

**NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
July 16, 2020 07:30 PM
HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM**

ROLL CALL BY VICE-CHAIR FOSTER TO CONVENE THE REGULAR MEETING

ROLL CALL TO CONVENE THE MEETINGS

COMMISSIONERS:

Chair Reginald C. Foster
Vice-Chair Karen Hughey
Treasurer Eleanor Evans
Commissioner Penny Kirk
Commissioner Ed Scheideler

NHA STAFF:

Angie Medeiros, Executive Director

Chair Foster declared that a quorum was present, and that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by the Secretary of the Needham Housing Authority (NHA) by preparing a Public Notice dated July 15, 2020 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

AGENDA – REGULAR NHA BOARD & HRH LLC MEETINGS

CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Chair Foster made all attendees aware that there will be an executive session at the end of the regular meeting and stated that the Board would adjourn thereafter. Except for the NHA Commissioners, staff and attorney, all will be asked to log out of the Zoom meeting.

The Chair recognized Commissioner Kirk to describe an eMail received yesterday from the Needham Community Preservation Committee (CPC) chairman Peter Pingitore. The eMail contained five questions that the CPC would like the NHA to respond to. Mrs. Kirk summarized the July 8, 2020 CPC meeting regarding using CPA funds for an emergency rental assistance program for Needham residents who are having difficulty paying their rents due to the pandemic. After some discussion, Chair Foster pointed out that this topic was not officially on the agenda for tonight and, in any case, the NHA would probably need more information on the proposed program before offering any opinions. The matter was tabled for consideration at the August regular NHA Board meeting.

RESIDENT/TENANT INPUT:

Resident Sue Biasizzo stated it is difficult to get into the Zoom meeting, and that a number of others are having problems too. It would be nice to know who else is attending the meeting. Ms. Biasizzo noted for all that Beth Israel Hospital-Needham has Covid-19 testing availability, but you need a referral from your PCP. Ms. Biasizzo wanted to know how the pandemic is affecting

the housing of new tenants. Ms. Medeiros responded the pandemic is not affecting the housing new tenants.

Resident Ilene Hoffman commented about the difficulties getting into the meeting. Chair Foster wondered whether we need to do more Zoom training. Ms. Hoffman went on to comment that the people who were hired to fix the concrete did a terrible job. Ms. Medeiros responded that Mr. Kuphal is aware of the problems, and that maintenance staff are taking care of it. Ms. Hoffman then commented that it is a mistake to destroy the old files. Ms. Hoffman further commented that the community room should be available for heat wave weather relief, but now and that the locks have been changed, residents have nowhere to go if they are having problems with their a/c. Ms. Medeiros reminded everyone that the community rooms were closed for pandemic safety reasons, but would set up new procedures to open the community rooms for cooling during heat waves. Ms. Hoffman moved on to offer her comments and concerns about the new fee policy.

Ross Donald wanted to make a couple points including about 164 Linden, opening the office and to continuing to do drawings that are there from 18-20 years ago. He made comments about a survey list such as announcements and discussions. Mr. Donald would also like to know the list of best practices for the Authority, and the NHA response to the health department survey. Chair Foster volunteered to send the documents to him. Mr. Donald would like more information about gardening and promoting people's independent styles instead of having people conforming to one style.

DISCUSSION/APPROVAL AGENDA ITEMS

1. Information: Covid 19 Status Update

ED Medeiros reported that things have stabilized, and that there is no material new news. Maintenance is continuing the enhances cleaning program.

2. Information: NHA Executive Director Annual Report for 2019-2020

Chair Foster reminded the Board that the Annual Report delivery was postponed from last month's Annual Meeting due to Covid-19 priorities. Ms. Medeiros summarized the contents of the report and opened the floor to questions from the Commissioners

Mrs. Kirk would like clarification of the charge list. Ms. Medeiros explained she lowered the prices for many services such lock outs etc., and rationalized other charges. Only one charge was increase, which was for violating the non-smoking policy. Chair Foster thanked Ms. Medeiros for her work and noted the amount of time she put into cleaning up the charges.

3. Approval: Donation of \$5,000 to the Cooks Afterschool Program for 2020

Ms. Medeiros noted that in recent years, the Authority has donated \$5,000/year to the afterschool program to fund incidental expenses. Chair Foster believes that for a small amount of money,

there are a lot of benefits for our tenants' children. Mrs. Kirk said that if we raise more money and she believes the program would get better and better.

RESOLUTION #2020-101 to approve the donation of \$5,000 to the Cooks Afterschool Program for 2020

Upon a motion duly made by Chair Foster, and seconded by Treasurer Mrs. Evans, it was unanimously approved by vote of 5-0 in favor.

4. Approval: Certificate of Final Completion of Linden Street Roofs Project

Ms. Medeiros noted that this project had been satisfactorily completed, and that she recommended releasing the final payment to the contractor.

RESOLUTION #2020-102 to approve Final Completion of the Linden roofs project

Upon a motion duly made by Vice-Chair Mrs. Hughey, and seconded by Mrs. Kirk, it was unanimously approved by vote of 5-0 in favor.

5. Information & Discussion: Destruction of old and obsolete files

ED Medeiros kicked off the discussion by stating the during the cleanup of 164 Linden Street, a large quantity of old, obsolete files had been discovered. Ms. Medeiros checked with DHCD who gave her state guidelines for which files must be retained and which can be destroyed. Any such records disposal action must be approved by the Board of Commissioners. Representative Denise Garlick asked to be recognized and stated that she thought that, even if permitted by state law/regulation, it was a bad idea to destroy any old/obsolete records before the current state audits are completed.

Chair Foster agreed with the opinion voiced by Rep. Garlick. He too doesn't think it is a good idea to destroy any files until all pending investigations of the NHA are complete finished. Even then, he would want to make sure we have written signoffs from both DHCD, HUD and all other interested parties. Commissioner Evans commented that'd be a good idea for the NHA to approve a records retention policy, as required by statute/regulation.

Chair Foster also noted that earlier this afternoon, the NHA had received a FOIA request from the Needham Times. The request asked for all the records to be provided. It could be an enormous task to copy all the records, then redact them (blackout all personally identifying information and other confidential sensitive information.) NHA staff needs to figure out how to get this done within the response requirements dictated by the Freedom of Information Act.

Given the discussion, Ms. Medeiros assured the Board that the obsolete records would be preserved and stored securely. No further efforts to destroy them will be made without express , advance Board approval.

6. Information & Discussion: Proposal for bi-monthly warrant/check issuance process

ED Medeiros recommended that the NHA checks get approved and signed bi-weekly, rather than our current monthly cycle. In between monthly Board meetings, two Commissioners would

designate to the task of review/signing, with the associated warrant being ratified by the Board at the next regular Board meeting. Ms. Medeiros had checked with counsel who'd confirmed this approach allowable under Mass. statute/regulation. A bi-weekly cycle is more consistent with common practice at public housing authorities, and is fairer to our vendors. Ms. Medeiros also believes it will be easier on all parties to have less checks to sign. Mrs. Kirk expressed agreement with Ms. Medeiros' proposal. Mrs. Hughey added that, when in-person Board meetings resume, she'd like to discontinue the practice of signing the checks during the meetings, since it can distract Commissioner attention from matters being discussed. Otherwise Mrs. Hughey too is in favor of the proposal. For the in-between check signing cycle, Commissioner Scheideler wondered if some sort of limit per check would be appropriate, say \$20,000. Any checks for greater than the limit would require full Board approval prior to signing. Otherwise, Mr. Schneider supports the proposal as well, especially if vendors do not have to wait weeks for payment. Chair Foster noted that checks of this size were infrequent; the routine ones involved payments on the HRH mortgage or payments to Eversource or the Town of Needham. Other large checks are tied to other Board approval items, such as the certificate of final complete we approved earlier tonight. The in-between check signers would use their discretion as to whether to sign a check, or wait until the next Board meeting

In conclusion, the Commissioners unanimously endorsed the proposal, but since it is an administrative matter, did not think a Board resolution was needed to formally approve it.

7. Information: Citizens Bank forms to add new commissioners as authorize signees

Chair Foster noted that is the NHA practice to enable any two Commissions to sign checks. This provides coverage in case of illness, vacation or absence. Ms. Medeiros has necessary forms for Commissioners Evans and Scheideler to sign.

8. Information: Future Use of 164 Linden Street

ED Medeiros stated that the cleanup and repair of the building is still in progress. Ms. Medeiros encouraged all parties with ideas for its future use to get back to her with their proposals.

9. Information: Training for New Commissioners

The invitations to the DHCD/UMass training and the state ethics training have been received. Chair Foster encouraged new commissioners to complete these online training modules at their earliest convenience. After this is completed, the Board can discuss if there's further training we should consider.

10. Information: Launch of Operation Cleanup

ED Medeiros wanted to let the Board know of a new initiative to clean up our properties and make them as attractive and liveable as possible.

11. Status Update: New Admissions & Continued Occupancy Policy

Our consultant still continues to be MIA with a personal problem. ED Medeiros hopes to have a better answer from the consultant next week.

12. Approval: Lawn and Garden Policy

The Board provided comments on the new proposed Lawn and Garden Policy. Mr. Scheideler thinks that it could be unfair that people with low income who cannot afford a lawnmower yet could be fined if they don't maintain their yards. He suggested the NHA consider buying loaner equipment for the tenants to share. Ms. Hughey speculated that it'd create a legal liability problem if the NHA provided equipment for residents to use. Questions also came up noting that the proposed policy did not clearly explain which provisions apply to High Rock tenants (e. g. who are required to maintain their yards under their leases) and which provisions apply to Linden/Chambers tenants (e. g. NHA Maintenance staff maintain these yards.) Also, where does the Seabeds and Cook properties fit it? Chair Foster proposed that we table the resolution to approve the policy tonight, pending further drafting to address the issues which have been raised.

13. Approval: Pest Control Policy

ED Medeiros presented the proposed Pest Control Policy and the reasons why it is needed. The Commissioners had no questions.

RESOLUTION #2020-104 to Approve NHA pest control policy:

Upon a motion duly made by Vice-Chair Hughey, and seconded by commissioner Mr. Scheideler, it was unanimously approved by vote of 5-0 in favor.

14. Executive Director's Report, Financial Report, Vacancy Report

Chair Foster asked if anyone has questions for Ms. Medeiros on these reports. Three were none.

15. Approval: Minutes of Prior Board Meeting

Chair Foster stated that due to an oversight, the draft minutes for the 6/18/2030 Executive session had not been completed. He asked if there were any changes or corrections to the remaining three sets of minutes, and there were none.

RESOLUTION #2020-105 to approve Minutes of the following NHA Board Meetings:

- 6/18/2020 Annual Meeting
- 8/18/2020 Regular Meeting
- 6/18/2020 High Rock Homes LLC Minutes

Upon a motion duly made by Chair Foster and seconded by Vice-Chair Mrs. Hughey it was unanimously approved vote of 5-0 in favor with the amendments.

16. NHA Bill/Check Warrant

Chair Foster asked if there were any questions with regard to the payments being considered tonight. There were none.

RESOLUTION #2020-105 to approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant dated July186, 2020 in the amount of \$251.629.13 as follows:

Section 8: 117 vouchers..... \$126,014.37

Payroll checks (6/24/2020) #501602-#50161.....\$20,815.86
 Payroll checks (7/8/2020) #501616-#501631.....\$20,874.88
 A/P Checks (7/14/2020) #32764-#32768..... \$83,924.02

Upon a motion duly made by Chair Foster and seconded by Vice-Chair Mrs. Hughey it was unanimously approved by vote of 5-0 in favor.

17. Approval: HRH LLC Bill/Check Warrant

Chair Foster asked if there were any questions with regard to the payments being considered tonight. There were none.

RESOLUTION #HRH2020-27

To approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant dated June 18, 2020 in the amount of \$ 39,121.74 as follows:

A/P Checks (6/18/2020) #3025-#3033.....\$ 39,121.74

Upon a motion duly made by Chair Mr. Foster and seconded by Vice-Chair Mrs. Hughey it was unanimously approved by vote of 5-0 in favor.

18. RESOLUTION #2020-106 to enter Executive Session

To discuss strategy with respect to litigation, the nature of which cannot be publicly disclosed because it would compromise the purpose of the executive session. Following the executive session, the Board will adjourn for the evening.

A motion duly made by Chair Foster and seconded by Mrs. Hughey. Chair Foster proceeded with a roll call vote as follows:

Chair Reg Foster	voted aye
Vice-Chair Karen Hughey	voted aye
Treasurer Eleanor Evans	voted aye
Commissioner Penny Kirk	voted aye
Commissioner Ed Scheideler	voted aye

The Board continued in Executive Session, then adjourned for the evening thereafter