

**NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY
HIGH ROCK HOMES, LLC
BOARD MEETINGS
AMENDED MINUTES**

Thursday, July 20, 2023

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

NHA STAFF PRESENT:

Cheryl Gosmon, Exec. Director
Nayda Sanchez, Leasing (Remote)

This was a Hybrid meeting. Chair Foster called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m. He called the roll of Commissioners with all reporting present on Thursday, July 20, 2023, for the Needham Housing Authority (NHA) and High Rock Homes (HRH) LLC Regular Board meeting. He noted that the Secretary of the NHA provided adequate notice of this meeting by preparing a Public Notice dated July 14, 2023, 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 people requesting it.

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Announcements from the Chair:

There were no announcements from the Chair.

Resident/Community Input:

Sue Biasizzo reported that the Cook's Bridge Tenant's Association (CBTA) struggles to maintain its membership. She pointed out that she has contacted the Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Tenants, who are reorganizing themselves and are understaffed. She added that she has contacted the League of Women Voters of Needham for suggestions on how the CBTA can kickstart its association. She stated that the CBTA knows how important it is to develop a partnership with the housing authority and that she would hate to see the CBTA disband because of a lack of membership.

Commissioner Bennett stated that she received an email from the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Tenants that there will be a forum at the Quincy Housing Authority to help form a Local Tenant Organization (LTO) and that residents from other housing authorities are welcome to attend. Commissioner Bennett stated that she would be willing to bring members from the CBTA to this meeting. A general discussion followed.

Helen Giragosian, speaking on behalf of the Chambers Street Garden Club, which has approximately members, stated that the club is very successful. She thanked the Needham Rotary Club, the Needham Police Department, and the Needham Housing Authority for their contributions and support. She stated that she would like to have something in writing regarding the redevelopment of Linden and Chambers so that the raised gardens would continue.

Chair Foster responded that he could assure Ms. Giragosian that the raised gardens are in the conceptual design and will remain as the process moves toward schematic design.

Ms. Giragosian also stated that she is embarking on a campaign to educate residents on their rights regarding the redevelopment of Linden and Chambers. A general discussion followed.

Ross Donald reported that he has also reached out to the Mass Union of Public Housing Tenants. He noted that this organization has a great deal of material to share with residents on how to start a Local Tenant Organization. He shared his thoughts on how to engage residents in the process. He stated that he is working on restoring 164 Linden Street to a community space rather than a storage space for the housing authority. He stated that he would like to collaborate with the CBTA to share information on forming an LTO for Linden and Chambers. He stated that he is working on a flyer to help get the word out and to encourage resident participation. He added that he is scheduling a series of meetings to promote the formation of an LTO for Linden and Chambers.

Carol Briggs commented that she would like to see a transportation program started at the housing authority. She stated the Town offers a service, but it is mainly for medical appointments. She said she would like something more geared toward shopping and other activities.

A. Review & Approval:

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 July 20, 2023, in the amount of \$385,763.94.

Discussion: Commissioner Scheideler referred to Steve Merritt's contract and scope of services. He commented on the expenses associated with meeting attendance. He questioned the compensation to Mr. Merritt for meetings that he attended for which both the Chair and Executive Director were also in attendance. He asked if the expense was necessary.

Chair Foster commented that two regular meetings occur weekly. One is the meeting with BH+A on the redevelopment of Linden and Chambers, and the other is a biweekly meeting with the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA), where everything comes together for management, coordination, and prioritization purposes. He added that these are status meetings, and sometimes, the Executive Director cannot attend the meetings.

Commissioner Scheideler asked the other Commissioner for their thoughts.

Vice-Chair Evans stated that Mr. Merritt was brought on to assist the Executive Director. If the Executive Director wants Mr. Merritt to attend these meetings, the Board should defer to the Executive Director as she is responsible for the agency's day-to-day operations.

Ms. Gosmon commented that she does not generally consult with Mr. Merritt and does not feel it necessary for him to attend the NHA business meetings as a paid consultant.

Chair Foster suggested that Mr. Merritt attend the Board meeting as a private contractor only if invited by the Executive Director. He noted that Mr. Merritt is welcome to participate in Board meetings voluntarily as a member of the public. Chair Foster explained the importance of having the client present at the PRI meetings, meaning himself, the Executive Director, or both. A general discussion followed.

It was the consensus of the Board that the motion be withdrawn.

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

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

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

HRH LLC Bill/Check Warrant

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Kirk to approve the High Rock Homes, LLC check register listed on the Warrant dated July 20, 2023, in the amount of \$38,297.34.

Discussion: None

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

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

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

B. Review & Approval -- Board Minutes

1. 6/1/2023 NHA Special Board Meeting

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Kirk and seconded by Commissioner Scheideler to approve the 6/1/2023 NHA Special Board Meeting as submitted.

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

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

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

2. 6/15/2023 NHA & HRH Regular Board Meeting

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Kirk and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to approve the 6/15/2023 NHA & HRH Regular Board Meeting as amended.

Discussion: Chair Foster pointed out the inaccuracies of the minutes. Chair Foster recommended that this item be tabled until the minutes can be updated to reflect the corrective action recommendation by the EOHLIC. It was the consensus of the Board to table this item until the next Board meeting.

C. HRH Audit – Final Report

Chair Foster opened this item for discussion. He referred to the cover letter from Marcum, LLP. He pointed out that problems are noted, and it is recommended that the Board follow up with the Executive Director. Ms. Gosmon reported that she had had several conversations with Timothy Marciante, Senior Accountant for Marcum, LLP. Ms. Gosmon stated that Marcum is exceptionally responsive and has given me a great deal of time explaining the audit report and answering her questions. Ms. Gosmon summarized Finding 2022-001 – Material Weakness. She pointed out that she has hired a financial specialist who is assisting the NHA with addressing corrective actions for this finding. She provided a summary of Finding 2022-002 – Significant Deficiency. She explained that this finding was related to not filing the annual financial statement promptly to MHFA. Ms. Gosmon noted that Finding 2022-003 – Significant Deficiency is related to a security deposit deposited into the wrong account but corrected.

Chair Foster noted that Marcum is working on the NHA Audit and that upon completion of the NHA Audit, he will invite Timothy Marciante to a future meeting to report on the audits.

D. NHA Violence Against Woman Act Policy - Review

Chair Foster opened this item for discussion—a brief discussion followed on comments from the RAB. Chair Foster noted that the policy was well written and that the Board could vote on the policy at this meeting.

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Bennett and seconded by Commissioner Kirk to approve the NHA Violence Against Woman Act Policy as submitted.

Discussion: None

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

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

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

E. Information & Discussion: Executive Director’s Report

1. Monthly Financial Report – May 2023

Ms. Gosmon presented the Monthly Financial Report from Milne, Shaw & Robillard, P.C., Certified Public Accountants/Management Consultants. A brief discussion followed on how expenses are allocated across the various programs.

2. Monthly Management Report

Ms. Gosmon presented the Monthly Management Report. A brief discussion followed.

3. NHA Five-Year Plan Update

Ms. Gosmon provided an update on the NHA Five-Year Plan. She stated that the RAB will meet with residents at a resident meeting at the end of July. Ms. Gosmon noted that the Draft NHA Five-Year Plan is posted on the NHA website in the office, and copies are available to residents in the Seabeds Way Community

Room. Ms. Gosmon expressed her appreciation to the RAB. She stated that she is very grateful for their commitment to this process.

Chair Foster noted that this is a critical path item for the PRI. He stated that the NHA Five-Year Plan will be submitted as part of the RAD application package.

4. Hiring a Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Coordinator – Informational Item
Ms. Gosmon reported on this item. She stated that she has hired a phenomenal FSS Coordinator. She noted that a copy of the job description is included in the Board Packet.
5. Needham Housing Authority 75th Anniversary – Update
Ms. Gosmon reported that a committee had been formed to plan the 75th Anniversary celebration.
6. Any other issues/updates of the NHA
Ms. Gosmon reported on the meeting with Caitlin Johnson, Housing Specialist from HUD.

F. Status Updates – Preservation & Redevelopment Initiative (PRI)

1. Linden/Chambers Redevelopment Project
Chair Foster led the discussion on this item. He stated that the Conceptual Design for the redevelopment of Linden and Chambers was completed on June 30th. Chair Foster distributed copies of the report to the Board, including a copy of the conceptual design. He stated that the project is moving into the schematic design phase. He noted that Phase 1A and 1B are 144 apartments, 72 in each building. Chair Foster reported that a series of Public Hearings will occur in the fall, where the Schematic Design will be presented to the Planning Board for comment. He stated that there will be more public meetings in January involving zoning, all of which will lead to Town Meeting 2024. He noted that this is a \$50M project to complete Phase 1A and 1B.
2. Seabeds/Cook Preservation & Modernization Project
Chair Foster reported that the Selection Committee for Architect and Engineering Firms for repositioning Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive is winding down. The Board will receive a report on this at its next monthly meeting. A general discussion followed.
3. Legal Services RFP
Chair Foster reported on this item. He stated that Vice-Chair Evans, Jonathan Driscoll, and Ms. Gosmon will interview Firms and Attorneys to Support NHA Development Partner Negotiations. Chair Foster summarized the timeline.

G. Status Update – Internal Initiatives

1. Roofing Replacement Project at CRCD – Update

Ms. Gosmon reported that the project is progressing very nicely. The contractor and his crew are doing a great job.

2. Paving Project at SBW & CRCD – Update

Ms. Gosmon reported on this item. She stated that she is working on securing a civil engineer/architect for this project. She added that she will update the Board at the August meeting.

4. Unit 42 – CRCD – Update

Ms. Gosmon reported that this project is moving along. She added that she has a plumber in place to work on the repairs for this unit. She stated that she is meeting with a general contractor regarding other repairs to the unit and will give a status update at the August meeting.

H. New Business

Chair Foster asked the Board to consider a Special Meeting in August to consider Attorneys and Firms to Support NHA Development Partner Negotiations and to review the recommendations made by the Selection Committee for an A/E firm for the Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive repositioning. A general discussion followed.

I. Adjournment

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Scheideler and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to adjourn the July 20, 2023, NHA and HRH LLC Board meeting at 10:10 pm.

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

Commissioner Foster votes aye; Commissioner Evans votes aye; Commissioner Scheideler votes aye; Commissioner Kirk votes aye.

The motion carried. The vote was unanimous, 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Cheryl Gosmon
July 20, 2023