person in Forsander thanking you for the mailboxes is that true?

Cara – it wasn't a letter to me it was a letter to the Board thanking us for the mailboxes. There was a letter read.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I did not see it on the Agenda and from my understanding the Chair said there would be absolutely nothing covered not on the Agenda, so I don't know how that got to be read, if we are going to the part where anything not on the Agenda isn't permitted.

Cara – that item fell under the line on the agenda titled correspondence.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – it fell under the Agenda called correspondence?

Cara – yes, there was an Agenda item called correspondence. It was read under that Agenda item.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – at the very end of the meeting it was something that dealt with correspondence that you read under New Business?

Cara – it was an Agenda item on last month's meeting called correspondence.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I had something too and it wasn't recognized so I am just putting that out there. You can say it is under correspondence it wasn't not something you had corresponded to someone. It just seems to me if you are going to apply rules or set rules that everybody should adhere to them and that is all I have to say on that. Thanks.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Discussion – Corticelli Street Update

Attorney O'Connor – it is a big day in the Corticelli St. development. It is tentatively scheduled to close Friday. There was a delay as the neighbor to the left of the home abuts our property by about a foot and as a result the plans were not approved initially because you need 10 feet between the buildings. The builder wasn't able to get the 10 foot requirement. The Fire Department is ok with the plans he has, he is going to shore up the walls with some additional fire proofing. It is tentative to close this Friday so fingers crossed.

Chairperson Richards – what great news! That was a little glitch that we weren't planning on but thank you so much for your efforts in getting that resolved. Anything else on Corticelli Street? We may be able to take it off our Agenda next month except for the celebration.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – who was the Corticelli Street buyer?

Attorney O'Connor – was frozen at this point. Cara asked if Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield was fine with her emailing the information in the morning.

DISCUSSION

Basements at Hampshire & Florence Heights

Cara – as we get emails from DHCD on each of the projects – on 9/14/22 I sent an email to DHCD. On 9/16/22 Jack sent a follow up email explaining we were having a Board meeting and the Board would like an update. We did not receive a response to either of those emails. We will reach out to them again later in the week and hope that we can get some more information by the next Board meeting.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – this issue wasn't brought up at the last Board meeting because it was tabled for this meeting. So then 2 months ago and you have not been able to get a response from the people who you are asking to be updated – is that what you are saying?

Cara – it is a capital improvement project and DHCD controls all facets of those projects and so we have asked them for an update. It was tabled from last month, all of the old business was tabled by the request of the Chair for numerous reasons. We have reached out to them and asked them to give us an update and have yet to hear back from them. We have no control of the projects at all.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – how long normally when you ask DHCD for updates does it take?

Cara – it depends on who it is and whether they are in the office or out. I can't answer that question because it really depends and whether I have cell phone numbers or not. Jack, can you tell me the last email we did get?

Jack – we receive emails from them every day but this particular project, May 22nd is the last email I have that the work order has already been processed through and the architect that they hired to do the second study on the project was working on it. Right now when we did this the first time with the first architect it took them a full 90 days to come out to the property and do the actual study. I am assuming at some point this month or next month we will hear from the actual architect/designer but the gentleman who is in charge of this project is also in charge of the window project at Hampshire Heights and was actually out last week driving through the property regarding the windows. During that time I have also asked him to touch base with the architect but I have not heard back yet.

Chairperson Richards – Jack, thank you for your update. It sounds like we are on it and I would like to keep this on the agenda for next month.

Commissioner Cancel – a request – if when we write to them again if we can express just how long this community has been waiting to get their basements addressed and fixed and see if we can put a sense of urgency on it. I also have a comment -on the risk of putting projects together I understand that in terms of getting the capital funds how it makes sense to do this all together because of all the different things that need to be done at the same time, but in the future I would urge us to consider to not put big projects together. It seems the basement project should have been one project that should have been put in priority above everything else because it has been so many years in fact decades that we have had these issues with the basements and we have so many tenants that on a daily basis are living in unsafe conditions because of the wet basements. Every month that passes by and we have a meeting and we keep postponing this topic it just hurts my heart to know people are suffering and not having the best quality of life because someone on the other end who we are dealing with doesn't see the urgency. I am just suggesting in the future we think about not putting different projects all together to where one may affect the other one and how the length goes.

Chairperson Richards – Thank you, Commissioner Cancel point well taken. I think that it was not our decision to put them together, if I am incorrect, please let me know but I think that was done by DHCD is that correct?

Cara - that is correct Madam Chair initially we had them booked as separate items because they were so costly. We thought we could get basements, water mitigation, then windows, etc. Let me take a step back, initially it was the driveways and walkways and then the basements we found out were an issue and when the architects and engineers were discussing this unfortunately it all ties together. What they found when they did the parking lot and walkways, when they went to take care of the basement and windows it would then destroy the work they just did because of the water and drainage issues. Then they said they were combining the window project as well. We didn't have any control over that and I think it was done so that they weren't destroying the brand new work that they did at the property once they did it, in doing the next project. I have indicated to them that we have water issues and that we are having issues. I have stressed to them how important this is and begged and pleaded with them to make this a top priority. They all have the same project manager and she is the one who holds those purse strings and everything. Yes, you are correct.

Chairperson Richards – Thank you, Cara I would say I agree with Commissioner Cancel if we can beg and send our tears, it is important. It is so frustrating and I understand people's frustrations. They say in politics you never want to see laws made because it is like sausage and it takes a long time. But please take the suggestion to beg and cry.

Cara – yes, I will absolutely do more of that.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – Commissioner Cancel expressed my sentiments exactly. I think about it like today it is raining and I am thinking of residents who have water coming in basements. I think someone put it on U tube of the water and that they had taped it all up and the water is still coming in. I see it as a human rights issue because of breathing and mold and mildew. It seems to me there are certain things there is a sense of expediency when it comes to it but when it comes to repairs and things like this it is oh wow, it just seems like the excuse. I think it should be a priority. If that is not a priority I think all the people who are having to live with water in their basements should get a rent credit to live in stuff like this because it is not fair. Thank you.

Chairperson Richards – Thank you, Commissioner Tarbutton I share your concerns.

DISCUSSION

Racism, Diversity & Cultural Sensitivity Training.

Cara – I had been doing some research on someone who could provide an all- inclusive racism, diversity and cultural sensitivity training and Commissioner Tarbutton was nice enough to forward us some training that was being offered but it was a train the trainer's course and that was through the Equity Literacy Institute. I reached out to the owner Paul Gorski and I sent him an email and he responded. I asked that the training be done ASAP that it be done via zoom or some other platform. I explained that we have several types of staff, administrative and service/maintenance people and would like to offer it to Board members. I asked how many days or hours it would be and what type of cost we would be looking at. He said that generally the length is based on what the organization bringing us is able to accommodate. For only sessions usually each session is 90 to 120 minutes and it is rare but we can do a one shot deal but it is not really that effective. Instead we generally do a series of 3 to 4 workshops but it depends on the goals. The usual cost for a workshop series is \$10,000.00 but we try to be flexible if you are a non- profit. We are not a non-profit and I think \$10,000.00 is incredibly expensive so I have started another search and at 5:15 p.m. today I received an email from Commissioner Cancel with someone's name that is local that provides this sort of training. Tomorrow it is on my list to reach out to that person. I have made 5 or 6 phone calls and I have made 4 or so email inquiries so I am working on that. The other training I have set that up for December so I am looking forward to that. Please don't forget if you have any specific topics to email them to me so that I can get them to the trainer, he is asking for those in advance so he can come prepared.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I think Martin Luther King wrote a book where we can't wait, because I think when he was asking for things there was always a delay. Since I have been on this committee I have been through at least 20 plus workshops, webinars on diversity, cultural awareness, DEI. I think the City of Northampton is saying we must get on board with this, I would think so. I don't understand the delay, you have UMass that has a social justice department this is what they do because I was a part of that. You have so many people who are here and I know Commissioner Cancel there was one woman a while back about 4 or 6 months ago. I have sent stuff not just now but I have sent stuff. Mel King Institute will do it for the Board but the issue was well I don't know about the open meeting law or something like that. This is my second term as a Commissioner and I can't believe this wasn't an issue at the very beginning for everybody. I don't understand the delay, the delay means to me an excuse because you are not going to get it done because it should have been done and part of me thinks if it was important it would have been done. I don't know why this isn't an issue of importance and I don't understand the delay to me the delay is it just isn't important. It is not just the Board, look at your tenant ratio, look at the population we are dealing with. We made a vow to NHA which includes residents and staff and it is like something that needs to be important. I think the part for me that is really difficult is that there are other issues that we zoom past because of a delay. With our Executive Director we renewed her contract a year beforehand because of delays or something like that. Why don't you have that same approach when it comes to issues of diversity, issues dealing with residents dealing with under- represented groups where is the sense of urgency – I've done it. I am now even a trainer – so they are there. It is not this complex Rubik's cube that is so difficult it is there if you seek it out. My suggestion may be if you coordinated with other agencies in the City who are taking this seriously and have already been through this. One group I am in, it was two month's work for all the Board and staff who did different times because it was recorded. If there is a will there is a way, I don't think it is right. I don't like this delay.

Chairperson Richards – Thank you, Commissioner Tarbutton I am in agreement that we should schedule this ASAP. Thank you Commissioner Cancel for sending some names and I know that Director Leiper will work as quickly as she can on this. We should move all these items really just for an update for the next agenda.

Cara – Attorney O'Connor I just want you to address something that has come up. We had spoken about turning off chat because it takes things out of the progress of the Agenda and allows people not during

tenant, staff or public comment to be commenting when they shouldn't so we have turned off chat for that very reason. We are having some push back on that. I would just like you to let the Board know what you had said that we are allowed to have that off and that it should be off in fact because of the Agenda.

Attorney O'Connor – let me take that under advisement and I will get back to you with a more thorough answer next Board meeting. My sense is if these chats are happening they are going to be outside of the meeting, they aren't included anywhere in the minutes and it is a potential open meeting law violation because the chats would not be part of the minutes, it would be problematic. I will actually reach out to the Attorney General's office and get their input because I can't imagine we are alone with that issue.

Chairperson Richards – Thank you, Attorney O'Connor for your update we look forward to hearing how we can manage this. We do appreciate tenant comments. I just want to encourage people to do that during the tenant portion of the meeting.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – wow, I have never heard anything like that before, the comment section being cut. I am with the Arts Council and that adheres to the open meeting law and of course they have comments that is one way of restricting. We don't even have our meetings available for Northampton open media so the public can see and now the comments are being restricted?

Cara – the comments aren't being restricted we have an Agenda.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I wasn't finished.

Chairperson Richards – excuse me, let's let Director Leiper respond to your comments.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I wasn't finished.

Chairperson Richards – I know, I will come back to you.

Cara – Because we are required to follow the agenda tenant and staff comment and public comment are on the agenda in a specific order and once they are closed we aren't supposed to be going back and forth to it. It has come up over the last couple of meetings that there were a lot of comments happening in the chat from residents and I inquired to Attorney O'Connor whether or not we are allowed to have it because I don't want to have an open meeting law violation. He said that in the interim it is best to turn it off. I happened to forget to turn it off when we first started the meeting and saw a couple of shots come through and I turned it off after the fact. Attorney O'Connor will have input from the proper authorities and will have a direct answer. I just wanted to bring it up because a couple of people started freaking out because we turned off the comments. For transparency sake I just wanted to let the Board know what happened and why.

Chairperson Richards – Thank you, Director Leiper I just want to say I appreciate all of your comments and research on this and there have been many. If you read the Gazette open meeting law violations and I read them and shudder because I hope it is not us.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I do appreciate people here who don't want to be in violation of open meeting laws Lord knows you have been cited by the Attorney General so I do understand the caution. When I say restricting I mean they aren't able to express themselves and this is one way of curtailing it for whatever reason. What is the saying for every silly thing a person says they can find a law to support it. I think that is really unfair as it is there aren't that many tenants that come to these meetings. Like with the appreciation thing, there were notices, notices on everybody's door and phone calls. When you want people to show up and be present you know how to do it. There is already a deficit here now you are saying now because of the comments here that makes no sense. You have been cited before so I do understand the extra caution but I don't think you are right here and I will look into the Attorney General myself.

Commissioner Cancel - my difficulty with this is that we should probably get real concrete, factual advice before shutting anything down for any type of way of folks communicating with us. I don't know the law around it. I can understand the rationale about not having something on the side going on. One of the things we really have to think about is that in order for somebody to respond to something that is

going on in one of these meetings they essentially have to wait until next month's meeting to bring it up and ask the question and because we can't respond they then have to wait another month for that response to come through if it does come through like we are establishing we are going to start doing that and I think that is great. Now you have two months where somebody wasn't able to express what they wanted to and or be heard. For a lot of people that can be problematic because their experience is this is the only place where they can get answers to anything. I realize that is not necessarily always true but that is the concern here, the amount of time that passes by where somebody doesn't have the opportunity to participate.

Chairperson Richards – Thank you, Commissioner Cancel I just want to say that if you have an issue you can always email Cara.

Cara – yes, they can email the property manager, myself, and anyone.

Commissioner Jones – Attorney O'Connor when you get a definitive answer from the Attorney General's office can we get that communicated to the Board before the next meeting so we are not waiting around for the next meeting to find out exactly what happened and we have a better understanding on how the meeting will be structured. Going forward I would appreciate it.

Attorney O'Connor – Absolutely, I will do that and I will do an email or put a call into them tomorrow to get their input. I would also suggest Madam Chair that we put this on the Agenda for next month and the conversation we are having about how to handle chats going forward should be under its own separate agenda item next month and we really should probably not be having any conversation about that further in this meeting.

Chairperson Richards – love it, I think it is great that Commissioner Jones indicated last month that we needed to sort of report on things that have been asked for and which we did this month and I think that is a good suggestion and it is always helpful to let people know how their concerns are being helpful. Thank you all for your comments.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 2022-15 – Adoption of Section 8 Payment Standards Effective 10/1/22.

Cara read the resolution.

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Richards; Vice Chairperson Brooks; Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

ABSENT: Commissioner Carney.

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Resolution.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield - is the payments standards – is that what you are talking about?

Chairperson Richards – for Section 8 payment standards.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – my only issue with this is the standards especially if there is going to have an increase, we were talking about at least two buildings that have water in their building and someone mentioned McDonald hasn't had intercom the last two years, but I think I get a problem with it. We are increasing and increasing but services are decrease, decrease, services that when they got here were working. If I had electricity on in an apartment I signed for and then all of a sudden the electricity is off and they are going to charge me for it – I would have a problem with that. I think we are quick to raise and ask for money even for mistakes that were two years ago that people have to pay for and then some people were getting notices to quit. I think this is very handed up. Let me clarify that, I haven't finished. When the notices to quit came out someone said they were behind for something that happened in 2 thousand something and it wasn't their mistake. I worry when we have stuff like this so I am just going to have to be a hard no on this until we can get all services and places to be livable for folks to be paying before we think about increasing amounts of money for anything. I think they should get a credit if anything.

Chairperson Richards – Thank you, Commissioner Tarbutton I think this refers to Section 8.

Cara – this applies to the voucher holders Section 8, it has absolutely nothing to do with the bricks and mortar rents for our apartments. This is for the landlords that we pay for people that live outside of NHA but receive rental assistance.

Chairperson Richards – And this is a fee correct that is state wide?

Cara – this is determined by HUD and we fall in the Springfield MSA section of HUD Fair Market Rent process and so we are currently able to pay up to 120%. It might change to 110% but it depends on whether the waiver goes through or not but I just want to clarify for Commissioner Tarbutton that this has absolutely nothing to do with the physical apartments of Hampshire Heights or McDonald or any of our physical apartments but the Section 8 Voucher residents and it helps the residents not pay as much rent.

Resolution 2022-16 – Adoption of Federal Flat Rents Effective 11/1/22.

Cara read the resolution.

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

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

ABSENT: Commissioner Carney.

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Resolution.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – what I said regarding Section 8 Voucher I think it applies here. Wow, when you look at the rents people will be paying. I know it doesn't have Hampshire Heights but I'm just thinking and they are paying \$987.00 and the intercom system has not worked for 2 ½ years, I have a problem with that. I don't know anything about Florence Heights, actually I don't know anyone who is there so it is kind of weird that I know nothing about them. I think if things were optimum and they worked and repairs I wouldn't have a problem with that and I don't care if I am paying it or not if it is HUD we are still part of the government just because we get it from the government we shouldn't want to. I think I am saying the word exploited for stuff that doesn't work. I think I have been around and seen too many sub-standard buildings that they are having to pay outrageous rents so it doesn't make sense to me until we learn to fix these things up and have people living in safe human conditions, so I say no on this for definite sure.

Chairperson Richards – I see a couple hands of residents but because this is the official Board meeting we are unable to recognize those by statute. Sorry about that, if you have anything to say get it to Cara.

PRESENTATION

Executive Director to present 2022 REAC Inspection.

Cara – Federal properties McDonald and Florence Heights are funded by HUD and we get a REAC inspection and they check all the common areas, mechanical areas and they randomly choose on the morning of the inspection, units to inspect. We did receive on 8/15/22 – at the REAC inspection at McDonald and Florence Heights, we initially received a score of 87C* which is passing and it is a very good score. What the scoring determines is when the next inspection will be. If you are in the 70's you have it every year, 80's – 2 years and if 90's – every three years. The point deductions we had were resident issues. For example, a resident putting an air conditioner in a window that is the only window and means of egress besides the door which regardless of whether we look it out and the resident put it in two minutes before, we are held to that. I took the pictures they sent and wrote a letter to HUD and met with the Fire Captain and Building department and showed them the pictures and they agreed that if there were a fire that we weren't in code violation pertaining to these issues and because they weren't screwed in they could be pushed out and essentially people could escape during a fire. As a result of these

meetings and this hard work not just from the staff, when I tell you the staff worked excessively to make sure because we had a score in the high 80's the last time. We didn't have one for 3 years and we had pandemic for two years. The staff really stepped up, even family members helping out – it was quite amazing. I wrote a letter and asked them to change our score to increase our score by 7.2 points and the reason for the request would mean that our inspection would be three years instead of two. I received a letter on 9/14/22 thanking me for the request of a review and approval with a new physical inspection score of 94. So we received a 94 on our REAC which is an almost perfect score, very unheard of. I want to personally thank you staff and I know we don't have any of the maintenance staff here but Amanda, Jack, you guys were instrumental in that. Even Amanda's kids were out there painting and cleaning off bricks with graffiti even though we cleaned it off. Even if it happens the night before HUD would hold you accountable. Good job to the staff, thank you, couldn't do it without you.

Chairperson Richards – that is really fabulous, congratulations and thank you for pushing the issue with the air conditioners. Congratulations to all the staff. We got a 94 - what is the difference between 94 and 100?

Cara – blocked egress. In one unit a resident had put a king sized bed against the only window and the bed was too heavy to push it over in the event of a fire, that was quite a few points for us. I appealed as many items that I could, there were a total of 14 items and we were able to get 8 removed.

Chairperson Richards – that is terrific! Congratulations again.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I saw a lot of busy bees the few times I go by there doing my errands and stuff. I saw lots of people working all the time, it looked like some of the maintenance people had glazed eyes, it seemed like they were working night and day. So I can only imagine if they did work like that I wonder what was the cost to get them to get us just to be viewed. I don't understand if REAC was at McDonald did they know the intercom was out of order?

Cara – they look at all the mechanicals, all of the common areas, everywhere.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – so they did know it was out of order at McDonald?

Cara – I am sure he tested it, he picked it up to test it. I guess I should clarify something here, you keep saying that the intercom has been down for two years. The intercom has not been down for two years, it has been intermittently down because it is such an antiquated system and we can't get anybody to work on it and we can't get parts for it. We have tried to retro fit parts and so it is working sporadically, it has not been constantly down for two years, I would like to clarify that. REAC was there in 2018 and we got a score in the high 80's which allows it to be a 3 years inspection and then we had Covid so they were delayed a year and that often happens. This is a normal process when you get notice - usually you get a 30 day notice that you are going to have an inspection and we only got a two week notice and the staff worked hard because they had to and it was what was necessary to get it done.

Chairperson Richards – Thank you for the clarification.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I don't know how long it was so I just want to clarify that I heard some different times I don't know if it is 2 ½ years or two months. Can you tell me how long at McDonald the intercom has been out?

Cara – the intercom has been intermittently out so it hasn't been out for an extended period of time until more recently where we are trying to get some parts retro fitted and manufactured, having a company make parts that they don't make any more because we can't afford to purchase a whole new intercom. We are putting in the new elevator at McDonald House right now too. It hasn't been down for an excessive amount of time based upon what we have going on and getting parts for it but it has been intermittently down – so maybe it seems if people aren't checking it and we have tried to communicate that to residents although sometimes we don't know it is down unless someone reports it as well.

Vice Chairperson Brooks – I have lived here for 22 years and the intercom system has never worked consistently well. I was told by a high school friend who Jon Hite hired to work on it as his only job. That Gentleman told me that it was impossible to fix the system because everything within the system was

rotting out simply self-destructing. The only way to effectively fix it was to do as Cara said either make the parts or try to find the parts from another building being torn down and using them on the intercom system.

Cara – which we have done a couple of times, we have scavenged some parts a couple of times, we have manufactured parts a couple of times and for a while there, there was a period of time during the pandemic that the man that has always worked on it, he is out of Florence, he just won't even work on it anymore. For a little bit of time we did have even a little difficulty finding someone who would agree to work on it. We understand it is an issue but we are working on it diligently and have been doing so.

Chairperson Richards – do we have this on the Capital Plan for the future?

Cara – Jack, this is not on the Capital Fund? No, it is not on the Capital Plan because it wasn't failing to the point where it is when we were doing the budget for it. We are also looking at pricing for a new intercom system to try to see which is more cost effective. Right now we are doing due diligence.

Commissioner Cancel – Thank you, Commissioner Brooks you answered one of my questions and thank you Cara you answered the other question. I have a third question – if we can at least look at what a new system would mean, how much it would be and so forth because I thought it was more of an issue of find the parts not only because it is so antiquated but also because of the shortage of parts and everything that has been going on the last couple of years. What this brought to mind was the fact that there is a lot of residents who felt they didn't have a voice when it comes to the ARPA funds and this is exactly the kind of stuff that because we don't have the type of budget to be able to take on a huge project like this in just any month, we should have talked more on about how to utilize those funds and that reminded me about when I was working with the Tenants Association at Hampshire Heights several years ago we were awarded some money from some class act suit in the State and we were able to put those funds in a CD. I was wondering about the possibility of using those funds for that or if the ARPA funds have already been depleted or allocated?

Cara – soon they will be releasing the budget guidelines, Commissioner Cancel and so my discussions with the Executive team has been to get some bids on what a new system will cost so that we can work it into the budget when the budget guidelines are released if it is feasible and that is my hope.

My hope is that we will be able to purchase a new intercom system with our next budget. Our next budget started July 1, 2022 and they haven't released the budget guidelines. Some of you have been here a long time and some of you are new so sometimes those don't come out until October, November, December and then we have to retroactive it. So we are just doing the due diligence now to be able to prepare for when the budget guidelines are released. I am hoping to be able to take care of it within the 2023 budget.

Chairperson Richards – good suggestions, though.

Commissioner Cancel – I was just wondering about the ARPA funds and the \$30,000 that we were awarded many years back from a class suit. I was wondering about those funds in regards to a possible solution to what we are talking about now.

Cara – have the funds been expended – some of them have and some have not. I am just being honest with you I have to wait until the bids come in on how much a new system is before I can figure out where to pull the money. We are doing the due diligence now to be able to pull that. Sharon, I am going to say this because you are the CFO but I am certain you don't have the numbers on what is exactly available off the top of your head.

Sharon – I do know that most of our grants are for the elevators right now because we are doing both of them and Federal HUD only gives me a Capital Fund grant once a year so right now our money is tied up until the budget comes out. I don't know how much money we are going to get.

Cara – that was a million two wasn't it for the elevators?

Sharon – yes, we ended up getting a lowest bid of 7 something but I think it is going to go higher. Jack and I talked on that, so we are being cautious.

Cara – for car # 2. So I am really going to try my best Commissioner Cancel to pull the money out of the operating budget but it is going to depend on the numbers and what they come in at. The Florence Heights playground was a half a million dollars, initially those numbers did not come in anywhere near that. It is really going to depend on what numbers come in and when they come in if I am not able to absorb it into the budget, I will bring it to the Board and say here is the funding we have to pull it from and let the Board make a decision, but I am going to try to handle it through the operating budget if I can. Chairperson Richards – just to reiterate what you are saying Cara is that we are in last years' budget because the new one hasn't been approved yet, it was a roll over right?

Cara – right and we only got State ARPA dollars not Federal ARPA dollars so the ARPA money went to State properties.

Commissioner Cancel – I am still wondering about the settlement that we received.

Cara – Sharon, I know we invested those in some CD's – are they still there?

Sharon – the settlement – refresh my memory I am so sorry.

Cara – this is the settlement we received for HUD - our reserves?

Sharon – we did the file vision that was a lot of money, not only just for file vision across the board but also for Accounts Payable which that alone was over \$60,000.00. So all that money is gone.

Commissioner Cancel – was that through approval of the Board?

Sharon – file vision was definitely approved through the Board, yes.

Cara – that was all the going green initiative and getting everything electronically instead of having everything paper.

Commissioner Cancel – I had a fantasy that maybe those funds might still be around.

Chairperson Richards – I share your fantasy.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – at Salvo with us being 7 floors our intercom was out about 6 weeks maybe 6 months I am not exactly sure and it caused a lot of anxiety and havoc around people with their medications and things like that some people weren't mobile and couldn't come down. I think it is important and if you can't get it done because of parts or whatever think about giving them a cell phone. Granted you might have to teach them how to use a cell phone in some ways but something as a substitute because this isn't working. You know when you came in here it was working you can have this you know have that there. I hear a lot about oh the buildings are old I think this building is 1970's. I was head resident at Mount Holyoke and those buildings were built before the civil war and the elevator and everything was working. I am not saying it is the same thing but I think the thing about its being old and no parts - I have lived in developing countries and that I understood but here it just doesn't make sense to me, again, it doesn't make sense to me. I wish we would put that as a priority. Thank you.

Chairperson Richards – Again, I want to thank the staff for all the resident applications and for the effort they put in to get us a really, really good REAC score. Congratulations to all you are awesome!

Chairperson Richards put forth the motion to adjourn the September meeting at 6:49 P.M., seconded by Vice Chairperson Brooks.