



NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

APRIL MINUTES

APRIL 28, 2025

Approved on MAY 19, 2025

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Monday, April 28, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 5:56 P.M. following the Annual meeting. Upon Roll Call, those present and absent were as follows:

PRESENT: Chairperson Carney; Vice-Chairperson Healey; Commissioner Jones; Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield; Commissioner Wood & Commissioner Brooks;

ALSO PRESENT: Matthew Mainville; Sharon Kimble; Doug Kierdorf & Gary DePace.

Chairperson Carney –

Thank you members of the Board for re-electing me to the position of Chair, I appreciate it.

LTO COMMENT

Doug Kierdorf – president, Forsander tenant’s association. We had a general meeting of all residents yesterday and at that meeting it was proposed and passed the following resolution – “The Forsander Tenants Association has no confidence in the temperament or the ability of the currently suspended Executive Director of the Northampton Housing Authority, Cara Leiper, to serve the needs of the people here, that is in Forsander.” There were 16 members present – (14) Aye, (1) Nay and (1) Abstain. I should mention that the person who voted nay said he did so because he had misgivings about the possibility of retribution. Also, the overwhelming number of people who voted Aye on this reflects probably the deep unease and misgiving about how this railroad is being run right now. I think that is all I need to say.

PUBLIC COMMENT – SUSPENDED

APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 2025 REGULAR MINUTES

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice-Chairperson Healey; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Wood & Commissioner Jones.

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the March 2025 minutes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

Matt Mainville – no ED report, to be honest with you I feel that having been new to the position and really getting my legs under me, I didn’t feel it would be appropriate for me to try and provide an Executive Director report this month given I don’t have as an in depth understanding of the operations as would be required to be able to provide that kind of information, so I am abstaining from giving an ED report at this particular time.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION

ACCEPT THIRD QUARTER FINANCIALS AS PRESENTED BY FEE ACCOUNTANT, GARY DEPACE.

Gary DePace – we are ¾ of the way through the fiscal year and are right on target – 75%. We are under budget on many line items but are over on some especially the 4190 (administrative – other) account. Gary explained the line items and what the 4190 account is used for – computer software and updates, phone bills, etc. Maintenance salary is over budget because of the winter months due to overtime – this is at 77.22%.

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice-Chairperson Healey; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Wood & Commissioner Jones.

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – you are paid by Northampton Housing Authority and about 28 other LHA's is that true?

Gary DePace – approximately, yes.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – you have been very helpful and you have given this Board training and I appreciate that. My issue with not voting is I am concerned about Warren Housing Authority, you are no longer there and I am curious.

Gary DePace – I am actually back there.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – ok you are back! There were some issues there and I was wondering if we should be concerned about that.

Vice-Chairperson Healey – I will ask Matt if it is typical in housing authorities of this size to have quarterly reports and to have the level of detail that we have now or if Commissioners, not just your own, typically review in greater detail the financial reports that are presented. I know we discussed this in the first meeting I was in but you are a new face and so I thought maybe you could give me some insight into what happens elsewhere and if we are doing the same thing.

Matt Mainville – what you are receiving is a typical product that other housing authorities see and have an opportunity to review and comment and question at board meetings. I know Gary DePace's CPA firm has a great reputation just from talking to other of my colleagues. This is a typical product you would see and I imagine should the necessity arise, Commissioner Healey, I know you are a new Commissioner and don't want to put words in Gary's mouth, but as mentioned by Commissioner Tarbutton, he is under contract with us, not an employee, but I am sure that he would be willing and able to do a training for you and Commissioner Wood who is a fairly new Commissioner as well. But this is typical and what would be expected.

Commissioner Healey – I know some housing authorities have audits done and we do in Northampton and it is an annual audit and I believe correct me if I am wrong, we have an auditor who is not from the State but a private auditor – maybe Gary can answer that.

Gary DePace – everything we get, our housing authority is audited by CBIZ a large accounting firm auditing many State agencies. They do that under the federal guidance requirement and also provide on the State side what they call the AUP or agreed upon procedures which is now something that is going to be done every other year for our State programs and it's that audited financial statement that goes in and I believe there were no audit findings of the financial aspect this last time, it went in on time and we are up for the next period which will be when June 30th comes and we have 9 months to provide the audited financial statements. Yes, it is done annually.

Matt Mainville – I want to make it clear what an audit looks like. The AUP looks at a significant number of things – tenant files, whether or not rent is being calculated appropriately, paid vouchers, they look at the actual check that got cashed and look at the backup material that is on it and was there a procurement process, did it get signed off on, is it appropriate in nature. It is a fairly thorough process and CPA workers, auditors etc. are very, very regulated on the Federal and State side.

Commissioner Healey – so the audit does look at the rents that are paid down to the nitty gritty, what the rents are, who is paying, etc.

Matt Mainville – they pull tenant files and procurement files.

Commissioner Healey – to be sure it is consistent with the policies of this Board.

Gary DePace – and the Commonwealth's and HUD's regulations.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – if you do a training for the two commissioners I would like to sit on that as well. Matt, question, Mr. DePace, is he working with you in the Holyoke Housing Authority?

Matt Mainville – No.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – In light of some situations that are going on where it has been alleged and I have even known this and said this before because it was directly told to me by a resident that they were getting \$100.00 of their rent and I asked you how does that happen? No one would let me talk, the resident said it was private. I think that is part of according to the papers, of what is going on. How can this be reconciled every month whether it is the warrant, the quarterly reports? Even now another tenant admitted to getting money off. How do you not catch and flag that?

Gary DePace – As a fee accountant I do not look at every rental charge to every tenant. If a person is getting some type of an adjustment that is probably documented in their file and could be used. Now when an audit takes place or the AUP in which they do samplings of tenant calculations, it is that time if there is an adjustment, there could be a legitimate reason for a monthly adjustment, (Gary gave an example here). I don't look at 500 charges every month, this is something that would come out of an audit and would be a finding if not documented and would come to you through an audit finding.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – that is a great example. I lived with bed bugs for four months and not a penny did I get and there is another tenant who damages a wheelchair and they are gifted with a go fund me for a new wheelchair. I am just trying to level the playing field on who gets what and why and how is it documented and according to ethics, how is this allowed?

Matt Mainville – these are good questions but not really reflected in the financial statements that were presented here. I think those are issues that aren't really tangent to the conversation we are having as it relates to the financials about wheelchairs and those types of things. I am familiar with the idea of giving stipends to folks in other circumstances and I don't know the circumstances you are referring to, Commissioner Tarbutton, but I know that is a practice that happens in other organizations. We provide a stipend to folks that take on custodial activities here in Holyoke, voluntarily, obviously, so that does happen. I am not opining on the particulars that are being presented here other than to say I know it is not a stand-alone issue.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – thank you, I do appreciate your perspective and this is very clarifying and I know you didn't do an ED report but I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for filling those potholes on the properties.

MOTION

REVIEW AND APPROVE 3 MONTH "INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NOTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY" CONTRACT FOR CURRENT HOLYOKE HOUSING AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MATTHEW MAINVILLE, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$53,998.00

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Jones.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice-Chairperson Healey; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Wood; Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield & Commissioner Jones.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Matt Mainville – to clarify, this motion is gray – in fact the \$53,998.00 is not coming to Matthew Mainville in a big fat check. This is a contract that would be with the Holyoke Housing Authority as a whole. For example, our IT person has come up to Northampton and some folks from our admissions and occupancy department have come to Northampton and our Assistant Executive Director for operations has come up to help with procurement. I oversee a whole breadth of folks and I don't have expertise in every matter. When you agreed to bring on the Holyoke Housing Authority you agreed to bring on the Holyoke Housing Authority in totality and a portion of this money will come to me but certainly not that entire amount. I don't want folks thinking that in fact I was going to be getting that full amount of funds.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I have communicated with Interim ED Mr. Mainville on two things and he got back to me lickity split and I appreciate the professionalism in the letter about the past meeting not being recorded but I think I heard him say it was being recorded. I appreciate the thoroughness of the letter and not shifting blame – it was, got it, sorry, apology. This is the kind of stuff a leader does and look how immodest he is, but you saved some cars and people were cheering to have people there filling in the potholes. I was just so happy, I think you need to brag on yourself with that. A lot of tenants couldn't wait to meet you, that is why they were disappointed not being able to go to the special meeting. I do appreciate when you first got here you went around to the buildings and I hope you meet with the tenants individually, not just the LTO officers.

MOTION

APPROVE CERTIFICATE OF SUBSTANTIAL COMPLETION OF FISH #214126 – HAMPSHIRE HEIGHTS WINDOW REPLACEMENT PROJECT.

Commissioner Brooks put forth the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice-Chairperson Healey; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Wood; Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield & Commissioner Jones.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – from what I gather, some things have been done but the rest of them have not been completed so I assume this is the completion of it, if that is the case I wholeheartedly say yes and I appreciate you taking on this torch.

Matt Mainville – I took an opportunity to drive through the property with Mike and Peter and the job has been completed. I think the punch list at this point is also buttoning up or has been buttoned up.

MOTION

APPROVE GUARDIAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS ELECTRICAL LOAD STUDY PROPOSAL NEEDED TO ASSURE WIRES & TRANSFORMERS HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO DO THE FORSANDER HVAC PROJECTS, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$27,115.00.

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice-Chairperson Healey; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Wood & Commissioner Jones.

VOTING NAY: Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield.

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Motion.

Matt Mainville – having had the opportunity to meet with some folks from Forsander, I just wanted to make sure, because there was some concern about whether or not the treated air would be equally dispersed in the bedroom and in other rooms. I did a little research and there will be two air split ductless systems. There will be heads in both rooms so that one room won't be overheated and the other cold. I also recognized after speaking with Peter that this is the very first step, pre-planning for what I think has been a successful application in another development. This is the first step that would allow an engineer to come in to determine whether or not the existing electrical system would support what is going to happen down the road.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – do they also go by GEM? They are the ones that administered the mini splits at Salvo.

Matt Mainville – in talking with Peter I feel it is a different vendor than who did the first one for you folks.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – if it is the same I am very worried, according to something the Executive Director previously said to the LTO officers, there was and I don't know if the Board heard about it, I had not heard officially about it, sub-contractors were fired for quote having sex with residents.

Chairperson Carney – I will call this actually until we know for sure, I would rather not talk about that. I would rather not bring that up given the fact that it is not likely the same contractor. Thank you.

Matt Mainville – it is not the same contractor, they were not satisfied for a number of reasons.
Commissioner Wood – Is Guardian the vendor for the entire project or just the electric study?
Vice-Chairperson Carney – just the study for \$27,000.00, that is not the entire cost of that Forsander project, it is a much larger number.

Matt Mainville – my understanding is that this is going to be a grant application process. This is an effort to cobble together those things that would be necessary. The first step that will then allow you to get to the starting line for an application for grant funding, that is my understanding of what is going on now.

Commissioner Wood – that is what I needed to know, wanted to understand where we are in the process and how the vendors are going to be selected moving forward so that will be a separate process and this is limited to this one piece.

Matt Mainville – I am not entirely sure, but that is my understanding.

Chairperson Carney – Mr. Kierdorf is here and this relates to Forsander – is there anything you might like to ask, any clarifying information that would be helpful for the LTO?

Mr. Kierdorf – the fact that there would be a unit in each room was a question the residents had and the other was when could we expect work on this to start and when could we expect it to be done? I don't know whether anybody there has a clue.

Chairperson Carney – it was slated in our Capital Improvement Plan, that the State looked at this for fiscal year 2026 which begins in July, but I don't know at which end of the fiscal year. I thought this was clarified at the last meeting, I don't know where in the 12 month period it is.

Matt Mainville – I think that is absolutely correct and just having a sense of what it means to get your first step. Down the road it will be enough time for us to ensure that residents are provided enough lead time to understand what is happening.

Mr. Kierdorf – is the money for this coming from a grant, not part of the Housing Authority budget?

Chairperson Carney – no, it is part of the grant, State funded.

Vice-Chairperson Healey – from what I understand, we have already applied for the money but we need to have the study in order to move forward with the placement of the HVAC system.

Chairperson Carney – I don't think that our grant is conditional upon this study, I think Mr. Mainville was saying this has already been in the works, it is part of our 5 year plan. This additional study is something that came up in terms of trying to make sure that the load capacity of the service equipment that is there presently can handle the increased amount of electrical load.

Vice-Chairperson Healey – and they can proceed after the study is done.

Chairperson Carney – yes, I don't think that even the study is holding them up, this is an additional thing that needs to be verified. We would not want to get well into this project and find out we needed to increase the service capacity of that building, am I correct Matt?

Matt Mainville – yes.

RESOLUTION 2025-3 – EOHLA CONTRACT FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (CFA) 5001
AMENDMENT #12 – IN THE AMOUNT OF \$617,011.94.

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Carney; Vice-Chairperson Healey; Commissioner Brooks; Commissioner Wood; Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield & Commissioner Jones.

VOTING NAY: NONE

Therefore, Chairperson Carney approved the Resolution.

Matt Mainville – EOHLA and the State goes through a process to give us funds to support Capital Improvements in your State properties. Every 242 Housing Authorities across the Commonwealth go through this process every year, it is very straightforward. A yes vote means you want to take the money and make improvements to tenants' properties and a no vote means you don't.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – the grant is fantastic by EOHLA, I am not sure how we are going to apply it.

Matt Mainville – I printed off your annual plan, it is a pretty good road map as it relates to what improvements are slated for what fiscal year – water mitigation in basements, intercom system at

Forsander. Obviously the process is imperfect because the money we receive never meets the capital improvement costs that we have, what we have to do as a squad is highlight those issues that are most critical and that is what you do through your Annual Plan in the CIP that is included in it.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I know we have had money over the years I would like to see exactly where it goes and how it does improvements. I don't know what the Salvo LTO proposed, I know the residents weren't involved in that. My question is when you have something for tenants why don't you have them involved in this? It is usually 6 months before the annual plan from what I am told where people get together and get ideas and I don't think anything like that happened at Salvo. I have heard a little bit for the federal properties, I would like to see where it is going.

Matt Mainville – these are dollars that are strictly being brought to the NHA for capital improvement, it is not administrative dollars. It is dollars that will go out the door for capital improvements projects. I can't comment on public comment but the reality is these are dollars that - \$617,000.00 sounds like a lot, but in today's construction environment \$617,000 doesn't go particularly far. So it is critical that every dollar that comes through gets accepted so projects can be completed.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I looked at Holyoke and I just couldn't believe how wonderful they look now and I see the money was directly applied to it. I know it is not a lot but every little bit helps and that the buildings we live in are clean, sanitary and safe. Can you put that money and bring us some security because that is what we need and maybe people can feel better in their apartments. If you shepherd this, I would be more comfortable.

Chairperson Carney – Director Mainville, is the situation at Northampton Housing unique in terms of, it has been a challenge to really involve tenants in the long range plan mostly because the plan is kind of the same. It is a living document as you referred to it the last time at our last meeting. It doesn't really change unless there are other factors that come in and bump the order of things so to speak. Typically we know the big ticket items that we are going to need. Is Northampton unique in the lack of public comment, public interest, it seems in these big long terms plans that we have?

Matt Mainville – it is not uncommon and I think there are different levels of success across the Commonwealth. One of the things I will say that does happen and I imagine it happens in Northampton, I can't confirm 100%, but what we use frequently in the lack of maybe public comment is we look at work orders, trends for work orders called in, maintenance items and in my mind it kind of equates to public comment because if people are calling in work orders for running toilets on a consistent basis it is another way housing authorities can mine for public comment. I applaud efforts to make sure you get tenant comment in the process but there are other means and methods in which you can do it.

Chairperson Carney – it is information, really where we see there may be a trend, for example in certain areas that those concerns are being recorded through the process of a work order. That is helpful information I am sure for all of us.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I do think tenant involvement is important. I think we can look for ways to involve residents and if they felt heard and respected you will have more. I get an earful every day about something but you took away the public comment and the L TO isn't here, but that is just one building.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield put forth the motion to adjourn the April 28, 2025 meeting at 6:48 p.m. seconded by Vice-Chairperson Healey. All were in favor.