



NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

JUNE MINUTES
JUNE 17, 2024
Approved on July 15, 2024

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, June 17, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

The Chairperson 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 Richards; Commissioner Cancel; Commissioner Jones & Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

ABSENT: Commissioner Brooks.

ALSO PRESENT: Jack Redman; Sharon Kimble; Attorney Tom O'Connor; Keith Walsh; Danielle McColgan; Jose Cruz; Deb Walker & Heather Maxwell.

TENANT COMMENT

MCDONALD RESIDENT – we have an impartial scribe or secretary that takes our notes, we keep meticulous records. I am having trouble finding your records. I am interested in seeing the written account of my “A” words. My inspection was a bit off-putting - they took a lot of notes and said we will get right on it. I talked with the property manager and nothing has happened yet. I know it doesn't happen instantaneously but instead of saying we are going to get right on it, say give us time, be honest. Concerned with the increased drug traffic since the Narcan boxes are here. I am looking for balm here, because I would really enjoy feeling safe. The garden helps but not with drug deals going down right beside me. Regarding police reports – no one seems to have any idea how many times the Police come here. Send us copies of your notes and links to meetings.

HAMPSHIRE HEIGHTS RESIDENT – I have lived here for 20 years and about a month and a half ago had my inspection and there was a list of items to be fixed. When can these get fixed and who do I reach out to? I haven't seen any maintenance in 20 years.

HAMPSHIRE HEIGHTS RESIDENT – EOHLC has new PHN's and clarifications. There is misinformation on the definition of a student. New information is inaccurate. College students are not allowed to have income excluded. New – age 18 -26 student income exclusion does apply whether a full or part time and 2 year or 4-year college or in a training program.

SALVO RESIDENT – At request of resident, an attachment of statement prepared is located on the last page of this document. Summary of resident comment is as follows: Thank you for the larger print notices. There is high traffic in the Salvo parking lot. I was almost hit twice in the parking lot, got a photo of her car and reported it to the Police. I am concerned with the speed in the parking lot, also NHA staff driving company vehicles in the parking lot. A former Salvo tenant association president thinks there are un-opened boxes of speed bumps in the basement. I would like information – are there speed limits on NHA property? There were no notices on the board meeting in the building the last few months. May of last year the notice was in the enclosed Plexiglas cabinet; residents report they don't normally look there. Consistency with posting goes a long way. Other tenants from other properties also complained that

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board meetings are not posted. On the new signs – is it Salvo Apartments or House? Administrative staff should not engage or participate in gossip about tenants in front of or within earshot or sight of other tenants. This extends to former tenants but extensively to resident board of commissioners. To do so is extremely inappropriate, unethical, unprofessional, improper and possibly illegal.

STAFF COMMENTS

NONE

PUBLIC COMMENT

NONE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

Jack read the report with updates.

APPROVAL OF THE MAY 2024 REGULAR MINUTES

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

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

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield

Therefore Chairperson Carney approved the May 2024 minutes.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – there were two resident comments and mine is incorrect. I sent in my comments for this meeting. The McDonald resident comments were condensed. Suggest an independent stenographer that nobody knows so we can get this stuff corrected because this is vital records.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution # 2024-05 – FY2025 Federal Budget Placesetter

Sharon Kimble explained they are taking the Federal FY2024 budget that the board has already approved and place setting it for the FY2025 budget until EOHLC approves their budget for us to use.

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

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

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the resolution.

MOTION

Authorize Chair to Execute Amendment #12 to the Contract for Financial Assistance (CFA) 5001 in the amount of \$617,011.94 for Formula Funding Award FY2026.

This is for the Capital Improvement Plan for FY2026. The formula funding award is in the amount of \$617,011.94.

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

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

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield - I get nervous with financial stuff – I would like to know more about it.

MOTION

Approve Executive Director to Submit Corrective Action Plan to EOHLC for FY2023 AUP on Behalf of the Board.

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

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

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Jack Redman – explained this is the agency audit from Marcum. He went over the report and there were 17 items noted on the Audit out of the 72 areas reviewed during the AUP. The draft of the corrective action plan was reviewed with Carolina Gonzalez from EOHLC. NHA received the document on May 30, 2024 and we have 30 days in which to send out the Corrective Action Plan.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – on EOHLC board training – 1). Is a no exception the same thing because in training it said an F meaning no fault, is that the same language they are talking about or is it interchangeable?

Jack Redman – no exception and no finding are interchangeable

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I have a question on the three emails.

Jack Redman – it is only one letter from Carolina Gonzalez.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I called Marcum for clarification. I have a concern about staffing and us doing other housing authorities and spreading ourselves thin.

Commissioner Jones – this would seem to fall under day to day operations of the Authority. I don't think it is up to the Board to go through every single one of these to make sure they are done year in and year out. When I got the email my only real question is just a more clarifying explanation of why this happened, it is not as if a contract register or vendor list did not exist – it did, they weren't uploaded when requested in the period of time. My question is why? I am not worried about going forward because I can't recall having this situation happen in my time on the Board where we had to submit an action plan.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I sort of echo a little bit of what the former speaker was talking about. It didn't say we forgot to hit the button it says staff shortages and absences. I am interested in the procurement element. LTO's must know – are they involved in the AUP corrective action plan?

Chairperson Carney - there are two questions on the table.

1. Why?
2. Who was involved in the drafting of the Corrective Action Plan including to what extent were required LTO involvement in an AUP Corrective Action Plan?

Commissioner Cancel – how can we inform and involve the LTO's in any type of corrective action, as much as we can involve the LTO's in running the organization, particularly when it has to do with things that will affect their day to day lives. I just want to encourage us to find ways to involve LTO's. Reaching out to LTO's and advise them that at the next Board meeting we will have a discussion on this action plan, etc. We have been doing better with this and I want to appreciate us for having a lot more transparency and clarity on these things and the more we do that I think the better off we are.

Vice-Chairperson Richards – it seems like a big deal; I guess my question is why?

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – Treasurer Brooks – was it something on his part that was overlooked that he didn't know he was doing? I would like his feedback and what he knows as well as the Executive Director.

Sharon Kimble – Commissioner Brooks is a signer of checks and it has nothing to do with Accounts Payable.

Jack Redman – The executive team – Cara, Sharon and Jack – Marcum does all their communication in a system they have built specifically for these audits. Roughly between 700 and 800 documents are scanned and uploaded. We have never had an AUP exception that we have brought to the Board, this absolutely was an oversight by the team where one or the other thought we uploaded these items. This was an oversight; this was a learning experience for the team. We talked about making sure each of us individually will go through the laundry list of items and make sure, versus handling our individual topics. The AUP is done at the same time as our Federal audit and is only done by auditors and regulated by HUD and EOHLA. There isn't any LTO or resident involvement with the actual audit. It does involve the board and staff and housing management specialist and team. We have spoken with Carolina and she has seen the plan of action. We need the Board to approve the plan and submit the documents. We take these audits very seriously it is a reflection on the Agency and the Board and we will ensure that this is not something that occurs in the future.

Sharon Kimble – I have worked here for 14 years and never have had a bad audit. This is not a bad audit – we are working with a new system that we have only been using since 2020. So much information to scan by staff and put into a file. Overall we did not do a bad job. Hopefully you will sign off on this and we get it back to them so they can close it out.

Jack Redman – Commissioner Brooks is the Treasurer of the Board – he receives the warrant and signs the checks along with the Executive Director's signature. He looks at what we spent and the bills. His role is not at all part of our audit. We overlooked three missing files and it now needs to be sent to them.

Chairperson Carney – I will point out and in my conversations with Carolina which remarkable, is that we have never had to deal with this in the past. Those of you who did look through the communications

and looked through the States AUP will see many Housing Authorities regularly go through this. It is unfortunate that the State uses the terminology of strikes, I find that is alarming. When I spoke to Carolina she said “this is no big deal”. So I am comforted by the fact that even though they use alarming language like strikes that many of our world famous home run hitters get strikes and they still hit them out of the park.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I spoke to Marcum, they seemed to think it was very important and his word was not unusual.

Commissioner Cancel – I thank Sharon and Jack for the explanations, I am thankful that we have this learning opportunity. I don’t see it as a huge problem and as Jack mentioned earlier, it is a good learning opportunity. I do want to encourage the LTO’s to attend our meetings so they can be more involved in the process and everyone is on the same page and if they have questions, you can bring them to the next meeting.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I am with what Commissioner Cancel says about including the LTO’s and their input. It is a concern and I think it is because we are overstretched, it is easy to make a mistake like this. I don’t think it was input, it says staff shortages and absences.

Chairperson Carney – I did raise the question with EOHLC – just on the heels of them asking us to provide assistance to Hatfield Housing Authority, that they would send this. Carolina said to me this has nothing to do with that. I want your Board to know we fully stand behind our recommendation of the NHA which is why we asked them in the first place and would continue to.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield put forth the motion to adjourn the June meeting at 6:48 p.m., seconded by Vice-Chairperson Richards. All were in favor.

Submitted Resident Comments for Attachment
by Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield

1. Concerned about the high traffic in the Salvo House parking lot (which is adjacent to/apart of) the Senior Center). One morning, I was personally almost 'run' over – the first driver a woman in a dark green Lexus (newly-model) – didn't even seem to stop after seeing me walking to my car. – she kept on driving. I was able to get a (very fuzzy) photo of the car and did report it to the police. The Senior Center has many people walking from the parking lot throughout the day (especially for luncheons), activities, and events. Additionally, I am Concerned about the driving/speed of all drivers (trucks, buses, etc.) especially NHA staff driving company vehicles in the parking lot.
2. There was an issue of Speed Bumps/Humps and according to former Walter Salvo Tenant Association President, 'there are unopened boxes of these speed bumps in the basement'. Would appreciate some clarity from NHA on this issue – Did hear something about problems with snow shoveling with speed bumps. It's an important issue for NHA and the City of Northampton to investigate. Also, there does not appear to be any speed limit alerts for the building – is there a speed limit on NHA properties? (Remember, there is considerable congested traffic at the front on Conz Street, so, naturally, drivers will avert to the parking lot to drive in an alternative direction.
3. The Notices (especially NHA Board meetings) used to be prominently displayed throughout the Salvo House building on the large Bulletin near the mailboxes and on each floor at the elevator entrance (there is a plexiglass holder on both sides of the elevator). In the last few months, especially this month, there was no notice of the board meeting in the building. May 2024 notice was placed in the enclosed plexiglass bulletin board, yet residents reported that they don't normally look there and did not see the notice. Perhaps that is why so few residents attended last month. Understandably, there has been some confusion in the past months with holidays and special board meetings – some consistency with the posting goes a long way; especially, from an email from NHA responding to a tenant complaint from another property about the lack of bulletin postings of meetings.
4. Staff (especially Administrative) should not engage or participate in gossip about (a) tenants in front of or within earshot (sight) other tenants. This extends to former tenants but extensively to (a) the resident board of commissioners. To do so is extremely inappropriate, unethical, unprofessional, improper, and possibly illegal.