

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

**Thursday, January 19, 2023**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

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

**NHA STAFF PRESENT:**

Cheryl Gosmon, Asst. Exec. Director  
Gary Kuphal, Dir. of Facilities & Maint.  
Nayda Sanchez, Leasing & Occupancy

**GUESTS:** Rick Leco, DVM Mainsail

**ABSENT:** Steve Merritt, Interim Executive Director

This is a Hybrid meeting. Chair Foster called the meeting to order at 7:40 pm. He called the roll of Commissioners with all reporting present on Thursday, January 19, 2023, for the Needham Housing Authority (NHA) and High Rock Homes (HRH) LLC Regular Board meeting. He noted that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by the Secretary of the NHA by preparing a Public Notice dated January 13, 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 persons requesting it.

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**Announcements from the Chair:**

Chair Foster did not have any Chair Announcements.

**Resident/Community Input:**

Sue Biasizzo provided a brief update on CBTA activities. She stated that CBTA members are scheduled to meet with Nayda Sanchez on January 26, 2023, to talk about the resident re-certification process. Sue also asked about the NHA's Policy on responding to a grievance request. She noted that there is no specific HUD guidance on this. Cheryl Gosmon stated that this is a good point, that the NHA should review its policy on this so that it is clear in terms of having a specific target date. Ms. Gosmon added that she would follow-up with Steve Merritt on this. Sue Biasizzo requested that any type of resident oriented news be placed at the beginning of the agenda.

Ross Donald advocated for the announcement of attendees at regular meetings and special meetings. He commented that he had not received a paper copy of the Board Packet. He noted that it easier to read the paper copy and would prefer to have that as well. He also commented that resident information should be made available to residents at each development.

**A. Review & Approval:**

1. NHA Bill/Check Warrant

**Motion and Vote**

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Kirk and seconded by Commissioner Scheideler to approve the check register listed on the Warrant dated January 19, 2023, in the amount of \$431,737.50.

Discussion: None.

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

Commissioner Evans votes aye; Commissioner Bennett votes, aye; Commissioner Kirk votes, aye; Commissioner Scheideler votes, aye; and Commissioner Foster votes, 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 Kirk and seconded by Commissioner Scheideler to approve the High Rock Homes, LLC check register listed on the Warrant dated January 19, 2023, in the amount of \$35,813.20.

Discussion: None

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

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

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

**B. Review & Approval -- Board Minutes:**

1. 12/15/2022 NHA, HRH LLC Regular Board Meeting

**Motion and Vote**

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Scheideler to approve the Minutes of December 15, 2022, NHA & HRH LLC Regular Board meetings as amended.

Discussion: Commissioner Kirk stated that the last page of the December 15, 2022, meeting minutes need to be changed to reflect the correct vote for the adjournment.

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

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

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

**C. Information & Discussion: Interim Executive Director's Report**

1. Monthly Financial Report

Ms. Gosmon presented the Monthly Financial Report as of November 30, 2022. There were no questions on this report.

2. Monthly Management Report

Ms. Gosmon presented the Monthly Management Report, which outlines the NHA's vacant units through the end of December.

3. Federal Capital Fund Budget Report

There were no questions on the NHA capital fund project to replace roofs at Captain Robert Cook Drive is out to bid the NHA expects to have a contract by the end of January.

4. Bank Issues

Ms. Gosmon noted that migration of HRH from QuickBooks to the PHA-Web has been completed. The check signature policy is still in process. The conversion with Needham Bank is still in process, which has a target date of February 1, 2023, to be operational.

5. Fee Accountant RFP postponed

The Fee Accountant RFP has been postponed.

6. Community Room Hours and Security

Ms. Gosmon referred to Mr. Merritt's memo in the Board Packet. She noted that this item is in process. The NHA staff is developing a policy on this matter for the Board's consideration. Ms. Gosmon also spoke about the housing authority's plan to address security.

**D. New ED Search Committee**

Chair Foster opened this item for discussion and welcomed Search Consultant Rich Leco to the meeting. Chair Foster recapped the report given by the Executive Director Search Committee at the December 15, 2022 Board meeting and the Board discussion from the Special NHA meeting on January 5, 2023. Of the three candidates recommended for Board interview the current situation is, after two rounds of searching since April 2022, there are currently not active candidates for the open NHA Executive Director position. Chair Foster asked Mr. Leco to present his recommended next steps.

Mr. Leco recommended that NHA commence a third round of searching and provide a status updated in terms of reposting the position. He stated that an ad has been posted on the industry websites: Mass NAHRO, Connecticut NAHRO and New England Regional Council of NAHRO. He added that he has sent emails to every housing authority in Rhode Island and the Public Housing Directors Association. He suggested negotiation of relocation expenses be considered in the application package for candidates outside of the New England area.

Chair Foster opened the floor for discussion and asked Board members to comment on how we found ourselves in this position how each Commissioner thinks we should move forward. A lengthy discussion followed with Board members expressing their disappointment with the process. Certain Board members expressed their disappointment with Mr. Leco's inconsistent communication with the Search Committee, and management of the effort. Search Committee members added that Mr. Leco had not given them standard questions to ask each candidate per DHCD's guidelines to assist them with the interview process. A suggestion was made that NHA's Search Consultant

needs to make a more concerted effort of reaching out to Public Housing Authorities rather than just posting passively and waiting to hear back from potential candidates.

Chair Foster asked Mr. Leco if he would provide his assessment as to why the search has not been successful to date and provide additional suggestion on what we can do to improve our chances of success if we embark on another round of searching.

Mr. Leco stated that he has done his best to find qualified candidates. He described his view of communications with the Search Committee, which he thought had been good up to this point. He offered his opinion that NHA is known as a difficult housing authority, and that this might explain the lack of viable candidates. Mr. Leco concluded by saying that he hadn't expected to receive so much criticism at this meeting, and offered to resign as the NHA's Search Consultant if the Board is not satisfied with his performance. He added that he would expect to be paid in full.

Chair Foster recommend that the Board pause the discussion at this point. He noted that the Board has heard Mr. Leco's willingness to withdraw. Chair Foster also noted that Mr. Leco has a plan to move forward and asked Mr. Leco if he had any more to add to that. Mr. Leco then logged off.

A brief discussion followed, and the sense of the Board was to accept Mr. Leco's resignation. As the most important next step, Chair Foster suggested that Steve Merritt reach out broadly and deeply to find a new Search Consultant as rapidly as possible and report back to the Board with his recommendations.

## **G. Report of Resident Services**

### **1. Laurie Blake – Memo**

NHA's Resident Services Report was included in the Board Packet. Commissioner Kirk stated that she has expressed to Laurie Blake, Resident Services Coordinator that she is impressed with all the activities she has put together and that she is doing a terrific job. Commissioner Kirk stated that she had applied for a grant from the Mass Cultural Council that will bring wonderful events to NHA for residents to enjoy. She stated that Harvard University's Din & Tonics a cappella group will be performing on Sunday, February 12<sup>th</sup> at the Linden Chambers Community Room.

Chair Foster noted that the Cook's Afterschool Program Report is included in the packet. He stated that he is impressed to see that the program is growing and with the work that is going on there.

## **H. Status Updates – External Initiatives:**

### **1. Housing Plan Working Group**

Commissioner Scheideler reported that the document has been finalized and submitted to the Select Board, the Zoning Board and Planning Board for final approval this month. He added that there is reference for anyone who would like to see the document, available at [https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/42623/Needham-Housing-Plan-2022-Final\\_r3](https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/42623/Needham-Housing-Plan-2022-Final_r3)

## 2. Preservation & Redevelopment Initiative (PRI)

- Kick-off Meeting with Linden/Chambers A/E Designer Team Report  
Chair Foster stated that a kick-off meeting was held on Monday, January 9, 2023, with the Architects Bargmann Hendrie +Archetype, Inc. (BH+A) who will be working with the NHA on a schematic design for the redevelopment of Linden and Chambers. He stated that there will be two meetings with residents on Monday, January 23, 2023, at 11:00 AM and 12:45 PM.

Chair Foster referred to the draft Press Release announcing the launch of the Redevelopment of Linden and Chamber Street properties for the Board's consideration. He also referred to the good news story in the Needham Hometown Weekly on the ROSS Grant award and the RSC State Grant increase.

- Final Board Decision - Repositioning Strategy 1b vs. Strategy 2  
Chair Foster stated that on the heels of our 1/5/2023 special Board meeting with the CHA will be providing the final written Federal Public Housing Conversion Assessment Report in the first week of February, with all the numbers and recommendations updated. Steve Merritt and Margaret Moran will meet several times to produce a consensus recommendation for the Board. Thereafter Chair Foster would like to schedule a two-hour retreat for the Board to discuss the final repositioning options and vote on which strategy NHA should pursue. After a brief discussion the consensus of the Board was to schedule a meeting on Saturday, February 11, 2023, at 10:00 am (later changed to 9:30 am.)
- FY24 CPA Funding Applications  
Chair Foster stated that two FY2024 CPA funding applications were submitted to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) on December 1, 2023. Chair Foster stated the NHA received a unanimous vote approving the funding applications for Linden/Chambers (\$1M) to finish the pre-development activities. Chair Foster stated that for Seabeds Way and Captain Robert Cook Drive (\$240,308). He stated that the CPC will meeting on February 8 and February 15 to review the NHA CPC applications.
- CHA Monthly Report  
There was no discussion on this report.

## 3. NHA Board Succession

There was no discussion on this item.

### I. Status Update – Internal Initiatives:

1. Plan to return Unit 42 CRCO to service – In Process.  
Ms. Gosmon stated that this item is a placeholder. She stated that Gary Kuphal and his team continue to work on this unit.
2. Roofing at Captain Robert Cook Drive

Ms. Gosmon stated that this project is out to bid. Gary Kuphal reported bids have been extended to Monday, January 23, 2023, for 10:00 am to give contractor time to reprocess any questions that were raised.

3. Paving Project – Seabeds Way and CRCD.

Mr. Merritt stated that he and Mr. Kuphal are in conversation about this project. He stated that Mr. Kuphal has contacted a firm that would design the project.

4. Linden Chambers Camera issues update

Gary Kuphal reported on this issue. He noted that he continues to work with the contractor on this project. He stated that he is meeting with the contractors regularly.

5. Seabeds Way/CRCO CCTV System

Ms. Gosmon stated that the NHA is still waiting for HUD extension approval.

6. Resident Survey – Update

Mr. Merritt will compile the information and share the results with the Board at a future meeting.

Chair Foster referred to the 2021 NHA Audit document and 2021 HRH LLC Audit document. He asked if the Board needed to have an in-person meeting with the auditors to go over the reports. The consensus was no.

**H. New Business**

Open Meeting Law Complaint.

Chair Foster noted that the complaint was in the Board packet. Since a complaint must be filed within 30 days of an alleged violation, most of the complaint was not timely filed. The remainder of the complaint (commenting on the complainant's lack of understanding at the 1/5/2023 special Board meeting) did not appear to be an OML violation. A general discussion followed

**Motion and Vote**

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Evans and seconded Commissioner Bennett that the Board votes to delegate the responsibility to respond to the complaint to the NHA's Executive Director.

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

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

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

**J. Adjournment**

**Motion and Vote**

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Kirk and seconded by Commissioner Scheideler to adjourn the NHA and HRH LLC January 19, 2023, Board meeting at 9:30 pm.

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

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

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

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Cheryl Gosmon  
December 15, 2022