



NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

DRAFT –OCTOBER 17, 2022 OCTOBER MINUTES

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, October 17, 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 Carney & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

ABSENT: Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Cancel.

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

NEW BUSINESS

PRESENTATION OF THE FY23 BUDGET BY FEE ACCOUNTANT

Gary DePace presented the FY 23 budget. we received the DHCD budget guidelines to submit for approval. They allowed a 9% increase on the State budget and a 5% growth cost of living in the administrative line item annual non- utility. The expense level last year was \$2,013,516.00 with the 9% increase it will be \$2,194,732.00. We are allowed an exemption for retiree health insurance of \$57,336.00 that is level funded year to year. We also get a mixed population grant of \$31,200.00 which we have received for 10-15 years. This is our second year of receiving the RSC grant which this year is \$40,000.00. Anticipating a subsidy request from the state for \$1,299,818.00 that is what this budget is submitting. About a 7% increase for GIC for \$396,447.00 retirement cost 2023 health insurance. Gary spoke about expenditures for federal and state. Overall we are in really good shape especially in the federal program. State programs are clearly much better than they have been in the past 10 years when we were close to minimum.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – this fiscal year there were raises – how much and was it across the board and how much is that line item?

Gary – the Executive Director deals with this and the ED salary is a DHCD calculation.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – how much into this fiscal year budget was allowed for professional development?

Gary – we did increase the amount of funds which incorporates training for staff and commissioners.

Cara – we increased it quite a bit. In my email I noted the increase for staff was based upon performance evaluation both for administrative and for the service team. Also, the service team is union based and the contract base is up to 2% for performance, then an automatic 2% no matter what and a potential 2% if they were able to meet vacancy turnaround guidelines. Administrative staff is based upon performance evaluation. We upped the training line item 4190 based upon required training DHCD is requiring for PMR annually like sexual harassment and other trainings. We did increase that line item to encompass those trainings.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – good to know. It would be helpful if you would put out what the amount is and what professional development funds are available. I feel like a pauper asking to be attentive to something that most people do and then it is like we don't have the funds. I hear that a lot as

a tenant. I am confused as to why Board members who are trying to get educated because a well-informed Board is an amazing Board and I have had feedback that there is no funding. Another question – Mr. DePace where do you allocate money from washing machines and soda machines and how much is that per month?

Cara – the washers and dryers are allocated to a special account and the money is used for stuff for residents' specific use. Example – resident appreciation days were allocated to those funds, it depends if the site is state or federal. 50% of the state money we can keep and we can keep 100% of the federal money.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – it would be helpful if we got that information every month.

Cara – it is in the financials, Commissioner Tarbutton.

Chairperson Richards – that would be quarterly.

Gary – it is also on the Treasurers report each month down at the bottom, it is indicated balance of laundry funds. There was a policy approved when the laundry was set up and the policy spells out what the potential use is and it is Board discretion funds but it must be used for the tenant benefits and not used for one individual tenant, it must be available to all. I.E. community room furnishings, etc.

Cara – when we re-did the community room at Salvo we bought new furniture and we used those funds. We are getting ready to do Forsander and Tobin and we did Cahill already. With respect with when you said you wanted to see amounts Commissioner Tarbutton, we don't give specific amounts to people's increases because that is daily operations but if you wanted to meet as a Commissioner I would be happy to go over it with you but it is confidential.

Chairperson Richards – in regards to training I know the Board has a couple of trainings coming up in December and also as you indicated in your memo, staff had some additional trainings that were mandated so it would be that line item.

Cara – the DEI training – we have two classes left for the staff, we were able to get that at no cost but we will not be able to get some of the required training that the PMR is going to make mandatory. We did have to increase that line item. I haven't even gone to the annual conferences because although we could have maybe funded it, I found it tough to justify that when we needed so many other things on the properties. I have only gone to one in the 8 years that I have been here and I am hoping to be able to do more things like that. Commissioner training we need to look at our bylaws and you as a Board at some point in the near future after our training, I would advise you to decide how are you going to handle requests for training because if I were to get 7 requests to attend the fall conference you are talking over \$7,000.00 once everything is paid for. So I just need us to look at this in the future.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield - \$1,000.00, I think that is a little bit over, it is not what it is, I got a hotel and the fee and it was less than that. I also want to say to resident Board members, I am getting the NAHRO certification and thank goodness that Mass. NAHRO is saying if you are a resident Board member they are allowing me to go to those things for free. I think there is a discount rate for any other Board member but I think to be aware of what is going on is vital. The one thing Cara, you did pay for was a training in February for \$15.00 so thank goodness Mass NAHRO will pay for my training at the convention otherwise I would only be wearing one dress per month so I do appreciate that, I think it is important.

RESOLUTION 2022-17 – APPROVAL OF THE FY23 BUDGET FOR ALL PROGRAMS

Cara read the resolution to the Board.

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

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

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield

ABSENT: Commissioner Cancel & Commissioner Jones.

Chairperson Richards – three Yays and one Nay, the motion does not pass.

Cara – no, it carries.

Chairperson Richards – oh, it carries – ok, sorry.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – the Chair says it does not, the ED says it does – ok.

Cara – Attorney O'Connor, can you please advise the Chair as to whether or not a 3 to 1 YAY vs NAY carries or not?

Attorney O'Connor – it unquestionably carries. A majority of those present and voting, so long as there is a quorum. We have a quorum and the majority was 3 to 1.

Chairperson Richards – thank you, Attorney O'Connor. I just want to say thank you to Cara and Gary for lots of hard work. I know how budgets are and they are hair raising, so thank you again for all of your hard work. I think we can all feel good about proceeding into the next fiscal year, so thank you.

Gary – thank you Marilyn, thank you Cara.

Cara – thank you, Gary very much for coming.

Therefore, Chairperson Richards passed the Resolution.

MOTION

Authorize Executive Director to execute all documents related to the sale of 18 Corticelli Street.

Chairperson Richards put forth the motion, seconded by Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

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

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSENT: Commissioner Cancel & Commissioner Jones.

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – are the residents happy with the sale? Have you been getting any feedback from them?

Cara – we notified the neighbors that we were selling it and they were very happy because they were happy to see that something was happening with it. Have I had any recent feedback as the sale and closing occurred? In the email I sent, I said October but it was sold September 28th. I had a typo but the conveyance has already occurred.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I hope so because they were very amazing. I just noticed when they came to one meeting when it was approved some of them shook their head and I was very confused and by that time they had left. I hope this is good for them.

Chairperson Richards – I think Commissioner Tarbutton we all join you in being thrilled. Thank you for everybody's hard work on this.

MOTION

Authorize Executive Director to execute monitoring services agreement for 40R project on Cottage St. in Easthampton.

Cara read the motion to the Board.

Chairperson Richards put forth the motion, seconded by Commissioner Carney.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Richards & Commissioner Carney.

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

ABSTAIN: Vice Chairperson Brooks.

ABSENT: Commissioner Cancel & Commissioner Jones.

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

Vice Chairperson Brooks – have they given you any idea of how many apartments will be there?

Cara – (5) affordable housing apartments. It is not a super lot that we would have to do, the only reason why I even considered it to be quite honest, is to increase the affordable housing in our region. As we all know that is a detriment to our area, we need more all the time, this is adding 5 units to the area.

Without us they would be hard pressed to get someone, they might be able to hire a consulting firm that doesn't know the business. I am not certain but they implored us to help them so that they could provide these 5 units.

Chairperson Richards – Cara, we have done this before for someone else, correct?

Cara – a similar thing when we did the lumber yard project. It was similar but the 40R project is a different project. We didn't know at this time because we would need to meet with DHCD and we did look at some other 40R projects – it would bring us a little bit of income, not much. I think that as a community to help our surrounding communities is the right thing to do for affordable housing.

Commissioner Carney – the services would be paid by which Housing Authority? Or the City of Easthampton?

Cara – no, we would be paid by the developer, Harnish Patel. The agreement would be with them. Easthampton Housing Authority originally had agreed to do the monitoring service but when they realized a lottery is required to fill those 5 units they didn't feel like they could handle it. I have a really good relationship with Attorney O'Leary's spouse. I do business with her in Northampton, she works in Northampton and they texted me and asked if I was interested. The owner – Patel and related entities would pay NHA for our services.

Commissioner Carney – they are required by their contract to supply the affordable units and the monitoring thereof. They are responsible to pay to monitor, that is why they are getting the bill.

Cara – we will be responsible for creating the lottery for the 5 units to fill them and then we will be responsible for checking to make sure they maintain the units, like they didn't turn them into storefronts after the initial build.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – Attorney O'Leary who is he, you are friends of his wife?

Cara – Attorney O'Leary is an Attorney in Easthampton and is married to Meredith O'Leary the Northampton Board of Health Director.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I go to Easthampton once a week I have often looked at some of their housing over there. There is a food pantry over there and I am pretty active, it was just on Cottage St., so you say it is the Mobil Station area on Cottage Street?

Cara – yes, it used to be a Mobil gas station but it has been closed down for many years and it is an eyesore so they are going to rehab it.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – what did you say happened with Mayor LaChapelle – what is her position on this?

Cara – I asked Attorney O'Leary because when Easthampton had agreed to do it and then backed out I wanted to make sure the Mayor of Easthampton didn't have someone else that she wanted to do it before I brought it before the Board. She was quite happy that Northampton agreed to bring it to our Board to see if we could do it. She wanted to keep it local and she knew we had experience so we got her sign off that she was fine with it, she wanted us to do it.

Chairperson Richards – do they have to be Easthampton residents who fills those slots?

Cara – I don't know the answer to that I need to have a meeting with DHCD. Given that the budget guidelines were released at the end of September and we were trying to get our budget done, I didn't want to waste time finding out the minutia of those kind of things if the Board didn't want us to do it. If the Board chooses to have us do it my team will be meeting with the owner, Attorney and DHCD. There is already someone at DHCD who is involved in the process.

Chairperson Richards – I am just interpreting that it is the thing to do to be a good neighbor and to help people in Hampshire County get housing, regardless.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – it sounds like a really wonderful idea but my reservation is I like helping our neighbors but I would really like for us to get into the process of our properties being nice and some of the problems that we have, they have not been eradicated, but at least dealt with before we branch out. I think it sounds really good but are we able to do that, it doesn't seem right but there is a

part of me that wants everyone to have housing. I look at Easthampton I rarely see anything nicely done, I mean it is really nice over there, I wish we could have a little more information on it before voting on it today. I don't want to say no to something or abstain from something until I get a little more information. I would like to go by and see it and that kind of stuff.

Chairperson Richards – it sounds like to me that the landlord is responsible for the building and the upkeep. We are just doing the paperwork and the lottery.

Cara – Attorney O'Connor can you tell us how that vote carries or not?

Attorney O'Connor – it carries. Again, it is the same principal that I said earlier. Two to one is the vote outcome and it is a majority of those present and voting. An abstention doesn't count as anything, we have a quorum, and it is a 2 to 1 vote that carries.

Chairperson Richards – on the advice of Attorney O'Connor the Motion carries, so we will proceed with that. I will say too that doesn't mean that we can't get further information and we will do that and present it but the Motion to proceed carries. Thank you everyone.

TENANT COMMENTS

Gwen Nabad – Hampshire Heights # 19D - I would like to know where the basement situation is and where the water situation is that comes down that hill. I had some ideas for the grassy slope in front of Building 19. I would like to get together to talk about that and some of the possibilities with the slope because it would eliminate the need to mow and also absorb and take up a lot of the water that comes down that slope. It is nothing that needs to be done right away but it is more something in the long term, so I wanted to bring it to your attention today and the basements. Thanks.

Mary Chapman – McDonald #201 – Is there any kind of process for you to ask the residents what they would like to have happen? I am just thinking about the resident appreciation day, what I heard from people over and over again is that we all felt infantilized. In other words, I know Cara had a great time putting the stuff together with her grandkid but it was just so demeaning to us as adults. Also, I know you have a million reasons why WIFI cannot be made available at least at McDonald but I think a WIFI printer could happen, it would cost \$100.00; that way people could bring their devices down to the community room and print the key policy. It is ludicrous that you have to ask a Doctor to write a note. I did get locked out and I do have an extra key in that box. I have spoken to you before- it is dark in there, my eyes are bad, I have arthritis in my hand, I couldn't get into the box to get my key. I waited a couple of hours for someone to come out and let me in, that didn't need to happen. The call box didn't work, I couldn't just pick up the thing and call anybody. I think the key issue needs to be addressed, it is a royal hassle for people. Talk about making us feel like infants, asking a Doctor for a request as adults, where does this come from? It doesn't make sense to me. Please consider the residents if you are going to spend our money that we put into the machines, why not ask us what we would like to have, we don't really necessarily like little plastic totes with Easter grass stuffed in it.

Angela Santaniello – Salvo # 425 – thank you for the appreciation day I got a lot of feedback from a lot of individuals that they enjoyed getting together as a group and it was appreciated. I want to thank NHA management staff and executive team and Attorney O'Connor for coming to our Walter Salvo safety awareness seminar that we had this last week. My husband Joseph worked really hard with the District Attorney's office and the Northampton Police Dept. with the Center for Women and Community and he wanted to start the safety seminar when we first started living here. It finally came to fruition and we got a lot of feedback on that, that it was very good and informative and a lot of people really appreciated it. I wanted to take the time and thank the executive team and management team for all of your support and help in allowing that to take place, so thank you once again.

Cara – Attorney O'Leary is in the meeting now. Would you like to open it up for anyone to ask a specific question of him or would you like me to have the meetings and come back to the Board and have him attend at a later time?

Chairperson Richards – I think in the essence of where we are right now, I think you should touch base with Attorney O’Leary and get back to us with the questions and if there are any more questions please get them to Cara so she can do that. We will stick with tenant comment at this point. Thank you, Attorney O’Leary if you are still on. I do want to remind people that your comments are not going unattended to in some way, shape or form. Each month in Cara’s ED report she will give us an update on some of those. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and your feelings with us and you will receive some connection on that, so thank you.

STAFF COMMENT

NONE

PUBLIC COMMENT

NONE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Cara read the report and gave updates. On October 7, 2022 we received notification that we received High Performer designation in the HUD Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) score and designation for our agency (PHA) has been issued for the fiscal year end June 2022.

The intercom system was replaced at McDonald House on Monday, October 17, 2022. The system calls residents at a number they select and they can grant access by pressing a #. The system cost under \$5,000.00 and bypasses our existing wiring. Staff are working with the one resident who does not currently have a phone.

I personally delivered donations from the Hampshire Heights Playground dunk the executive director of \$100.00 to Manna Soup Kitchen and \$100.00 to Grow Food Northampton.

This month an outreach specialist from Commonwealth Care Alliance visited all five elderly/disabled sites. They educated residents on benefits offered through their health care program and were able to enroll interested residents at the time of their visit. 13 residents took advantage of this program.

The podiatrist, Dr. Michael Coby visited Forsander and Tobin Manor to provide on-site foot care. 12 residents signed up for this service and were seen by the foot doctor.

Both RSC’s met with representatives from Xfinity about their Affordable Connectivity Program and Internet Essentials Program. This meeting educated RSC’s on enrolling residents in their programs which can lower their cable and internet bills.

For fire safety week October 9-15, we held poster making contests at both Florence Heights and Hampshire Heights. Youth and teen residents were invited to participate for a chance to win a cash prize and to learn fire safety skills! The theme of the week was to discuss the most efficient way to escape your home in the case of a fire. Participants drew maps of their homes, highlighting their exits and quickest pathways to get out in the event of a fire. We also discussed safe places to meet family members in case of separation. All participants will take home a cash prize (reimbursed by HAI group).

Our family RSC met with Northampton Public Schools Early Childhood Center to discuss plans for forming a weekly playgroup at the Hampshire Heights playground and/or community room. The Early Childhood Center started joining Grow Food Northampton at their weekly market tables at Hampshire Heights to advertise their services to families and to bring free diapers and books for families to take home.

Resident Comment Follow-up:

9/26/22 email to resident regarding completed installation of bulletin board at Hampshire Heights and clarification on gardening at Salvo.

9/26/22 email to resident regarding WIFI and clarification on gardening at Salvo.

Chairperson Richards – thank you and congratulations to all staff.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – kudos for getting the intercom fixed at McDonald House I think that is really great. I am surprised, it has been a month and it has been done but I think it is great. Two perspectives of the resident appreciation, I had two Doctor's appointments so I couldn't make it. One question someone asked and I appreciate the fact that it was in the newsletter I think that was pretty good, some of the things I really do like, so I want to thank the RSC I think who writes these. Someone asked that when you take a resident's picture or you utilize them, don't you have to get their written consent to do that?

Cara – if you are in a public facility or public space and you have your picture taken I don't think we have to get their consent to share with the Board. Attorney O'Connor would you please weigh in on that?

Attorney O'Connor – I think you are right there. With minors I believe you have to get the permission of their parent or guardian, but for adults I don't think you do.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I just wanted to make sure because I know in my acting and theater stuff anything we get that we use whether a newsletter or poster you have to get consent, it has to be written just in case, you know how some folks are. Other than that well done with that. Some people are asking questions like rent credit, all that kind of stuff but overall I think it is great. I wish we could do that quarterly quite frankly.

Cara – when I did the budget this year I am really increasing the events that we do with and for residents. We will do something for Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas, either a resident appreciation day once a year or, I hate the word block party because it reminds me of kind of projects, but a community get together. The RSC's and the managers and I work on getting the newsletter done so that will continue as well. We will be doing more resident geared activities once the budget is approved by DHCD. Now the Board has approved it part of what I did was increase that as well. So you will be seeing more of that – I just want to make you aware of that.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I noticed there were some delays when people were responding. I think that when we were able to have the comments, I know I did many times – I'm having a problem it won't come up! So it's that kind of stuff that keeps us aware of that. I did read what you said and I also wrote to the Attorney General and from what I can understand once it is clarified it is at the discretion of the Chair. I think that something without having comments so we would know what is going on or whatever the case may be, that is a portion of the meeting I am kind of sad it is not there.

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 2022 MINUTES

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

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

ABSENT: Commissioner Cancel & Commissioner Jones.

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the September minutes.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – Marilyn states Commissioner Jones after reading the minutes to cut a report?

Commissioner Carney read what was said in the minutes – to cut a report on resolutions that had been made during the month – meaning to draft a report on resolutions that have been made during the month. Remind me of doing that for the next meeting. Commissioner Carney then stated that it was just a comment that was noted in the minutes but I think that is the reference that you are talking about Commissioner?

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I didn't know if it meant that you were going to cut something out. I don't know if he meant drafts.

Commissioner Carney – no, it looks to me like it is just his way of saying you know, cut a report, meaning make up some sort of report on resolutions that have been made during the month.

Cara – that was Chairperson Richards reminding everyone that Commissioner Jones the prior month had made a recommendation to have like an update in the ED report about stuff that residents bring to the meeting. We had done that.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – then there is something and now it feels like it is gone. In the previous meeting before it was tabled, August or September, then one meeting it dealt with me in particular, Mr. DePace stayed through the whole thing I wanted him to stay here, then I realized in last month's meeting it wasn't there. It dealt with the Northampton open media so I am wondering why did that not get put back on the agenda so we can discuss that?

Cara – I thought I had an email from you that said never mind with that but maybe I misunderstood the email. Was that only about the G drive?

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – that was only about the G drive. One was about having these meetings recorded and submitted to the Northampton open media with the zoom.

Cara – the law requires us to keep track of public records requests. We actually record these meetings when they are in zoom. When we are in person they don't get recorded but with the zoom we do record them so when there is a public records request of course we send the link out. For resident protection and confidentiality sake they only last for 30 days. I can't send it to them because it would only last for them for 30 days anyway. If they make a public records request I would send that to them. I didn't include it on the agenda. I think Marilyn and I thought that it was put to bed; you guys tell me what you want to do and I will be happy to do that.

Chairperson Richards – send me an email and I will be happy to put that on for next month if we overlooked it.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – it was already on there and it wasn't discussed and I would like to discuss it because there are some things that say this is public and zoom meetings have to be turned over to Northampton open media.

Chairperson Richards – just send me an email, I am happy to put it on.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Discussion – Basements at Hampshire and Florence Heights.

Cara – DHCD has the ball in their court. The day after our meeting in September the DHCD house doctor which is the administrator, processed the paperwork to go to the next step. On 9/22/22 I then approved the work order and fee proposal. Today October 17th at 4:38 p.m. we received an email back from Craig Miller of Waterfield Design that they will have a revised design proposal to DHCD for DHCD's approval within the next day or two. Once it is approved by DHCD we will have a better timeline for the Board and residents.

Chairperson Richards – I want to thank and congratulate the staff for getting high honors. Thank you so much everyone for being available this evening, it was kind of tight.

Chairperson Richards put forth the motion to adjourn the October meeting at 6:49 P.M., seconded by Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.