

NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

NHA Regular Board Meeting

Thursday July 15, 2021, 7:30PM

MINUTES

ROLL CALL BY CHAIR FOSTER TO CONVENE THE REGULAR MEETING

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chair Reginald C. Foster

Vice Chair Eleanor Evans

Treasurer Ed Scheideler

Commissioner Penny Kirk

Commissioner Janice Bennett

NHA STAFF PRESENT:

Angie Medeiros, Executive Director

The Chair opened by stating 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 13, 2021, 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'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Chair Foster reminded everyone that, per our discussion last month, the Board is meeting tonight and in August is via Zoom, and that we plan to do the September meeting in-person. All meetings will start at 7:30pm.

RESIDENT/TENANT INPUT

Chair Foster asked if there were any residents who wished to speak. There were none.

STATUS UPDATE, DISCUSSION & APPROVAL ITEMS – NHA & HIGH ROCK HOMES LLC:

1. Discussion of Need to Schedule Board Training session on the following topics:
 - Open Meeting Law MGL Chapter 30A, §§18-25
 - Conflict of Interest Law MGL Chapter 268A, applicable sections

- Rules of Procedure for NHA Board meetings
- Board Training – Scheduling thereof

Chair Foster noted that last month's meeting had not gone as well as all commissioners had wished. Although he believed that everyone had the best of intentions, we all expressed quite different views on the role of the Board and we didn't seem to be on the same page as to how we should be performing our oversight and fiduciary responsibilities. Chair Foster had ruled that a motion was out of order, something he has never done before, and he was not sure he'd made the right call. At the end of last month's meeting, Chair Foster promised to think through what had occurred and attempt to propose a constructive way forward. His recommendation: we should schedule ASAP a Board training session on the topics and issues where we lack consensus. But before discussion this proposal, he'd like to invite the other Commissioners to comment.

Commissioner Scheideler stated that he agreed that he and Chair Foster have a different understanding of board oversight. He's prepared a rebuttal to his motion being ruled out of order last month, but agrees that a board training session is a good idea, so he will pursue his rebuttal during the training session.

Commissioners Kirk and Bennett and ED Medeiros did not have any comments at the moment. Commissioner Evans believes that board training would be very helpful, based on her experience with non-profit boards. It will be very helpful for commissioners and management to be on the same page about roles and responsibilities, so that we can work together in the most productive way to achieve goals for the Housing Authority.

Chair Foster then reported on his research into Board training option. He reached out to several parties for suggestions:

- Donna Brown-Rego, ED MassNAHRO
- Mel King Institute
- DHCD
- HUD

The following options were available. All persons had an extensive experience delivering training on the topics/issues of interest, and were highly recommended by Donna Brown-Rego.

- Jeff Driscoll, ED of Medford Housing Authority
- John Park, Leadership Synergy
- Stephen O'Rourke, ED of West Warwick Housing Authority

Chair Foster presented the results of his interviews with each individual, and shared written materials with the Board. After some discussion, the consensus was that Stephen O'Rourke would be the best fit for our needs. After reviewing the options for the training date, the Board selected August 22 from 9-am – noon.

2. Review and Approval: Amendment #8 – Public Housing Compliance Award – asbestos abatement related to flooring project at Linden Street

ED Medeiros explained the reason for approving the award and answered a few questions from the Commissioners. Upon the following motion duly made by Chair Foster and seconded by Commissioner Kirk, the following motion was approved unanimously by a vote of 5-0 in favor.

RESOLUTION #2021-171

Public Housing Compliance Reserve award – asbestos abatement related to flooring project at 667-1 (\$9,400) and 667-2 (\$9,000) Linden Street for a total amount of \$18,400.00

3. Status Update or Approval -- Modernization/Redevelopment Initiative:
 - Project Status Update
 - NHA/CHA Intergovernmental Agreement Negotiation
 - CHA recommendation re: Assistant Executive Director Position
 - CHA recommendation re: Steering Committee

Chair Foster recapped the activities of the last month. The Board awarded the engagement to the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) at our June 24, 2021 Special Board Meeting. The parties commenced contract negotiations. As of this evening, the contract has been finalized, with only minor details to be completed. It is expected to be signed next week.

Meanwhile, the project kickoff meeting took place yesterday July 14. The main focus was to finalize the draft of Work Order #1, which will cover the next 6-8 months of work.

Chair Foster proposed that the CHA leadership be invited to our August meeting. Not only would the individuals be introduced to the Board and NHA community, but they could also present the scope of work in Phase 1 (aka Work Order #1), and answer questions.

Another important topic to is the proposed new Ass't Executive Director position. The resulting recommendations of CHA project supervisor have been shared with the Board under separate cover, and further described by Chair Foster.

The Board discussed various approaches to designing the new Ass't ED position, what would be his/her responsibilities relative to Ms. Medeiros' responsibilities as NHA executive director. Should we hire an expert on modernization/redevelopment, or should we hire a "deputy Angie", allowing Ms. Medeiros enough time to do the training to learn these skills? A question was raised by Commissioner Scheideler (and echoed by Commissioner Bennett) as whether the new Ass't ED position should be part-time, as opposed to full-time? Do we really need an entire additional FTE, or would a half-time position suffice?

Mrs. Evans offered several questions/observations: how easy or hard would it be to hire a part-time position? Would a full time Ass't ED position allow us to address other tasks we don't have to do, such as applying for grants? It'd be nice to have someone to cover for Ms. Medeiros when she's not available (e. g., on vacation.)

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Board felt it still didn't have enough information to fully justify a decision on hiring a new Ass't ED. They decided to defer further discussion to the August Meeting, when the Board could solicit the expert advice of our new CHA consultants.

4. Discussion & Approval: Minutes of NHA Board Meetings:

RESOLUTION #2021-173

To approve Minutes of the following Board Meetings:

- May 20, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes.
- May 20, 2021, Annual Meeting Minutes
- June 17, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion duly made by Chair Foster and seconded by Commissioner Bennett the draft minutes with revisions, were approved unanimously by vote of 5-0 in favor.

5. Status Update:

- Tenant-Commissioner Waiver

Chair Foster recapped the history with respect to the mandated tenant-commissioner process, whereby one of the elected NHA commissioner seats gets converted to a Select Board-appointed seat that is reserved for a tenant-commissioner. Since the NHA already has a tenant-commissioner (Janice Bennett, who was elected the previous month), at our May 2021 Board meeting, we decided that Ms. Bennett's elected seat should become the appointed seat. To implement this decision, we need to submit a "Waiver Type 1" for DHCD approval.

Before submitting the waiver, the Board thought it wise to solicit the opinion of the Needham Select Board. This took place at their meeting on June 22, 2021. The Select Board voted unanimously to support the conversion of Commissioner Bennett's elected seat to become the Select Board-appointed seat. A letter to this effect was forwarded to the Commissioners under separate cover.

Hearing no further objection, ED Medeiros will submit the Waiver Type 1 to DHCD tomorrow. This waiver will need to be renewed every subsequent year until the end of Ms. Bennett's term (April 2025).

- Security Cams Initiative

There is currently nothing to report on the Security Cams Initiative as of now.

- After School Program Reboot; Other uses of the premises

Chair Foster asked ED Medeiros to begin with a status update. Working with the Needham Public School (NPS) advisors, a parent meeting has been scheduled for the Capt. Robert Cook parents next week, to be attended by an NPA Ass't Principal. The

goal is to ask the parents what they think is the best approach for their children. Based on the feedback, the NHA and NPS will then come up with a plan. Also, NHA staff is working on a plan to get 164 Linden St. cleaned up and ready for use. Besides this, there's not much new to report.

Chair Foster then asked if there were any questions/comments from Commissioners. Mr. Scheideler asked about the letter to the parents, which stated that an Assistant Principal from the NPS High School would be attending...why not someone from the Eliot School? Ms. Medeiros said she wasn't sure. This was the person designated by the NPS for the meeting, and she thought that his duties might also cover the Eliot School. She will follow up on the question with the NPS, and make sure the right personnel are attending.

Commissioner Scheideler said he'd learned more about the founding of the previous program by former Tenant Commissioner Cheryl Gosman and Janice Bennett. It's activities, which involved using volunteers from Olin, Babson, Nobles that provided enrichment projects and field trips. He doesn't understand how the teachers at Eliot and High Rock could provide a similar enrichment program. ED Medeiros replied that the Eliot/High Rock staff are on-board with this type of approach, and that's what everyone wants to figure out after the parent meeting next week. Mr. Scheideler said he thought this sort of enrichment is quite important. Ms. Medeiros added that, besides tutoring/education assistance, ideas which have been put forward conceptually include a music class, sculpting class, field trips, etc...this is what they want to discuss with the parents. Commissioner Scheideler commented that he was hearing for the first time that the goal was to combine the best elements of the old program with new ideas...he supports this approach.

Commissioner Bennett then provided more background on the former program and her input. She's concerned that if the NPS is involved, the kids will regard the after-school program as just a continuation of school, rather than something fun and different. Speaking personally, she'd favor keeping our program in-house. She thought the idea of meeting with the parents is terrific, and thanks Ms. Medeiros for reaching out to them. Commissioner Bennett also mentioned a "Steps-to-Success" program that was created years ago. It's a peer-to-peer program for high schoolers that she thought was quite successful. It's now known as "Needham Steps Up". ED Medeiros said she agrees with all Ms. Bennett's comments. These ideas will be presented to the parents next week.

Chair Foster then asked if Commissioner Kirk had any questions/comments. She said she regrets and is disappointed that Diondre and Ms. Tambeau were not in attendance, because she had many questions for them. She felt that Unit 42 had been decimated, everything had been thrown away, and was concerned that important files had been misplaced or lost. Starting two months ago, she made it very clear: Commissioner Kirk would have liked to personally review all prior NHA staff actions with respect to the after-school program, and to be actively involved in the rebooting effort. At the present time, there's no point asking her questions and providing her input if she is

limited to just working with Executive Director Medeiros. So Commissioner Kirk is very frustrated, and thinks we've lost so much time will be impossible to get the program back up-and-running by September...there's much too much to do. But in closing, she does agree with the comments of Commissioners Bennett & Scheideler on the nature and content of the after-school program.

Ms. Medeiros responded by saying, with all due respect to Commissioner Kirk, that the NHA staff are not comfortable with interacting directly with Ms. Kirk. That is why, on several occasions, Ms. Medeiros has asked Ms. Kirk to not to reach out to directly staff, because of staff discomfort and also because it undermines Ms. Medeiros' role as executive director and creates confusion. But notwithstanding, Ms. Medeiros has been told that Ms. Kirk continues to reach out directly to staff. Ms. Medeiros said that while she recognizes that Ms. Kirk has had deep commitment to and connections with the after-school program in the past, she must insist that Ms. Kirk honor Ms. Medeiros' request which as Executive Director, she has a right to decide.

Chair Foster interjected that he thought we were straying from the current status update agenda item, and getting into territory that we'll be addressing at the August 22 training session: the boundaries, roles and responsibilities of NHA Commissioners and the Executive Director. He asked if Commissioner Kirk is OK if, rather than responding directly to Ms. Medeiros' comments right now, we defer this part of the discussion to August 22. Ms. Kirk agreed, though noting again that we're running out of time this summer.

Commissioner Evans weighed in with her comments. She thought the Board should be involved at a high level with the rebooting of the after-school program. Combining elements of the previous program with new ideas from the NPS and other community resources sounded good to her. She commended the involvement of the Cooks Bridge parents next week, and hopefully on an ongoing basis thereafter. She felt that it's still possible to achieve everyone's objectives. Hopefully there'll be something in place in September, which can continue to be built on and improved throughout the school year.

Chair Foster finished by saying he appreciated the constructive nature of the discussion we've just had. In his view, everyone has the best interests of our residents and their children at heart. We need to recognize that like so many other things, our after-school program was devastated by the Covid pandemic. So we're dealing with a very difficult rebooting situation and a work-in-progress report. He asked if the Commissioners would be interested in receiving an interim report before our next monthly meeting scheduled for August 19.

Commissioner Scheideler said he'd like to attend next week's parent meeting. Ms. Medeiros respectfully thinks that this would not be a good idea. For an NHA commissioner to attend could make the staff or parents feel uncomfortable. For everyone's information, Commissioner Bennett noted that she's been invited to the

parent meeting as a tenant and former parent. Ms. Evans stated that she's comfortable with just the ED and Ms. Bennett in attendance. Chair Foster agreed with Ms. Evans, and also said that in his experience, if commissioner attends, it could change the character of the meeting in an unhelpful way.

ED Medeiros will consider whether an interim board meeting is warranted after she sees what happens at next week's parent meeting.

6. Information & Discussion: Executive Director's Report, Financial Report, Vacancy Report, Workorder Report.

Ms. Medeiros is looking into training with the staff, she would like to do a team meeting or activity.

Mr. Scheideler questioned why NHA has a contractor on site in the after-school program house. Ms. Medeiros explained that he needs privacy to discuss issues with residents, this is a private area to be meet with, he is usually only there 2 days. Our building is small, and we do not have space or privacy in the office. The 4 rooms there were not all being utilized.

7. Approval: NHA Bill/Check Warrant

RESOLUTION #2021-174

To approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant dated July 15, 2021, in the amount of \$310,850.29 as follows:

Section 8:112 vouchers	\$ 133,682.00
Payroll checks (6/16/20201) #502197-502210	\$ 10,910.46
Payroll checks (6/23/20201) #502211 502223	\$ 10,258.48
Payroll checks (6/30/2021) #502224-502238	\$ 12,526.54
Payroll checks (7/7/2021) #502239-502255	\$ 11,630.56
A/P Checks 1 st batch (6/30/2021) #33575-#33612	\$ 50,033.56
A/P Checks 2 nd batch (7/7/2021) #33613-#333634	\$ 81,978.98

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

8. Approval: HRH LLC Bill/Check Warrant

RESOLUTION #HRH2021-36

To approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant dated July 15,2021, in the amount of \$31,576.47 as follows:

A/P Checks (6/8/2021) #3130-3134	\$28,720.49
A/P Checks (6/9/2021) #3135-3137	\$2,846.98

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

9. Adjournment

Upon a motion duly made by Chair Foster to adjourn meeting and seconded by Commissioner Kirk, it was approved unanimously by a vote of 5-0 in favor.

UPCOMING NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING DATES

Thursday Aug. 19, 2021,	7:30pm	Regular Meetings	Zoom Virtual Meetings
Thursday Sep. 16, 2021,	7:30pm	Regular Meetings	In-person Meeting
Thursday Oct. 21, 2021,	7:30pm	Regular Meetings	Zoom Virtual Meetings
Thursday Nov. 18, 2021,	7:30pm	Regular Meetings	Zoom Virtual Meetings
Thursday Dec. 16, 2021,	7:30pm	Regular Meetings	In-Person Meeting