

NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY
REGULAR BOARD MEETINGS,
HIGH ROCK HOMES, LLC BOARD MEETING
MINUTES

Thursday, August 18, 2022

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Reginald C. Foster, Chair
Eleanor Evans, Vice-Chair
Ed Scheideler, Treasurer
Janice Bennett, Commissioner (remote)
Penny Kirk, Commissioner

NHA STAFF PRESENT:

Steve Merritt, Interim Executive Director
& Secretary
Cheryl Gosmon, Assistant Executive
Director
Gary Kuphal, Director of Facilities &
Maintenance
Nayda Sanchez, Director of Leasing &
Occupancy

This is a Hybrid meeting. Chair Foster called the meeting to order at 7:33 pm and called the roll of Commissioners with all reporting present at the August 18, 2022, NHA and High Rock Homes LLC Regular Board meetings. He stated that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by the Secretary of the Needham Housing Authority (NHA) by preparing a Public Notice dated August 12, 2022, setting forth the date, time, and place of this meeting. Said notice was filed with the Clerk of the Town of Needham and provided to persons requesting it. Chair Foster noted that the meeting is being recorded.

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Chair Announcements:

Chair Foster noted that a last-minute announcement came through from DHCD announcing the approval of the waiver for Tenant Commissioner Janice Bennett.

Resident/Community Input:

Sue Biasizzo, speaking on behalf of the Cooks Bridge Tenant Association (CBTA) stated that for July and August the CBTA held two roundtable discussions with a good turnout. She stated that the CBTA will meet with Nayda Sanchez, Director of Leasing and Occupancy, and Steve Merritt to discuss a list of concerns. She also stated that the CBTA will go back to a more formal meeting format in September.

David Shubow stated that he is interested in readymade meal services. He stated that he uses Springwell currently but is interested in the Meals on Wheels program. He asked if the NHA has other resources or options for readymade meal services.

Mr. Steve Merritt responded that Springwell should be able to set up meal services for David and that he should contact the NHA office if he needs assistance.

Ross Donald expressed his appreciation to Cheryl Gosmon for the meeting minutes transcription. He also expressed that he would like to amplify the issue of the rat. He noted that he did not present this observation as a complaint but rather to draw attention to the issue of waste and waste management. He stated that he spoke with the Public Health nurse who visits every third Thursday of the month at Linden/Chambers and she noted that if the town has a rat problem is mostly associated with dumpsters at restaurants where food is thrown in. He noted that it is very similar to the situation at Linden/Chambers with the trash receptacles and the food. He stated that this needs to be pursued in a greater way because there are many ways to handle food waste. He suggested that disposals in kitchen sinks might help mitigate this concern. Ross stated that he will continue to work with the Center at the Heights and their staff who provide more consistent help for residents of Linden/Chambers. Ross requested that Jon Wortman's report be made available to residents. He added that residents are interested in the issues that have been brought up as well as the idea of including residents in the discussion. He also stated that the idea of a resident-centered mission statement and approach is what is needed.

Chair Foster noted that this concern was raised at the last Board meeting and that Commissioner Bennett was charged with the task of looking into it and maybe adding another section that talks about resident roles and responsibilities and that information to the Board.

Commissioner Bennett responded that she did the research. She referred to a clause in the NHA Lease regarding tenant obligations. Commissioner Bennett stated that the rights and responsibilities of the residents are outlined in section IX of the Lease. Commissioner Bennett added that she spoke with Sarah Byrne from the Mel King Institute for Building Community who agreed that it was the right place to research in terms of the responsibilities of the residents. Commissioner Bennett suggested that the Board review the NHA Lease. She stated that she believes that it would be the Board's responsibility to change anything in terms of input from residents. She added that maybe this task could be reassigned to the Tenant Organization.

Chair Foster thanked Commissioner Bennett for her research. He stated that the degrees in freedom to change the lease are very narrow and the Jon Wortman report is not a legal document but rather a statement on ways to interact with each other and who's responsible for what. He suggested that the Board take the work Commissioner Bennett has done and at the next meeting draft a section on resident rules and responsibilities and consider adding it to the Jon Wortman document. He stated that the Board would continue with this action item and suggested that Cheryl and Steve draft an outline for the Board's consideration at the next meeting. Commissioner Bennett suggested that language on the NHA's responsibilities to residents be included as well.

Jessica Reese, President of the CBTA was in attendance and Sue Biasizzo gave the CBTA update.

A. Discussion/Approval Items – NHA & High Rock Homes LLC:

1. NHA Bill/Check Warrant
Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Kirk to approve the check register listed on the Warrant dated August 18, 2022, in the amount of \$310,072.80.

Discussion: Commissioner Kirk had a question about a vendor and carpet replacement. Gary Kuphal responded that the vendor was replacing flooring, not carpeting. A general discussion followed.

Chair Foster called the roll of Commissioners in favor of this motion:

Commissioner Foster votes, aye; Commissioner Evans, aye; Commissioner Kirk, aye; Commissioner Scheideler, aye; and Commissioner Bennett, aye.

The motion carried. The vote was unanimous 5-0.

2. HRH LLC Bill/Check Warrant

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to approve the High Rock Homes, LLC check register listed on the Warrant dated August 18, 2022, in the amount of \$27,558.38.

Chair Foster called the roll of Commissioners in favor of this motion:

Commissioner Foster votes, aye; Commissioner Evans, aye; Commissioner Kirk, aye; Commissioner Scheideler, aye; and Commissioner Bennett, aye.

The motion carried. The vote was unanimous 5-0.

3. Review & Approval -- Board Minutes:

7/21/2022 NHA, and HRH LLC Regular Board Meeting

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Kirk and seconded by Commissioner Scheideler to approve the Minutes of July 21, 2022, NHA, & HRH LLC Board meetings as amended.

Commissioner Kirk noted that 164 Chambers should be changed to 164 Linden Street.

Chair Foster called the roll of Commissioners in favor of this motion:

Commissioner Foster votes, aye; Commissioner Evans, aye; Commissioner Kirk, aye; Commissioner Scheideler, aye; and Commissioner Bennett, aye.

The motion carried. The vote was unanimous 5-0.

B. Interim Executive Director's Report

1. Monthly Financial Report

Mr. Merritt presented the Accounting Compilation Report and Quarterly Financials prepared by Milne, Shaw & Robillard, P.C., as of June 30, 2022. He provided a brief report, noting that there are no significant changes.

Chair Foster referred to the quarterly report. He noted that Linden/Chambers's total revenue is \$429.97 per unit, per month (PUM), adding that there are 152 units, and the operating subsidy is \$134.80 per unit, per month. He stated that 68% is revenue and 32% is the operating subsidy. He also noted that total expenses are \$440.85 per unit, per month totaling \$402,058.00 leaving a net deficit of -\$9,929.00. Chair Foster stated that more subsidy is needed. He pointed out that the people who are paying rents in the Linden/Chambers

development are paying extremely low rents for apartments in the Needham area, and really need the housing help.

2. Mr. Merritt presented the monthly management report. He reported that the monthly vacancies at the end of July, are down by six. Mr. Merritt commended Nayda Sanchez, Director of Leasing and Occupancy her very hard work in filling the vacant units. Mr. Merritt also presented a brief report on work orders which are going very well.
3. Mr. Merritt presented the personnel report. He reported that personnel changes include two new hires: Resident Service Coordinator, Laurie Blake and Maintenance Mechanic/Laborer Trainee, William Goffredo. Mr. Merritt also reported that Daniel Mann gave his two-week notice on August 1, 2022.
4. Mr. Merritt referred to a notice from HUD that acknowledges the receipt of the NHA's Audit Report prepared by Marcum LLC for the fiscal year 2020. He stated that the report contains no audit findings.
5. Mr. Merritt asked Gary Kuphal, Director of Facilities and Maintenance to present an update on the Linden Chambers camera issues. Mr. Kuphal stated that the cameras are installed, and everything is up and running but that the Wi-Fi from one building to another is not strong enough. He stated that the contractor is planning to install a new antenna which will cover a larger area.
6. Bank Issues: Mr. Merritt presented forms to the Board to capture signatures for check writing. He stated that the NHA's software can put the signatures on the checks. Mr. Merritt explained how it works. He stated that the Board would approve the bill schedule for routine bills. He added that this process would enable the NHA to pay its vendors in a timely manner. Mr. Merritt noted that the NHA has started a purchase order system and that no bills would be paid without his signature on a purchase order. A comprehensive discussion followed. Chair Foster suggested that the Board would continue their consideration of this matter at the September Board meeting.
7. Mission Statement Discussion
Mr. Merritt stated that is a standing agenda item and that no decisions have been made on this item to date.
8. Mr. Merritt reported that Maria Iriti the landlord for the NHA administrative office at 21 Highland Circle is requiring electronic payments which is part of her original agreement with the NHA. He stated that the NHA will pay Maria Iriti electronically as of September 1, 2022.

Mr. Merritt reported that he met with TD Bank, and they are preparing a proposal for the NHA's review. He stated that he will share this information with the Board once it comes in, adding that there will be a saving to the NHA of no monthly fees.

9. Mr. Merritt referred to the article in the Board Packet on Easing the Use of Funds for Affordable Housing Development. He stated that the article refers to using streamlined resources which could facilitate the use of funding sources for affordable housing construction and preservation at a time when rising costs and interest rates continue to present challenges for financial feasibility.

Chair Foster stated that he reviewed the article. He stated that the article refers to using ARPA funding to pay against debt service which would be a good use to facilitate affordable housing construction and preservation.

10. Mr. Merritt reported on upcoming events which include a cookout at the Linden/Chambers development on Tuesday, August 30, 2022. Mr. Merritt also reported that there will be a cookout on September 13, 2022, hosted by the Needham Police Department celebrating the opening of the Cook's Community Center and the Cooks After School Program. Mr. Merritt reminded the Commissioners and the listening public of the upcoming public hearing to review the NHA's Annual State Plan for the fiscal year 2023 which will be held at Linden/Chambers on Thursday, September 15, 2022, at 7 pm.
11. Mr. Merritt reported that he is developing an Incident Report template for the Board's consideration. He stated that this will be a report that residents and staff can use.

C. Search Committee Status Update: New Executive Director Search

Mr. Merritt reported that he spoke with Rick Leco D & V Association on the status of the search for a new Executive Director. He stated that advertising for this position will go into the National NAHRO monitor.

D. Status Updates – External Initiatives:

1. Housing Plan Working Group

Commissioner Scheideler stated that the Housing Plan Working Group received the state's final draft on the Multi-Family Zoning Requirements for MBTA Communities.

Commissioner Scheideler spoke about what this means for Needham. He stated that the new requirement for every MBTA community is to have at least one zoning district in which multi-family housing is allowed as of right, and which is located near a transit station, if applicable.

Chair Foster stated that he commented on the Housing Plan Working Group's interim draft document on the priority needs of an individual citizen and sent them to the co-chairs. He proposed a special meeting of the Board to discuss the draft and prepare a statement on the Board's suggestions for changes and or improvements. A brief discussion followed.

2. Preservation & Redevelopment Initiative (PRI)

- **Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) Report**

Chair Foster summarized the CHA report relative to the Intergovernmental Agreement between NHA and CHA on Task Order 1, Work Items 1-4. Chair Foster suggested that the Board convene a special meeting to discuss Task Order 1 and the subsequent Work Items.

- Linden/Chambers A/E Designer FRS – status update
Chair Foster stated that the RFS was posted on August 3, 2022, and the deadline for respondents to submit proposals is August 24, 2022. He stated that he attended a Coffee at Linden/Chambers on August 9th to talk with residents and answer their questions on the PRI and the RFS. He stated that it was a great turnout and residents had a lot of questions. Chair Foster stated that on Thursday, August 11, 2022, designers/architects participated in an Open House at Linden/Chambers to hear information on the PRI and to walk the site. Chair Foster distributed copies of a schedule outlining the timeframe for the NHA Local Designer Selection Committee’s work.
- Appointment of Chad Reilly to the Local Selection Committee (LSC)
Chair Foster summarized the circumstances that led to the selection of Chad Reilly to the LSC. He stated that Mr. Reilly comes highly recommended and that he is seeking the Board’s approval to nominate Mr. Reilly to the LSC. A brief discussion followed.
Motion and Vote
Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Kirk to appoint Chad Reilly to Linden/Chambers LSC.
Chair Foster called the roll of Commissioners in favor of this motion:
Commissioner Foster votes, aye; Commissioner Evans, aye; Commissioner Kirk, aye; Commissioner Scheideler, aye; and Commissioner Bennett, aye.
The motion carried. The vote was unanimous 5-0.
- Review/Approve – 2021-2023 PRI Budget
Chair Foster spoke about the work that has gone into developing the PRI Budget. He asked the Board to consider a special meeting to review and vote on the 2021-2023 PRI Budget. After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Board to meet on Tuesday, August 30th at 7 pm. Chair Foster asked the Board to consider a second special meeting to review repositioning strategies for Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive as well as discuss the conditions of High Rock Estates. After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Board to meet on Monday, September 12th at 7 pm.

E. Status Update – Internal Initiatives:

1. Recommendation of RCAT to Approve low bidder, Laracy Electrical Contractors, Inc, for Intercom Panel Replacement at Chambers Street (FISH # 203088)
Mr. Merritt provided a summary on the recommendation of Laracy Electrical Contractors, Inc. as the low bidder for Intercom Panel Replacement at Chambers Street. A brief discussion followed.
Motion and Vote
Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Kirk to award the contract for Intercom Panel Replacement at Chambers Street in the amount of \$14,300.00 to Laracy Electrical Contractors, Inc.
Chair Foster called the roll of Commissioners in favor of this motion:
Commissioner Foster votes, aye; Commissioner Evans, aye; Commissioner Kirk, aye; Commissioner Scheideler, aye; and Commissioner Bennett, aye.

The motion carried. The vote was unanimous 5-0.

2. Report from the Cooks After School (CAS) Steering Committee (Janice Bennett, Penny Kirk, Jessica Reese, Cheryl Gosmon, and Steve Merritt)
Commissioner Kirk provided a brief update on the activities of the CAS Steering Committee. Commissioner Bennett provided an update on fundraising efforts as well as donations that have been received. Gary Kuphal stated that he spoke with Lisa Vergara of Story Time Crafts and that her organization would like to donate 50 full bags of school supplies to the families at Captain Robert Cook Drive and High Rock Estates. The conversation veered to a brief discussion on the position description for the manager of the CAS program. Mr. Merritt stated that the manager of the CAS would be an employee of the NHA, and the position would be a part-time position. Mr. Merritt stated that the CAS program budget is coming together. He stated that he would have more details for the Board at the next NHA Board meeting. Mr. Merritt noted that he has asked parents to complete a permission form as opposed to completing a registration form. He referred to the statute and noted that children are not required to register for the program. A general discussion followed.
3. Restoration of Community Center at 28 CRCD
Mr. Merritt reported that the restoration of the community room at 28 CRCD has been completed. He noted that the CAS Steering Committee held their meeting there on August 11, 2022, and today August 18th. Chair Foster and the Board expressed their appreciation to Gary Kuphal and the NHA maintenance team for their hard work in completing this project as quickly as they did. A general conversation followed on plans to have a reopening ceremony in the community room.
4. Plan to return Unit 42 CRCD to service - **In Process**
Steve Merritt provided an update on this item. He stated that Gary and his team are in the process of getting the unwanted items out of the unit and would begin their process of renovating this space for a family of up to eight people.
5. Paving Project – Seabeds Way and CRCD.
Gary Kuphal stated that he is working to find an engineer to design the scope of the project. Mr. Merritt stated that there will be some patching of the areas in the interim.
6. Seabeds Way/CRCD CCTV System Begins Spring/Fall of 2022
Mr. Merritt reported that Ms. Gosmon is working with Gary Kuphal to find a contractor and an engineer to design the project. A report on this will be given at the next Board meeting.

F. New Business:

1. 2022 NHA Resident Survey
Chair Foster recapped history on the initiation of the Resident Survey. He spoke about the development of the next survey, as well as its relevance as well as importance in terms of soliciting information from our residents on how we can

improve on services and programs that would help improve their experiences as residents of Needham Housing Authority.

2. Guidelines for Resident Input at Board Meetings.

Mr. Merritt presented a draft guideline on resident input at Board meetings for the Board's consideration. Commissioner Scheideler spoke about his conversation with Mr. Merritt regarding the importance of ensuring that the resident voice is heard. A brief discussion followed.

G. Adjournment

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Kirk to adjourn the NHA and HRH LLC Board meeting at 10:00 pm.

Chair Foster called the roll of Commissioners in favor of this motion:

Commissioner Foster votes, aye; Commissioner Evans, aye; Commissioner Kirk, aye; Commissioner Scheideler, aye; and Commissioner Bennett, aye.

The motion carried. The vote was unanimous 5-0.

Minutes Prepared by

Cheryl Gosmon