



# NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

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## APPROVED –NOVEMBER 20, 2023 NOVEMBER MINUTES

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, November 20, 2023 at 5:30 P.M.

Chairperson Carney called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

Upon Roll Call, those present and absent were as follows:

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Carney; Vice Chairperson Cancel; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield. Commissioner Richards arrived at 5:42 p.m.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Cara Leiper; Sharon Kimble; Jack Redman; Attorney Tom O'Connor; Amanda Huertas; Danielle McColgan; Jose Cruz; Angel Sadlowski; Angela Santaniello; Mary Chapman; Alfred Chagnon; David Edwards & Yasiri Castillo.

### TENANT COMMENT

A McDonald resident asked about the bed bugs at Salvo and wanted to know what NHA's plan was and also if NHA is reimbursing Salvo tenants for their laundry expense. Wants to know by the next meeting. Salvo resident – laundry rooms need to be locked up to avoid the spread of bed bugs. Residents having trouble with getting their laundry done – can NHA help. Haven't heard any negative complaints with the bathrooms being locked at night.

Salvo resident – how long for the laundry room, what is NHA going to do with people refusing to do the bed bug process – it has been a long time already and pricey – suggestions for us from NHA.

Salvo resident – maintenance issue and bed bugs. We are two months without the laundry room and community room. If the rooms are not treated why aren't they open? When and how will the problems start to get rectified.

Salvo resident – residents are leaving things in the hallways and lobby. There is a mess on the second floor, dressers, baby furniture which is making things worse. Need to get the bed bug issue moving.

Salvo resident – broken elevator – Secretary of the LTO taped something on the first floor but not on other floors so people getting into a broken elevator on other floors not knowing it is broken which is a serious liability.

Salvo resident – heard from the bed bug guys there are two more treatments before the laundry room and the community room can be opened. Rugs need to be removed. I emailed on 9/27 that feces and urine are embedded in them and also has bugs and roaches. Bug treatment is not being done to the apartments above, below and next to the apartments infested. This has been a problem for two years. Someone who is not on a lease but is staying here and has a no trespass order but dumpster dives and brings it in Salvo. Person had a fire and got new furniture from NHA and we live with stuff that is 20 years old or more. Need to deal with people bringing bugs back into the building. Need traps to catch the bugs. NHA is getting fleeced by the bed bug company.

Salvo resident – residents talking about money spending at the laundromat – NHA should reimburse us. It costs over \$11.00 a week at the laundromat instead of \$5.00 a week. It is in our lease to have a working laundry facility.

Salvo resident – laundry locked – sent an invoice to NHA for laundry. Dealing with bed bugs for two years. I am dealing with bed bugs for the last two months. Need to be aware. Use our trucks to bring to

laundromat. The treatment preparation is confusing. If someone isn't in compliance send them a note they aren't allowed to go into the laundry room and community room.

Commissioner Carney wished everyone a Happy Holiday and reminded people of the free Thanksgiving meals provided by Manna Soup Kitchen.

#### STAFF COMMENT

NONE

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

NONE

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Cara read the report and gave updates.  
Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield asked about having Robo calls to tenants to inform them of things.  
Good report.

#### APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 2023 MINUTES

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

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Jones

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the October 16, 2023 Minutes.

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Amendments to Board By-Laws.

#### MOTION

Correct Proposed Scrivener's Errors in the Board By-Laws.

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

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – page 59 should be article 8 then article 9 – needs to be corrected.

Cara – it is correct in the Board packet.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – page 4 article 4 – put an “s” on comments.

Chairperson Carney – stay as comment. Continued to go over the agenda for by-laws.

Vice-Chairperson Cancel – seeing more edits to by-laws instead of scrivener's errors. In 2021 when we revised we were shown a document with edits. Edits should be discussed with the entire Board.

Chairperson Carney – Cara, confirm for me that the previous approved rendition of the by-law included a Treasurers Report.

Cara – page 4 April 2021 by-laws does not include a Treasurer's report. 2019 did have a Treasurer's report.

Chairperson Carney suggested to continue the discussion on the Scrivener's errors to the next meeting.

Vice-Chairperson Cancel put forth the motion to continue Scrivener's errors motion to next meeting, seconded by Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

#### NEW BUSINESS

**RESOLUTION 2023-10** – Accept Quarterly Financials ending September 30, 2023 as prepared by Gary DePace.

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

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

**VOTING NAY:** Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Resolution.

Cara – we are under budget at 17.4% and we should be at 25%. Legal is up at 28.68% slightly elevated due to bill back. Travel is elevated due to bill back from HCRHA. Insurance is up by 1.22% due to increases and should even out at the end of the quarter.

Vice-Chairperson Cancel- question on travel – what does it entail?

Cara – account number 4150 is for travel, which is travel for employees, mileage for training. In this instance we paid an employee a reimbursement and did the bill back, it has just crossed and we will be paid back.

Vice-Chairperson Cancel – what is an expense for travel?

Cara – an employee goes to a conference and gets mileage, if an employee goes from one property to another, we reimburse them if they use their own car.

Vice-Chairperson Cancel – usage of housing vehicles. Instead of being reimbursed can they use the NHA vehicles to go to these places?

Cara – Where we can do that we do. In some instances we can't. In this particular case we weren't able to do that. This is not an NHA expense, it is paid to a NHA employee but it will be reimbursed from another Housing Authority because it is not really an NHA expense, it is in the middle of that process of reimbursement. That is why you are seeing an overage.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – does mileage include a reimbursement to a tenant who went to a LTO convention in central Mass?

Cara – I can't discuss individual things with you.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I have been begging for reimbursement for training. If you are paying for training for one person and not another.....

Cara – so that the Board is clear – I sent the potential Chair and Vice Chair of the upcoming Tenants Association of Walter Salvo to the National Tenants Association meeting which they found to be very helpful but I can't discuss the specifics of that. We were recognized as were the other Housing Authorities that we oversee by them for sending people to the Mass Union conference.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – it wasn't a national thing it was a bi-annual conference for the Mass Union of public housing tenants. I agree, it is great. I didn't know you were paying some people or whatever the case may be. I am excited other people are doing this.

Vice-Chairperson Cancel – on travel, I do see staff that takes vehicles home. I think I have seen someone that I have never met, I don't think they work for NHA, they look a lot like Commissioner Jones. I have seen some employees take vehicles home – is that common practice?

Chairperson Carney – clarified that the use of vehicles, etc. is not part of the ED report. Executive Director Leiper can you clarify the policy on this?

Cara – we are supposed to be talking about the financials only. However, as part of the Union contract anyone who is on call utilizes a NHA vehicle as well as the master plumber.

Vice-Chairperson Cancel – the travel expenses that Director Leiper mentioned didn't have only to do with the LTO expenses.

Cara – the travel expenses don't have anything to do with the employees using vehicles, it is not even in that line item. Does that clarify it a little better?

Vice-Chairperson Carney – the on call usage of vehicles by staff does not fall under that line item. I will ask you then to clarify what does that line item include beyond what you mentioned?

Sharon Kimble – the 4150 account is mainly for mileage, i.e. the RSC's just went to an event. Travel there would be paid as we don't have enough NHA cars for all three employees to use.

Cara – public housing notice 2021 20 addendum 1 informs all Housing Authorities that the rate of reimbursement for private auto mileage traveled in the course of authorized business increased from .45 cents to 58 ½ cents effective 3/20/22. Cara then explained in detail what consists of line item #4150 according to guidelines.

Vice-Chairperson Cancel – what Cara read is helpful I am okay with her answer.

Cara – when we sent you the budget guidelines you will find the account explanations in the guidelines each year or if you want to talk with me about it feel free to give me a call.

Chairperson Carney – regarding the Board – expenses paid for Board members, etc. those are a whole different world and we typically approve those for Board members.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I took a class and I wasn't reimbursed. I have seen an administrator come to a weekend event with a relative. Things that make you go hmmm,.....

Cara – I do drive a NHA vehicle approved by DHCD and HUD, it is part of my contract, Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield. It is because I am on call 24/7, it is part of the budget and my contract which is approved by the State, Federal and the Board.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – does that include gas and other expenses?

Chairperson Carney – the whole vehicle expense has historically been covered.

Commissioner Jones – I call a question.

## MOTION

### **Proposed Amendment to By-Laws for Governance and Policy Committee**

Cara read the language – the 2019 By-Laws and Attorney recommended language.

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

Attorney O'Connor – reasons to change – it is problematic to limit the committee's role to just those items that are listed in that old description. What if the committee wanted to look at something that was not one of the tasks listed in that old description, they would arguably be beyond the purview of their authority. I broadened it so they can review anything that deals with governance and policy. Then made it clear that they then had to go back to the Board for approval. The whole purpose of any of these committees is to do leg work for the Board then go back to the Board for approval or further guidance. Not limit the committee, broaden and make clear they have to go back to the Board for approval.

Vice Chairperson Cancel – I would propose that rather than eliminating that, saying exactly what the Attorney is proposing, all business and then list the examples. Attorney O'Connor's concept is actually taking away the specificity of what we are talking about in the previous language that we had before.

Chairperson Carney – we can propose a friendly amendment to whatever motion has been presented.

## NEW MOTION

**Have the previous language we had as the task for this Governance and Policy Committee still included with the language the Attorney offered. Such as – then include the tasks of that committee just after his proposed language.**

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I think Vice-Chairperson Cancel is saying we appreciate having the Attorney with us but he works with us, he doesn't tell us. We don't want him directing things to tell us what to do. It doesn't feel inclusive.

Commissioner Jones – my interpretation of this language is both of these paragraphs are not compatible with one another. Look at the 2019 language, it talks about Governance and Policy Committee and the way it is written and it can be interpreted and I interpret it that the Policy and Governance Committee and they alone develop and carry out a plan and process for evaluating the Executive Director. That committee alone nominates officers for the annual meeting and that is not what the second paragraph is striving to do because anything the Policy and Governance committee might do is taken back to the Board for approval. The first part of the 2019 language mentions developing policy recommendations and then all of a sudden the work recommendation disappears from the rest of that paragraph. On that basis I am against fusing these two paragraphs together and I basically revert to the suggested language Attorney O'Connor brought forward and I think it is perfectly reasonable to list some of these items in the first paragraph which is where I think Vice Chairperson Cancel was going. You could list those in the second paragraph by saying such as this and this and this but make clear that that does not exhaust the possible list of things that that committee could look at.

Commissioner Richards – I agree with Commissioner Jones and the past practice has been the committee has to come to the Board as a recommendation. If Commissioner Jones would like to offer a friendly amendment, I get it. We have a lawyer for a reason, to keep us out of trouble and I always appreciate that.

#### NEW MOTION

Amend the recommended language by the Attorney to include items after his paragraph to read such as, developing and carrying out a plan and process for evaluating the Executive Director, review and make revisions of the By-Laws as necessary and respond to other personal issues not charged to the Grievance committee, the committee will meet as necessary.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – we should table this it makes me uncomfortable. Table to the next meeting.

Commissioner Richards – amendment is redundant and may appear to be limiting which I wouldn't want to limit the committee. I think that was the intent of Vice Chairperson Cancel's amendment, he has already said he agrees that it needs to come back to the Board. I think those examples are limiting and redundant.

Attorney O'Connor – the whole purpose of my language was to basically not limit the Board at all and I know Vice Chairperson Cancel wants those specific things listed but as I stated earlier my concern is if that committee were to want to review something that is not specifically listed there would be a very fair argument that they are beyond their authority. Commissioner Richards is spot on that was the reasoning for my language and the amendment arguably limits what the committee can do.

Commissioner Jones – assuming the nomination of officers is still stuck in this particular draft one could include the phrase “instead of” such and you could use the phrase including but not limited to, and accomplish everything I think Vice Chairperson Cancel and myself are trying to get here.

Vice Chairperson Cancel – the last proposal by Commissioner Jones is a lot better than my language that I suggested.

#### MOTION

The Governance and Policy Committee will have two Board members and will be responsible for making recommendations to the Board for approval of all matters relating to the governance and policy of the agency including but not limited to developing policy recommendations, developing and carrying out a plan and process for evaluating the Executive Director, review and make revisions of the By-Laws as necessary and respond to other personal issues not charged to the Grievance committee (see section 3 below). The committee will meet as necessary.

Vice Chairperson Cancel put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

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

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

APPOINTMENT BY CHAIR OF MEMBERS TO GOVERNANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

Chairperson Carney

Vice-Chairperson Cancel

Vice-Chairperson Cancel put forth the motion to adjourn the November meeting at 7:32 P.M., seconded by Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.