

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

Thursday, November 17, 2022

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

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 7:32 pm. He called the roll of Commissioners with all reporting present on Thursday, November 17, 2022, for the Needham Housing Authority (NHA) and High Rock Homes (HRH) LLC Regular Board meeting. He stated that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by the Secretary of the NHA by preparing a Public Notice dated November 10, 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.

=====

Announcements from the Chair:

Chair Foster stated that he did not have any announcements other than a couple of items that came in after the agenda notice was posted. He stated that one item is Amendment #8 to the Contract for Financial Assistance (CFA) 5001 Formula Funding which the Board will discuss later in the meeting. He also stated that Commissioner Kirk had sent him some updates on her activities to raise grant funds. Chair Foster stated that for the record he would like it noted that the NHA Board of Commissioners voted affirmatively on October 3, 2022, to extend the Interim Executive Director's contract and voted affirmatively to approve the Matthews House Kitchen Renovation Contract.

Resident/Community Input:

Sue Biasizzo commented on the workshops she attended at the Massachusetts Union for Public Housing Tenants (MUPHT) Fall Conference. She stated that Commissioner Janice Bennett and Seabeds Way resident Carol Briggs attended the conference. She stated that there was a workshop on Reasonable Accommodations and a scheduled workshop on the Grievance Process, but that workshop did not happen due to time constraints.

Commissioner Bennett also commented on the MUPHT Fall Conference. She stated that she brought back a lot of information from Ben Stone for the residents. She mentioned that MUPHT Board were reworking their bylaws which caused a delay in getting through to some of the workshops.

Ross Donald commented on a resident meeting organized by Helen Giragosian in terms of getting an LTO started at the Linden and Chambers development. He stated that a representative from MUPHT was on hand to answer resident questions and concerns. He noted that there was some discussion on parking as well. He also noted that Jack Cooper, the Executive Director for MUPHT is retiring as of November 30, 2022.

Ross Donald stated the town Water and Sewer Department has been cleaning and clearing the drains and canal between Maple Street and the housing authority properties. He stated that he believes it is mostly an easement of the property owners on Maple Street and that this effort may have been instigated because of flooding during the summer of 2021. He expressed that the NHA should look at the kind of landscaping that is being done here and be mindful to not blow organic matter into the drains.

Rachel Crimlisk asked for clarification on the Open Meeting Law in terms of remote and hybrid meetings for municipal boards. She asked if the Open Meeting Law regarding remote and hybrid meetings will change with the new Governor coming into office. She also asked if the NHA Board of Commissioners will be voting on anything during this meeting.

Chair Foster stated that there will be several votes during this meeting on various things that are on the agenda. He also stated the Open Meeting Law regarding hybrid and remote meetings will continue per Governor Baker's Executive Order until March 31, 2023. He added that at that time new legislation in the General Court might make some sort of permanent changes to the Open Meeting Law.

Vice-Chair Evans offered a point of clarification. She stated that municipal boards are no longer operating under Governor Baker's Executive Order. She stated that the legislature passed a law permitting municipal boards to meet remotely, which currently goes through March 31, 2023. She also stated that when the legislature meets in January to start its new session it may decide to extend or make permanent changes to this law.

Lew Garfinkel asked if there will be voting on the proposed Bird Feeder Policy at this meeting. Chair Foster responded that there will not be a vote on the proposed Bird Feeder Policy at this meeting. He added that Steve Merritt will provide an update on the discussion at the resident meeting on this proposed policy.

A. Review & Approval:

1. NHA Bill/Check Warrant

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to approve the check register listed on the Warrant dated November 17, 2022, in the amount of \$395,363.06.

Discussion: Commissioner Kirk asked for clarification on a couple of large legal expenses totaling \$7062.38 and, on an expense, totaling \$53,461.72.

Mr. Merritt replied that Commissioner Kirk is referring to charges from Morgan Brown & Joy the attorneys representing the NHA in the Tran matter. Mr. Merritt also replied that the \$53,461.72 is a partial payment for the Linden and Chambers camera project.

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.

2. HRH LLC Bill/Check Warrant

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Scheideler to approve the High Rock Homes, LLC check register listed on the Warrant dated November 17, 2022, in the amount of \$30,619.60.

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.

B. Review & Approval -- Board Minutes:

10/20/2022 NHA, HRH LLC Board Meeting

10/03/2022 NHA Special Board Meeting – CHA Presentation on Repositioning

9/22/2022 NHA Special Board Meeting & Executive Session – No action was taken on this set of minutes.

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to approve the Minutes of October 20, 2022, NHA & HRH LLC Regular Board meetings as amended.

Discussion: Commissioner Kirk asked that corrections be made to item G: Status Update – Internal Initiatives, #7. She stated that in the absence of a Resident Service Coordinator, she took it upon herself to respond to certain grant opportunities that had come to her attention, but at some point, she intends to turn this over to Laurie Blake, the Resident Service Coordinator as part of her ongoing job responsibilities and that she would be glad to help her should she need it. Commissioner Kirk added that she not planning to do grant writing for the rest of her term.

Chair Foster asked that the minutes be amended to include that DHCD provided more than 2/3 of the cost in the Tran lawsuit and not 2/5 of the cost as noted in the first page of the October 20, 2022, meeting minutes.

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.

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to approve the Minutes of October 3, 2022, NHA & HRH LLC Regular Board meetings as amended.

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.

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

1. Monthly Financial Report

Mr. Merritt presented the monthly report as of September 30, 2022. He stated that NHA is in good shape. He noted that the income is up. He stated that the NHA has had some extraordinary expenses, particularly in apartment turnovers. He reported that the NHA has turned over approximately 42 units this year. He reported on the need to purchase a dump truck which is badly needed but that this purchase would put the NHA below the reserve threshold and as such will be put on hold. He reported on Great Plain Avenue tree removal at the Matthews House property.

2. Quarterly Financial Report

Mr. Merritt stated that he is ready to put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Accounting Services. He stated that currently Milne, Shaw & Robillard, P.C. does not incorporate High Rock Homes LLC in their accounting services. He noted that federal accounting has not been procured in a few years and HUD would like to see this done before contracts are rolled over. He stated that the RFP would include a service to reconcile the High Rock Homes account every quarter. A brief discussion followed.

3. Monthly Management Report

Mr. Merritt stated that the Monthly Management Report outlines the NHA's vacant units through the end of October. He stated that Nayda Sanchez, Gary Kuphal, and their teams are doing a great job to reduce vacancies.

Mr. Merritt stated that work orders that are written each month are completed by the end of the month. Mr. Merritt reported on the rent charged and received. He pointed out areas where there are rent issues. A brief discussion followed on uncollectable rent.

4. Bird Feeder Policy – Resident Meeting Update

Mr. Merritt provided an update on the recent resident meeting at Seabeds Way regarding the proposed Bird Feeder Policy. He stated that it was a very good meeting, with good discussion out of which came a mutually agreed upon solution to address the issues while continuing to work on developing the policy. Mr. Merritt noted that the proposed policy will take more time and involve more resident input. Mr. Garfinkel expressed concerns about not having a bird feeder for four months. He handed a letter from his doctor to the Board Chair relative to his need to have a bird feeder. A brief discussion followed.

5. Parking concerns – meetings with residents – Policy update discussion

Mr. Merritt reported on his conversation with Linden and Chambers residents on parking concerns at a scheduled meeting in the Linden and Chambers Community Room. He stated that he received a lot of input and concerns about parking. He stated that several residents have assigned spaces and a good number don't. He summarized the parking plan. He stated that new parking stickers will be issued for the area, and parking spaces will be marked. He stated these discussions are ongoing, and we will get to a fair and equitable solution.

6. Bank Issues

Mr. Merritt stated that he will need to get signatures from the Board to install in the NHA's account reporting system. Mr. Merritt recapped the status of his conversations with TD Bank and Needham Bank. He stated that TD Bank has updated its proposal and that he is waiting to hear back from Needham Bank.

7. Any other issues/updates of NHA

Mr. Merritt presented DHCD's Amendment #8 Formula Funding (FF) Award in the amount of \$253,079.00. He stated that of this amount \$9,400.00 is for 667-2 asbestos-containing flooring mitigation and \$243,679.00 is the FY2025 formula funding award capital fund amendment. Mr. Merritt stated that the Board would need to approve Amendment #8 to the Contract for Financial Assistance (CFA) 5001 in the amount of \$253,079.00. A brief discussion followed.

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Evans and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to approve Amendment #8 to the NHA Contract for Financial Assistance (CFA) 5001 in the amount of \$253,079.00 and to authorize the Executive Director to sign the contract.

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

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

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

D. Quarterly Report of the Resident Service Coordinator

1. Laurie Blake – Memo

Mr. Merritt stated that Ms. Blake has been extremely busy. He summarized some of the projects she is working on. He spoke about holiday celebrations that are in the works.

E. Search Committee Status Update

Commissioner Bennett, Chair of the Executive Director Search Committee provided a status update on this item. She reported that six resumes have been received and distributed to the entire committee. She stated that the Search Committee met on November 4, 2022, to discuss the resumes. She stated that the Search Committee had decided to bring four candidates in for an interview on Monday, November 28, 2022.

Commissioner Bennett stated that she would like to have a set of five questions for the Search Committee members to present to the candidates. A brief discussion followed.

Chair Foster stated that DHCD has requirements for how the interviews are conducted and that all candidates should be asked the same questions. Chair Foster noted that the NHA's Executive Director Search Consultant knows about this and will make sure the Executive Director Search Committee guidelines are followed.

Commissioner Scheideler added that four qualified candidates are highly qualified and will be invited in for an interview. He added that it is his understanding that the Committee will decide on two candidates to be presented to the NHA Board of Commissioners.

F. Status Updates – External Initiatives:

1. Housing Plan Working Group

Chair Foster presented this report. He stated that the Housing Plan Working Group held a community forum on Wednesday, November 16, 2022, at Powers Hall via Zoom to present its draft plan on addressing unmet affordable housing needs for the Town of Needham. He stated that he attended the event as an attendee. He noted that there was strong support for the NHA's Preservation and Redevelopment Initiative (PRI) by several speakers. He also stated that there is strong support for allocating more of the annual CPA funding awards in the direction of Community and Affordable Housing. He stated that their next meeting is on December 8th.

1. Preservation & Redevelopment Initiative (PRI)

- **Cambridge Housing Authority Status Update Report.** Chair Foster stated that the contract for the A/E Designer Firm has not been signed by DHCD to date. There was no additional discussion on the enclosed CHA Report.
- **Kick-off Meeting of A/E Designer**
Chair Foster stated that a Kick-off meeting will be scheduled once the A/E Designer contract is signed by DHCD.
- **FY24 CPA Funding Applications**
Chair Foster referred to the two FY2024 CPA funding applications included in the Board Packet. He stated that he would like the Board to consider the application and potentially vote their approval of the applications which are due to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) by December 1, 2022. Chair Foster summarized both funding applications: Seabeds Way/Captain Robert Cook Drive (\$240,308), and Linden/Chambers (\$1M). A general discussion followed.

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to approve the two CPA Funding Applications for submission to the Community Preservation Committee for CPA funding for FY2024.

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

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

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

G. Status Update – Internal Initiatives:

1. Plan to return Unit 42 CRCD to service – In Process.
Mr. Merritt stated that this item is a placeholder. He stated that Gary Kuphal and his team continue to work on this unit.
2. Roofing at Captain Robert Cook Drive
Mr. Merritt stated that Gary Kuphal has identified an A/E Design Contractor for this project. Chair Foster suggested that the Board consider a special meeting within the next forty-eight hours to approve the contractor for roof replacement at Captain Robert Cook Drive.
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 item. He stated that he is still waiting on the replacement antennas and adding DVR boxes throughout the site.
5. Seabeds Way/CRCD CCTV System Begins Spring/Fall of 2022
Mr. Merritt stated that the NHA is working with a company that will design the system. Mr. Merritt stated that the NHA is still waiting for HUD extension approval.
6. Resident Survey – Update
Mr. Merritt stated that a good number of Resident Surveys have been returned to the office. He stated that he will be compiling the information and will share the results with the Board at a future meeting.
7. Commissioner Kirk shared an update involving grants activity that she is working on. She stated that she has written two local grants. She summarized what the grants would include. Commissioner Kirk stated that she is writing a large grant totaling \$2500. Commissioner Kirk stated that she is planning a Music Around the World program in February that will be supported by one of the grants, an Irish Band in March, and an event in May celebrating Cinco de Mayo.

H. New Business:

1. Utility Allowances FY2023 Public Housing and Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program
Mr. Merritt presented a comprehensive listing of utility allowances for gas, oil, and electricity from neighboring towns for the Board's consideration and review. This item will come back to the at its Special Board Meeting on Tuesday, November 22 for discussion and vote.

2. NHA Meetings.

Chair Foster stated that he would like to convene a meeting to discuss the Preservation and Redevelopment Initiative and strategies for repositioning. He will contact the CHA Team regarding a good time to schedule this meeting. A brief discussion followed. He also stated that the NHA regular Board meeting is scheduled for December 15. This will be a budget meeting.

I. Adjournment

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Scheideler and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to adjourn the NHA and HRH LLC Board meeting at 9:41 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.

Next Meetings:

NHA Special Board Meeting – Tuesday, November 22, 2022

NHA & HRH LLC Board Meeting – December 15, 2022, at 7:30 PM

Respectfully Submitted by:

Cheryl Gosmon
December 15, 2022