



NORTHAMPTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

APRIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 3, 2026

APPROVED on May 18th, 2026

Members of the Northampton Housing Authority met via “Zoom” on Friday, April 3, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.
Upon Roll Call, those present and absent were as follows:

PRESENT: Chairperson Healey Vice-Chairperson Tarbutton-Springfield; Commissioner Wood; Commissioner Abrashkin & Commissioner Nash.

ABSENT: Commissioner Jones.

ALSO PRESENT: Sharon Kimble; Attorney Tom O’Connor; Tony Patterson; Doug Kierdorf; Dave Power, Heather Packard, Destiny Martinez.

Chairperson Healey introduced the staff and members attending.

Sharon Kimble, Interim Executive Director, Tony Patterson, new maintenance director.

Commissioners – Abrashkin, Tarbutton-Springfield, Nash & Wood.

Doug Kierdorf, Forsander LTO President.

Dave Power – City of Cambridge, Inspectional Services, Project Coordinator for Environmental Health – I bring a background of about 30 years of pest control experience.

Heather Packard – Mass. Audubon’s Community Organizer – in this role I manage our grassroots advocacy statewide. We have a variety of campaigns, but the largest campaign right now is Rescue Raptors to end the use of anticoagulant rodenticides in Massachusetts.

Commissioner Abrashkin – We have to tie everything we are doing into the particular circumstances of public housing developments and public housing residents many of whom have particular needs and may need different kinds of assistance from other circumstances and so on.

Dave Power – City of Cambridge – the main interest is, and Heather is going to speak to this much better than I can, is our ban on city property or city contracted property of second generation anticoagulant rodenticides, which is a specific type of class of rodenticide that sends the animals blood, the intended target is mice and rats unfortunately, it can get to other animals by them eating the bait or by a predator consuming that animal when it is nearly dead or completely dead. That can build up within that predator’s system and then it can be troublesome or lethal for that animal. In general, IPM – integrated pest management, through all of the other things other than chemical usage, other than pesticides and rodenticides, this can go as wide ranging or as particular as you want for how deep you get in the weeds with IPM. It will affect a lot of your various roles within the Housing Authority. It is your sanitation, it is how the trash gets stored and collected, it is how the landscaping is handled, what type of plantings you have, how they are planted near the structure, all have a factor to some degree of preventing pests, or eliminating a problem once you have it. Obviously, the ideal would be to prevent them, that is not always possible in certain circumstances, depending on the pest, depending on what the problem is – from bedbugs and cockroaches to mice and rats. Most of it is going to be sanitation, which can be a challenge if you have residents that may not be able to perform the necessary tasks to be prepared for a treatment or even an inspection. I know that becomes a big problem, where there is a

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problem that needs to be addressed and the resident doesn't have the capacity or strength to do the necessary preparation, that is going to snowball down the line and make it much harder to control the problem.

Heather Packard – I am not a practitioner like Dave, so I am glad Dave is here. I am an advocate, an educator, I have been involved in this issue for just 3 years. My full time job practically, has been this particular one campaign for 3 years. I have been running educational programs weekly, but this is probably the 3rd time I have talked about this issue this week. I don't know how familiar you are with the harms that are caused by this particular class of poison. Second generation anticoagulant rodenticides, they bioaccumulate. Literally, the advocacy that we are focused on is ending the use of that particular, like laser focused on one particular class of poison. As Dave mentioned, there are many other options, including other poisons that are very effective, cost comparable and lethal and dangerous even, but they don't bioaccumulate the way that sgars do. Our ask to communities has been and to business owners, and Housing Authorities, or anyone, is to contact your pest control company and ask them to stop using sgars. It is a single phone call and a single class of poison, that is all the real advocacy that we organize has been around, because there are many effective alternatives and almost all pest control companies are familiar with the alternatives. They are the practitioners like Dave who are more familiar with that than I, in actually utilizing the alternatives. I do have a lot of information about alternatives but I really think that when you develop an integrated pest management plan, you typically deal with exclusion, sanitation and then lethal methods for remaining rodents. That is a big, broad plan that you would work with your maintenance director to help draft that. That in my opinion is kind of a big project and I think it is great. You definitely should have IPM in general. The advocacy for us was to stop using sgars, not deal with all your rodent problems. I think that determining your scope and needs you have for IPM is a separate ask and request than just doing a quick swap and it literally can be, even before you do the full IPM, you could literally just swap, for instance, you could put cloaciferol, a very deadly poison, in every one of those bait boxes, have your pest control company do it. It doesn't bioaccumulate and you have addressed the real problem of all those harms that are happening to wildlife and pets. If you want to do a quick deal with the advocacy issue you could just do that and then take time to develop a much broader plan, if you are having a rodent problem.

Commissioner Abrashkin – Sharon, how much of a problem is there, I am a new member of the Board so I don't know much about it.

Sharon Kimble – we do pest management control. We are having this meeting to try to use better ways of doing it, but I believe if I stopped it, we certainly would have a huge problem with mice and stuff.

Heather Packard – definitely do not stop it. To be clear, our advocacy goals are pro-rodent control, and just a broad, more inclusive method of exclusion, sanitation and then a whole slew of options for lethal methods are needed. Taking the time to develop a full and integrated pest management plan is important for your work. The drive for this meeting was to stop using this one particular class and swap it for something else, and that is absolutely not stopping rodent control. You cannot stop rodent control in most situations. People need to control rodents. We over-house them, we overfeed them and now we are killing the predators. We are increasing the prey and we are decreasing predators by killing them with these poisons. Anything you can do to trust nature and let it take it's natural course. One great horned owl will eat 50,000 rodents in it's lifetime. Anything you can do to save some of those predators is actually free rodent control.

Doug Kierdorf – this winter we had mice in my building and I think it would be helpful if you said why you want to ban sgars. I am a member of Mass. Audubon, I am familiar with their campaign against these, you know there are bills before the State Legislature to ban these things, statewide, anyway. This winter mice came into our building and I have a cat and I mentioned this to our property manager and she said ok we will have them put these baits down and I said don't do that because if one of those mice

eats some of this stuff and comes into my apartment and my cat kills and eats it, then my cat dies. I would just like a brief summary of why this is a bad thing.

Heather Packard – pest control companies have been over-relying on sgars for several decades now as the primary means of pest control, that is all they do. They don't use any of the other methods that you have seen in my flyers and that Dave is using and as a result, the rodents themselves, because this particular class of poison bioaccumulates, it doesn't break down for up to 10 months in their bodies. They do not die in the bait box, they eat it, it takes up to 10 days, it is a very slow acting poison. They actually come back and eat at the bait box multiple times frequently and get a heavy load of poison in their bodies and they are walking poison on 4 feet to any predator or scavenger or pet that were to eat them. Because of this particular bioaccumulation issue for this particular class of poison and the fact that they are slow acting, they actually create prey that are weak and sick and easier for the predators to catch. We often find that juvenile hawks and owls are, because their bodies are smaller and a less dose is needed to harm them but also because they like the weaker, easier prey, they are not as good hunters. New England Wildlife Clinic treats hundreds of cases at this one clinic every year, of rodenticide poisoned animals. The MSPCA's Animal Medical Center in Boston treats 40 to 50 rodenticide poisoned pets every year. If you factor that out you are talking hundreds of pets and thousands of wildlife. Wildlife are much heavier impacted because their primary diet is rodents, some of them, hawks, owls, foxes, that is like their favorite thing. Tufts Wildlife Clinic did a study, they tested every single red-tailed hawk that came in, for any reason, and 100% of them had rodenticides in their liver. It is a persistent poison, it doesn't break down, that is why we are so focused on that one particular class, a full toxic food web is getting created that is harming thousands of wildlife and threatening our pets as well.

Commissioner Tarbutton-Springfield – I want to applaud NHA for taking a tenant concern and taking it to this level. I think this is one of the first discussions in the 5 years I have been on the Board, that we have had this, it is a big issue. I want to respond to Heather Packard's question - are there pest problems here. I have been living here for about 13/14 years and there is a pest problem. My apartment had bedbugs and it was really horrible. For the last 3 years I have been taking allergy shots. I am allergic to mold, mice and roaches so I live with that and I think it is an environmental harm in some ways. I don't know much about this topic today, but I would like to know more about what you guys do and your research. I have yet to see one of the flyers you are talking about. I am very concerned and you talking about waste and stuff, I do think we need to look at that stuff and try to do it so we can all live in this world full of so much stuff and not get sicker. I appreciate you - thank you.

Commissioner Wood – I would like to hear Dave talk a little bit more in particular about the collaboration and the ways in which the Cambridge Health Dept. works with Cambridge Public Housing around IPM practices and what that relationship looks like as the entity that is responsible for enforcing the State Sanitary Code, David and I am sure you have a lot of competing needs and interests as you are trying to do your job and it would be great to hear how you do that collaboration effectively and successfully. From what I have read since Heather sent materials, it does feel to me a little bit like a no-brainer to simply stop the use of sgars. The other thing I would like David to speak a little bit about is have you seen any negative effects whatsoever, since Cambridge has banned the use of them? Is there really any downside whatsoever in stopping the use of sgars?

Attorney O'Connor – I am the Housing Authority's Attorney, I am somewhat of a dinosaur here, I have been here for a couple decades. In terms of problems in the buildings certainly to JoElla's point, bedbugs have always been way more of an issue than mice. The mice issue tends to be more of a seasonal thing, particularly the winter like we have had. I think the mice issue was more prominent this year than any other that I remember. Second, just a question for Heather and/or Dave, the bioaccumulation you referenced, could you define that for those of us that don't know exactly what that means, it is obviously

a negative thing, but I would like to know exactly what that terms means and am I safe assuming that the other chemicals that you are suggesting as an alternative do not bioaccumulate?

Heather Packard – bioaccumulation is when a persistent chemical doesn't break down, so it keeps the amount of dosage that is needed to harm an animal, it will gradually build up. If the first poisoned mouse or rat that is eaten by a predator doesn't get that hawk or owl, the 2nd or 3rd will because it is bioaccumulating in the rodent, so as they go back to the bait box over and over, it bioaccumulates in their liver, it stays there and doesn't break down and then, they can have massive doses in their liver even if they are dead, it is there. A scavenger eating it is getting poisoned because then it bioaccumulates in that scavenger or predator or pet, it goes to their liver. Even large animals as large as mountain lions in California have been killed by these, because it is a persistent poison that doesn't break down, it is building each time they eat it, more and more in their liver. Every time you see a hawk or an owl flying in a city setting you could almost guarantee there is rodenticide in it's liver, it is just not enough yet that it is sick. These bait boxes with sgars are blanketing our State, it is over 500,000 pounds of sgars put out annually in Mass. by pest control companies. They have to report to the Mass. Pesticide Board and I pulled down the spread sheet. It is a huge problem that there is this much sgars and that they are relying so heavily on a single class of poison and it is not working. There is no data to show that sgars reduce rat populations or mouse populations. If you don't address the root cause with exclusion and sanitation you are going to have a hard time ever really having good control of rodents. Bedbugs – I know nothing about them but it could be part of your integrated pest management plan.

Dave Powers – IPM is non-chemical or non-pesticide control. It is doing a lot of other things and a lot of those other things can be a little more expensive. The reliance is on a really good pest control company if you outsource. Cambridge Housing Authority does do some limited amount of their own, but they can do all of the IPM on their own because there is no license required, there is no application of poisons. It is in the detection, the inspection, knowing what the problem is and how to address it. You can get a lot of help from your pest control contractor – ask them to help you with an IPM plan to figure out the things that can be done in every unit, every living capacity, whether it is case by case when you get a call or a proactive inspection identifying holes where mice can come out of a wall, a ceiling, underneath doorways. Really good door sweeps is a great exclusion method. Keeping them out and not supporting them when they get there is a major factor and you can do all of those things with IPM in conjunction with a really good pest control contractor, they should be able to speak to it. If they can't give you a good workup on integrated pest management then you should think about a different company because they are taking the easy way out. If all they are doing is coming in and dropping traps or rodenticide without really investigating the problem and figuring out what is going on – most times it is going to be ceiling holes, whether it is radiator, pipe holes, pipe openings for utilities and then door sweeps. I can share with the group some resources on bedbugs, rodents, IPM, how to do an IPM inspection, all those things. How we collaborate with Cambridge Housing Authority – I am in close contact with the head of operations for maintenance and the sanitation guys that work directly for Cambridge Housing Authority. We have established a really good bond which I think is important, where I have a unique perspective to pest control, it obviously has been a help to Paul Grenham, the director of facilities management at Cambridge Housing Authority. I encouraged Paul and he went last year to Bobby Corrigan's New York City Rodent Academy which is a 3 day intensive, hands on, all about rodents, mostly rats and mice, but it is a great class if you can get into it. You have to reach out to New York City and the course is free, but you pay for your own attendance and travel, he learned a great deal about those things. It really is about sanitation and exclusion, garbage reduction. Those are the three things you have to think about. Cambridge invested in their own machinery – a machine called BurrowRX – it is for rat burrows specifically, it uses carbon monoxide into the rat burrows to just kill the animal there.

There is no secondary poisoning, the animal dies more or less instantly inside their burrow and it is much better for the environment as far as bioaccumulation goes, it is not a registered pesticide.

NOTE – THE RODENT ACADEMY IS TWICE A YEAR – SPRING AND AUTUMN AND IT IS A 3 DAY EVENT 8:30 – 5:00 IN DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN.

Chairperson Healey – the rodent academy sounds like a really good idea.

Heather Packard – there is a Boston one coming up September 23rd or 24th.

Chairperson Healey – if you can send us that information that would be great. I am also interested in the machinery you mentioned.

Dave Power – I can share BurrowRX or you can look it up online. I think it is several hundred dollars and there is technical training for using this.

Heather Packard – it is really only for rats, because they live in burrows underground, it wouldn't address mice, who live in nests above ground.

Commissioner Wood – Dave, that was really helpful and I feel like there are layers for us to work through as a Board. It appears the first thing is to initially contact the pest management company that NHA contracts with and have a conversation to say – what are your alternatives to SGAR, what would you recommend? Initiate that conversation and then report back to the Board about what they are recommending to do as an interim, like immediate step and then move towards conversation around longer term support that the Board can provide to the Housing Authority around the development of a more comprehensive integrated pest management approach.

Heather Packard – I am curious to know if someone here knows who that company is?

Sharon – Minuteman Pest Control.

MOTION

Commissioner Wood – I move that the Northampton Housing Authority staff contact Minuteman Pest Management Company to request the immediate stopping of use of SGARS and a plan for alternative pesticide use and then to report back to the Board on that initial conversation.

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

VOTING YAY: Chairperson Healey; Vice-Chairperson Tarbutton-Springfield; Commissioner Wood; Commissioner Abrashkin & Commissioner Nash.

ABSENT: Commissioner Jones.

Therefore, Chairperson Healey approved the motion.

Commissioner Nash – I just want to make clear that we are requesting that the NHA administrative side look into things, where that it is Sharon and the other folk's job to come back with a recommendation. Ben, I hear that in your motion, I just want to make sure that we are not ordering them around to do things, that we are asking them to investigate and do their jobs and in turn our job in the end is to make a policy if needed and right now we are in the middle of a collaborative approach here to investigate things and we will figure things out.

Heather Packard – I am more than willing to have a future conversation with you, Sharon and Tony, we can get into the weeds of integrated pest management in more detail.

Vice-Chairperson Tarbutton-Springfield – question on the motion – is sgars used in bedbugs or is that a totally different thing?

Dave Power – no sgar is only in a rodenticide.

Chairperson Healey – I think this should be in the record - we will take a roll call on this and then I think Sharon understands the spirit of the motion and the intent.

Sharon – I do.

Commissioner Wood – I would like at some point a deeper conversation around the IPM practices that Cambridge is using and David if there is something you can send us in the way of written materials that you have compiled over the years about what your approaches are just so we can do some of that reading offline and then consider what is the next step for the Board to want to continue the conversation.

Chairperson Healey – just keep in mind we have a new maintenance team and this is a whole new project that we are addressing, so keeping in mind that these are the folks that are going to be doing the work for us.

Dave Power – absolutely, they are the front line and I would be happy to help just craft something on a regular basis for IPM schedule to look at different things. They are fairly easy to address, you just have to know where to look.

Doug Kierdorf – when I questioned the use of these things I was told by someone that they are particularly effective because the sgars we are talking about, they are effective because the animal over multiple uses will take the poison back to their nest and feed them to their young. That is one of the things that make them so dangerous, but that is the sort of argument that a pest control company will advise because frankly, I think it is just a lot easier to put these things down. When we had a bed bug issue here last year, ORKIN was treating those.

Heather Packard – rats and mice are mammals, so they feed milk to their young, not bait for a month or so. The babies immediately begin foraging for their own meals outside the nest. Mice and rats are not animals that bring food back to the nest the way a bird does, we are familiar with birds feeding dead mice in this case, sometimes poisoned ones to their chicks, that is actually not what is happening. So if you have heard that argument it is false because the only way they feed their babies is milk. I don't know if rodenticide gets in their milk but it is not about a mouse feeding little bits of that to their babies, it is not accurate.

Commissioner Abrashkin – Doug, I too have a cat, actually it has been sort of a disappointment to me, because what it will do is sort of watch a mouse scurry across the floor in the kitchen and then amble over to its food dish and it doesn't really do its job. Now I am glad maybe, because it might have been ingesting something that we don't want it to ingest. The bed bug issue - in a prior life I served as the Executive Director of the Springfield Housing Authority and bed bugs were an enormous problem, we had many companies coming in and employees wearing moon suits just doing extermination and that would last a while and then come back. We spent tons of money trying to control it. What we are doing here now, it is a big problem in its own right, but bed bugs will be a different project, right?

Heather Packard – I am guessing the same pest control company might do both, they can address any pest typically, but it would be totally different solutions.

Commissioner Abrashkin – comment to Ben – what do we do to coordinate the policies we are setting and the practices that we are initiating or following, what do we do to coordinate those with the City of Northampton?

Commissioner Wood – the approach I would suggest is that the Board does some of it's own thinking and reading around IPM practices. The NHA does their own thinking and reading around IPM practices, which, as David is describing, is sort of the comprehensive approach to all pests, not just rodents. Then we can come into a conversation and maybe this is something that NHA staff can tell us what has happened in the past and sort of what the relationships are currently with the Northampton Housing department, but we could come into those conversations a little bit more grounded in some knowledge and approaches and the things we are actually interested in, so that we can then see what the Health Department is willing to do, interested in doing, in terms of collaboration, but I imagine there is already a lot of that happening, so part of it would just be understanding what the current relationship is and what the approaches are.

Commissioner Abrashkin – does anybody here have that information?

Commissioner Wood – if the answer to that is no, then I think it is really incumbent on us to do our own thinking and reading and then set up a meeting with the health department and I do know those folks so I could grease those particular wheels.

Commissioner Abrashkin – that makes sense, I just don't want to lose that part of it, because we are all on the same team.

Heather Packard – there is a movement in Northampton to get a municipal ban on municipal property and a home rule petition to file at the state legislature for all town municipal property, the select board has been copying me on emails. I suspect the board of health will be in that loop as well with them.

Commissioner Wood – you are talking about sgar ban. What we are talking about now is a longer term holistic, collaborative approach to IPM with the health department.

Vice-Chairperson Tarbutton-Springfield – we brought that beautiful cat here, thank you for the milk and all that stuff. My understanding is bed bugs are vampires, they suck blood and a lot of people who had pets here were freaked out about it. A mouse is a pet, it has blood. I know we are talking about two different things, but does that happen here? I agree with folks saying we should have one pest company who could do many things. We had a bed bug person who was here almost every week and tenants here did not know what they were, they just thought bug. We do also want to educate our tenants about what is going on too. Can a bed bug jump on a mouse?

Dave Power – I would say it is uncommon, bed bug wise. Fleas and ticks that is a different story but I think bed bugs are mostly human related, but I wouldn't be able to give you the scientific answer on that. I am more the practical doer guy. If you get to a serious enough problem, they might also encounter your pets, but you would already know that you have an issue and hopefully already addressing it. I think one thing that has come forward, it sounds like there has been a bunch of different companies, maybe different properties, so a streamline process would definitely help you guys – one company, one answer and I am happy to contribute more to that effort.

Commissioner Abrashkin – I would like to clarify the next steps.

Chairperson Healey – it sounds like first, the Housing Authority staff, maintenance and executive staff will speak to the pest control company and gather the information that we talked about, as we asked and think about the problem with bed bugs as well because that was addressed by a different company and bring that to the Board. We may want to have another follow up with Heather with some education in the near future. David has offered to be somewhat of a resource for the overall IPM.

Dave Power – I will share some resources with the group, probably not until Monday because I am nearing the end of my day and then happy to continue to work with you guys to develop a plan.

Heather Packard – if we are sharing resources should it just be on the email chain that we are using, I don't have everybody's email.

Chairperson Healey – I think perhaps email to Patty & Hank at this point. Ben has been in touch with David and they can share information and get back to us as well. Should we have another board meeting addressing this or are people satisfied that we will move toward the Board with more information and then make a decision from there in the next board meeting? Yes, that is what I think as well, rather than duplicating our efforts.

Commissioner Abrashkin – we should put it on the agenda for our next full board meeting, just to update the Board on what we have been doing here, so that everybody will be in the know.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chairperson Tarbutton-Springfield put forth the motion to adjourn the April 3, 2026 meeting at 10:56 a.m. seconded by Chairperson Healey. All were in favor.

