



NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

APPROVED DECEMBER 19, 2022 DECEMBER MINUTES

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, December 19, 2022 at 5:30 P.M.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 5:32 P.M.
Upon Roll Call, those present and absent were as follows:

PRESENT: Chairperson Richards; Vice Chair Brooks, Commissioner Carney; Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield & Commissioner Jones. Commissioner Cancel joined the meeting at 5:58 p.m.
ALSO PRESENT: Cara Leiper; Sharon Kimble; Attorney Tom O'Connor; Keith Walsh; Kaitlin Hanning; Amanda Huertas; Danielle McColgan; Mia Weibel; Jose Cruz; Angel Sadlowski; Angela Santaniello; Mary Chapman; Roy Martin and Al Chagnon.


TENANT COMMENT

Angela Santaniello Salvo #425 –the neighborhood watch is doing a great job and not many police reports that is also a good thing.

Mary Chapman – McDonald #201 – when tenants give responses to you or complaints or praise, you can take it personally or not, it is not a reflection on you exactly but you might want to consider the complaints or compliments, you just can't take it personally. Consider tenant comments at the end of the meetings, it would help a lot because things happen in the meetings and we aren't allowed to comment on them. Maybe consider allowing tenants to say what kind of events they like and if you are planning on bringing something in ask them if they are into that event, let us vet the event before you have it if you are going to insist on choosing them. That seems simple to me but it might not be to you, we can discuss it. Tenant group was recently denied a chest style deep freezer and we also offered a system of keeping it safe and clean and you wouldn't have been responsible for it. We are hooked up with Grow Food and they would have loved to have seen a freezer. One reason we were denied is it would be on NHA property and their responsibility. Ok fine, but we had offered a plan for it not to be your responsibility. If the freezer would have been your responsibility maybe the washers can be your responsibility in keeping them clean. When we want to wash clothes we have to run a load of just bleach, soap and baking soda before every load because they are so dirty and that costs us money and we can't even get money from you for that so far, but you may consider changing. It is just an idea and don't take offense like I said and that would follow, to me that seems logical. I am tickled to see that the public filming may happen or the recordings going to be accessible to all. We would love to see the minutes again, if you could share the minutes in some kind of public form like google documents they would be there in perpetuity. We could look at them forever, we could see how far we have come and how far we would have to go.

Roy Martin – Salvo # 529 – we had an issue the other night – 2 people called police and they said they weren't coming because it has to do with Mr. Oliver. Not the Joe Oliver who lives here but his brother who he doesn't want here. The brother was caught stealing packages here from downstairs. Put them in a cart and Al caught him going out the door with them. Al talked to Jose about it. Police says if you don't want him here NHA needs a restraining order or no trespass order. Police said restraining order is much better to have because he can't come on any property. He had three other people with him and they got

49 Old South Street, Suite 1 • Northampton, MA • 01060

T 413-584-4030 • F 413-582-1350 • TDD 711 • 

through the door and went to the 2nd floor and then he asked me who I was talking to on the phone and he threatened me. I told him I was talking to the Police department and they are on their way and he ran out the door and grabbed a bag he left outside and he told the other guy who had (3) black bags over his shoulder full of packages. Please go and get a restraining order, he lives at the VA hospital. Take care of that before a lot of other packages get stolen.

Al Chagnon - Salvo #329 – a lot of problems with people getting into the building. Mr. Oliver is a big problem – he is here almost every other day. He is taking food and packages. I called the police as I stopped him going out the door with packages and they said we have to file a report. I said I want to file a report. We need to get this guy out of here, he is bringing other people with him now, and he is a big concern for the people in the building. He is very violent, smoking in the lobby, he calls me the stalker to the police because I am always catching him coming in.

STAFF COMMENT

NONE

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Richards – thank you to everyone for your comments and as you know you will be hearing about our comments from the Executive Director. Thank you again.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Cara read the report and gave updates. Highlights of events – NHA received an increase to our RSC grant so we will now have \$50,000.00 for the next five years. This is an increase of \$18,000.00 a year.

DHCD held our PMR and our ratings were outstanding.

HAI Group which is one of our insurance carriers awarded us the “Low Loss Ratio Award for the 2018-2020 policy years.” Award recipients are determined using general liability claims data over the three policy years. The Risk control committee recognized consistent positive performance. They stated “Your commitment to risk management hasn’t gone unnoticed. We truly appreciate your diligence and encourage you to continue the hard work that brought you these results.”

Grow Food Northampton held a holiday market at all properties for Thanksgiving. They offered full meal kits at no cost that included a whole chicken and several sides, allowing families to cook a holiday meal at home with fresh and local food. Grow Food also hosted a quick breads and wreath making workshop at Forsander and Tobin Manor. They had a great turnout and residents enjoyed making wreaths for the holiday.

Salvo power washing – staff helped residents who needed extra support in clearing their balconies. Also received assistance from Northampton Neighbors and the Ward 3 Neighborhood Association. We appreciate all the support our residents received from the community.

Fallon Health hosted health fairs at some of our properties - they had various tables offering information and resources for our residents in regard to health care and services they may be entitled to. They provided raffle prizes to those who attended and the Housing Authority provided the snacks.

Northampton Health Dept. held vaccine clinics at 3 of our properties. Both Covid and flu vaccines were offered and 51 people over two days got vaccinated.

Our agency partnered with the Pulaski Club in Easthampton and residents were invited to their holiday dinner. Many families at Florence Heights and Hampshire Heights attended. Along with dinner, specialized gifts were given out by Santa to all of the children who attended.

NHA became a recognized organization with Toys for Tots. The family RSC picked up 127 new toys, which is one for every child under the age of 13 at Hampshire Heights and Florence heights. Being a recognized organization will make the application process much easier in the future to apply for toys. Arrangements are being made for toy pick up and drop offs, many families have already come to claim their toys. We are also offering gift wrapping supplies for parents who choose to wrap their toy during pick up.

Commissioner Carney – I just want to say that I am really glad to hear of all the partnerships with so many organizations. Grow Food Northampton, Toys for Tots, Pulaski dinner. I am heartened to hear that those collaborations are going on. Thanks for reporting that.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I share the same sentiments with Commissioner Carney. I am very amazed with the Ward 3 Neighborhood Association and Kathy Service with Northampton Neighbors who coordinated. They helped a lot of folks and Danielle the RSC helped and was really wonderful and I am quite proud and very happy the building is cleaned and great. Danielle also said that the Northampton Arts Council wanted to give first night buttons especially those who receive snap benefits. Hopefully it will go through, I think it is a great thing that we are being thought of and hope we can give people notice of it, although some elderly here want to get out of the cold.

Chairperson Richards – congratulations to all - the reviews - sounds like we have done quite well with those. Much appreciated to Cara and the staff.

APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 2022 MINUTES

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

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the November minutes.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Discussion – Basements at Hampshire and Florence Heights.

Cara – on December 5, 2022 we received an email from Waterfield Design and the crew went to the site to start the survey. The site survey is moving along nicely.

MOTION – To allow Recording of meetings for distribution to NOM.

Commissioner Carney presented a motion for discussion seconded by Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

Commissioner Carney – I recall when that came down on the City Council, I was still on the City Council. What I think the confusion was that was a requirement for all of the City Council sub-committee meetings there are a number of them that are specific City Council meetings, and that ordinance does say that those meetings shall be submitted, shall be recorded. At the same time I think it is a great idea if we could get a camera, if we had something set up on a tripod and it's not a very difficult

thing, I don't know if you recall Commissioner Richards, really what we would do is press start. Who would be responsible for taking that cassette out and walking it over to the Northampton Open Media after each meeting I think is the question that is before us - whether the burden is on NHA or whether we might be able to do that. I do also understand what you are saying is that if we do start it now on zoom then that in some way obliges us to continue that. Well this motion would and I would like to hear from other commissioners in terms on how we might meet that obligation or responsibility in the future for the next meeting when we come out of zoom.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield - 1. I want to make it perfectly clear, I will say me, never said it was the rule. I asked is it, because I was getting conflicted information so I really want that to be clear.

2. I have said this maybe 3 or 4 times that the Arts Council, Al Williams, he will provide free training to anyone that wants to be trained to use the equipment, so that is not a problem.

3. You can have a hybrid meeting which is part this and part people there. I have been to several of them at the hearing office on the 2nd floor of City hall and there is an elevator accessibility. It is easy breezy. I went to a meeting and they said here, I will show you right now and it was done. I am fearful that when we say, oh the cost, well we can't or this or that and the liability and all that. I didn't hear DHCD say that, I didn't talk to them I was at a convention, people were there and they were just talking about how really good it has been for everyone. Right now you are hearing residents say I can't get on, I am having a hard time. I will just speak for what is happening at Salvo where some people who are a little bit technology challenged even to say well here is the link, it is hard for folks to get that they have to write it down and then if you are trying to type it into a phone and it is all that. There are a lot of people who will be more included because I think it is really good instead of somebody regurgitating what happens they can see for themselves. I don't know why there is hesitation, I am a little nervous, there is fear factor involved, it is easy, if there is a will there is a way.

Cara - the correspondence from DHCD which I included in last month's package stated that because we are not a City body it is almost like there is a confusion that we are a City body. They just stated you may read the correspondence to the Board and let them vote. The Board could say to the City Council that if they want to come and record the meetings they can if they want to but that NHA doesn't have the resources to do so. My only thing is and of course I will always do what the Board wants, is that if we choose to do this when there is no volunteer. As it is, I am out straight to put packages together and to get the meeting to go the way that it does and so who would this fall upon, I guess is my only question.

Commissioner Cancel - I want to piggyback on what Commissioner Tarbutton was saying is that if there is a will there is a way. I think it just really comes down to how much does the Board as a body want to provide this convenience for the public. If we feel strongly about that then we will just figure out a way to make that happen, just like the other committees that meet for the City. I understand the difference between City Boards and our Board but really for me it just comes down to how much we want to provide this and it is a service and does take time and does take someone to put in some effort to see this happens on a regular basis when the meetings happen. It does take coordination with Northampton Open Media and so forth. My suggestion would be if there is someone on the Board for instance myself and while I am part of this Board I would be willing to help make that happen. When the time comes and if somebody else is stepping in to my role somebody else can do it, it can be one of the tasks we have as Board members, it doesn't all have to fall on Cara because she actually does put in a lot of work before each meeting to make sure we have an organized meeting and things happen in an orderly fashion. I do agree on that in terms of that perhaps somebody from the Board might take on.

Commissioner Jones – I am all in favor of doing this, it shouldn't be that hard to put up a tripod in the corner of the room assuming we go back in person soon. Most of our meetings in the past have been at McDonald House in the Community Room. I think there would be a question about sharing the audio with the picture but I think it could be done. When we do the community preservation society meetings in City Council chambers that is just one general camera shot of the entire room I believe and that is it. It seems like we should be able to do our own version of that wherever we end up meeting in person. I am all for it, if we can have people reliably in place to monitor everything we should be good to go.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – when I was going to the Arts Council meeting I was asking what is the equipment that is when I learned they would train people. I was thinking great I would like to learn and I think there were about 7 people that I know interested in doing that. I think if we don't do this you know anybody from the public can come in and tape and they can upload it. I would think that it would be something we would be a part of and embracing. I think anybody can train. You can even get students from Smith and say you want credits, give us somebody here. I am really looking at the glass half full as opposed to half empty.

Commissioner Carney – I just want to go back to the point Cara made which was that we are ok while on zoom and I think what you were saying is that we will still have that and that goes back to the point Commissioner Tarbutton made, if we stay in zoom we could basically sit a laptop in the room with a camera facing the table where we are at. There are ways to do that which is the point. I also would not like to have this put on Cara. If there can be an agreement here that there will be somebody who will take the lead on this for example to set up and to investigate the hybrid, how we would do that. That might be helpful.

Cara – In the beginning Commissioner Tarbutton had brought up the hybrid method and maybe keeping zoom and that is an excellent idea and something I can actually do. It is not hard, it just means we would have the audio maybe but not the video of the people that speak up at the Board meeting but it would still allow people to call in. I have heard that they are talking about expanding the deadline which is the end of March because it is afforded so many people. If we want to continue with zoom even if when we go back in person and do it that way not a problem that doesn't even need to be made an issue.

Chairperson Richards – thank you so much everyone for your comments and thoughtfulness.

Cara – that hybrid was a great idea Commissioner Tarbutton, thank you.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – thank you Cara with that because right now I still don't feel well and I don't know if I would want to be around people. I wouldn't want to give them something I don't want and you know we are having all those hospitalizations and stuff so a hybrid I think would make people who aren't feeling well participate without being there.

MOTION – Approval of the October 2022 Minutes

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

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Cancel & Commissioner Jones.

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Motion.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution # 2022-18 – Adoption of the Section 8 Utility Allowance Schedule effective 1/2023.

Cara read the resolution to the Board.

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

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Richards approved the Resolution.

Resolution # 2022-19 – Enter into an ARPA Contract for Financial Assistance (CFA 4001).

Cara read the resolution to the Board. People that didn't spend their ARPA funds, Governor Baker assigned a lot of money to be divided among housing authorities. We were granted \$617,209.00 to be added to our current capital projects. All it is doing is increasing our capital budget by a little over a half a million dollars. We have to sign the documents accepting the grant of funds. The majority of funds will go towards contract changes. When it comes down to Hampshire Heights basement remediation because it is going to be much more costly than originally anticipated just like the McDonald elevator. Essentially you are accepting a grant for an additional \$617,209.00.

Vice-Chairperson Brooks – Part of the ARPA is also supposed to be directed to Broadband, Cara, isn't it?

Cara- this is ARPA funds that weren't used by agencies so this is specifically dedicated to the Capital Improvement Project, we don't have any say. We have already submitted a 5 year plan and these have to go towards that bottom line number.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I am a little uncomfortable with this because when we submitted the ARPA funds before all of this it felt a little deceptive to say we had resident participation and only 3 people showed up including a resident Board member. It makes me nervous to even say that was a part of it.

Cara – this doesn't have anything to do with that Commissioner Tarbutton, this has to do with additional funds that were not used by agencies that the Governor redistributed.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I do understand that but I was very uncomfortable when we submitted so I get nervous about this. For me it is going to be a strong no.

Commissioner Cancel – question – I have just seen a lot of communities around Northampton who had a very participatory process which the residents have a lot to say about ARPA funds and I know that is what Commissioner Tarbutton is referring to. I also agree I don't think we did our community any justice telling DHCD or whoever the government agency is that we had a participatory process when in reality that is not the case. I am wondering, is there an opportunity for residents to give input on how those funds are used? I know we are saying Capital Improvement but is there an opportunity for residents to give input as to which Capital Improvement projects those ARPA funds can go to since I believe the first time around we didn't do a good job involving our residents.

Cara – line two in the letter from DHCD says and they highlighted it – “the funds are considered non-discretionary designated as part of the formula funding.” So this is you either accept or decline the money. If we accept the money it goes to our state capital 5 year program that is already in place.

Commissioner Cancel – yeah, I understand that we definitely want to accept the money no doubt. My question was would there be participation.

Chairperson Richards – would there be participation? No, they are saying non-discretionary. Does that clear things up for you?

Commissioner Carney – I think you need a clarification, may I? From what I understood the Executive Director just said we have in place a 5 year Capital Plan and we have a letter from DHCD that says if we accept this money we must take it and use it for our already declared 5 year Capital Plan that we approved as a Board. Am I correct with that?

Cara – yes, you are correct.

Commissioner Cancel – that is not the way I understood it.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – she asked for clarification and the part that I wanted to say is that yes, but the one we initially submitted it was a little deceptive in the fact that it said resident participation when there were only 3.

Cara – there was absolutely nothing deceptive Commissioner Tarbutton and quite frankly I really resent you implying that we were being deceptive on any level, we advertised and did everything by the book and whether residents chose to come or not we cannot force people to come, so please correct yourself when you say we did something deceptive because we did nothing deceptive.

Commissioner Carney put forth the motion to adjourn the December meeting at 6:36 P.M., seconded by Vice Chairperson Brooks.