

**NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY**

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**HIGH ROCK HOMES LLC MEETING**

**LINDEN/CHAMBERS COMMUNITY ROOM**

**Thursday June 17, 2021 6:00PM**

**ROLL CALL BY CHAIR FOSTER TO CONVENE THE REGULAR MEETING**

**ROLL CALL TO CONVENE THE MEETINGS**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Chair Reginald C. Foster  
Treasurer Eleanor Evans  
Commissioner Penny Kirk  
Commissioner Ed Scheideler  
Commissioner Janice Bennett

**NHA STAFF:**

Angie Medeiros, Executive Director  
Gary Kuphal, Director of Maintenance

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by the Secretary of the Needham Housing Authority (NHA) by preparing a Public Notice dated June 14, 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.

**AGENDA – REGULAR NHA BOARD & HRH LLC MEETINGS**

**CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**Board Meetings: In-Person Vs. Zoom Hybrid**

Chair Foster began by apologizing to all about the confusion as to whether tonight’s meeting would be by Zoom, or in-person. The State rules were literally changing this week, and there was uncertainty as to what would be permitted. For the benefit of the meeting minutes, tonight we are meeting in person and, with no advance notice, also attempting to stream the meeting via Zoom.

So yesterday, Governor Baker signed legislation permitting virtual NHA Board meeting through April 2022. Chair Foster would like us to have a discussion on the question: Do we go back to in-person Board meetings, or do we continue to do Zoom meetings, or something in-between? There are pros and cons.

Commissioners Scheideler, Kirk, and Bennett stated that they'd like to continue Board meeting via Zoom, and provided their reasons therefor. Commissioner Evans suggested alternating: Zoom meetings for two consecutive months and an in-person meeting for the third month.

Ms. Medeiros stated that she'd done some preliminary investigation on what it'd take to do a hybrid in-person/Zoom meeting. About \$1,500 in equipment would have to be ordered. Additional technical support would be needed to be found to set up the equipment and operate it during the Board meeting.

Mr. Dey believes the zoom meetings work very well; but he preferred the 7:30pm start times to the current 6pm. He like Ms. Evans proposal of alternating in-person and Zoom meeting.

Ms. Evans added that, at her day job, her return to in-person work had clarified. She would strongly prefer that we return to our customary start time of 7:30pm for regular Board meetings.

After further discussion, Chair Foster summarize the will of the Board. Starting with the July Board meeting, regular monthly meetings will revert to our customary start time of 7:30pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday's of each month.. Two consecutive months will be virtual via Zoom. The third month will be in-person. So for the rest of the Summer, July and August's Board meeting will be via Zoom, and September will be in-person.

Chair Foster will collaborate with Ms. Medeiros to research further the feasibility of a hybrid meetings for the third month meetings.

### **RESIDENT INPUT:**

Sue Biasizzo requested that the resident handbook to be translated into every language spoken by NHA residents. She suggested contacting Sandra Robinson who may be able to help translate the handbook. There was a discussion of a/c fees. The Community Rooms will be open and available to residents for cooling.

Ross Donald believes in a resiliently network, wherein when there is a trouble situation there is a network that can formed, de-policing the police, and getting social services in when it is appropriate. He believes we should have tablet tutors to help the elderly learn how to use tablets and technology, etc. He thinks that there should be more new landscaping and allowing for planting by the residents, it could be a positive thing, proposing water garden and restoration etc.

Dave \_\_\_\_\_ of 28 Chambers St would be interested in volunteering for projects, gardening etc. Ms. Medeiros stated that she's is interested in having a clean-up day with the residents, following by a cookout. He is interested in getting involved or volunteering for any groups and become involved more.

Kalpana Shaw asked if anyone has investigated renting some of NHA's community spaces. She wants the postings in the community rooms to be kept up-to-date. There is a leak that maintenance needs to look into. She identified changes that need to be updated on the website, and suggested robo-calls to inform the residents. Ms. Medeiros will look further into the issues.

Jessica Reese requested that the wood chips in the playground be replaced

## **STATUS UPDATE/DISCUSSION/APPROVAL AGENDA ITEMS:**

### **1. Status Update: Security Cams Initiative**

Chair Foster reminded all attendees that there was a thorough discussion of all the pros/cons at last month's Board meeting, so we won't be repeating it this month. He asked Ms. Medeiros for a status update. The camera project for the state properties is proceeding forward. Installation is expected to start September.

Sue Biasizzo suggested that residents be involved during the installation...Ms. Medeiros will take this suggestion under advisement. In response to a question, Ms. Medeiros stated that there would not be someone monitoring the cameras 24/7...it's too expensive.

### **2. Status Update: Board Training and Certification**

Chair Foster noted that the Board set in-service training goals for itself at the beginning of 2021. He reported that so far he's completed three of the five Mass NAHRO training modules needed to earn his certification: Legal Elements, Finance and Professional Relationships. He's been impressed the quality of the training, and it's been very interesting interacting with the participants from other LHAs. Chair Foster has two more courses to go for certification: Personnel and Ethics. Last month he also took another Mass NAHRO course: Public Records Law.

Chair Foster asked about how the other Commissioners are doing. Ms. Bennett has completed the DHCD/UMass online commissioner training. She found it very informative and interesting. Ms. Bennett also plans to start the Mel King Institute training program for resident-commissioners. Mr. Scheideler has also completed the DHCD/UMass training. He too thought it was a good program and learned a lot from it.

### **3. Status Update: RFP for Modernization and Redevelopment Consulting Services**

Chair Foster was pleased to report that by the proposal deadline of May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021, NHA had received three good quality proposals.

Since the May status report, the Proposal Selection Committee was finalized, consisting of Ms. Medeiros, Mr. Kuphal, Chair Foster, Mr. Scheideler, Karen Hughey, Karen Sonnarborg and Chris Gerstel. Karen S. is a very experience consultant who works (in part) for the Needham Planning Department. Chris is a neighbor who lives on Maple St.

As of today, the Selection Committee has met three times for about 2 hours each time. The Committee is making good progress evaluating the proposals and checking the references. Mr. Scheideler said he was learning an incredible amount about how modernization and redevelopment projects are done. He also commended the participation of Karen Sonnarborg. Her experience has been invaluable to the process.

Chair Foster reported that two more meetings of the Selection Committee have been scheduled. While it's tight, it is possible that the Recommendation Report will be ready for the Board by Thursday June 24, 2021. As detailed at last month's meeting, the Committee makes a recommendation to the full Board, and the Board makes the final decision on which vendor wins the award of engagement. Chair Foster suggested that Commissioners put a

placeholder in their calendars for a Special Board Meeting on June 24<sup>th</sup>. If the Committee misses that date, then we'll fall back to a contingency placeholder on July 1. Both meetings will be scheduled at 7:30 pm.

#### **Assistant Executive Director Position**

At the upcoming Special Board Meeting to receive the Selection Committee Report and award the contract, there will be a second agenda item to consider adding an Assistant Executive Director position (or some other position) in recognition of the additional workload the Modernization/Redevelopment Initiative will place on senior NHA leaderships. Chairman Foster reminded the Board that this is an idea that was originally recommended in the 2019 Facility Master Plan, and has been discussed/supported by the Board several times over the past 2-3 years.

Chair Foster is working with Ms. Medeiros and our Fee Accountant Rick Shaw to craft a specific proposed job description of the position and a recommendation for funding it. They will be checking with other LHA's for recommendations.

#### **4. Status Update: Conversion of Elected Tenant Commissioner Position to Needham Select Board Appointed position.**

The Select Board was previously was scheduled to consider this matter at their June 8, 2021 meeting. However at the last minute, they postponed their consideration to their June 22, 2021 meeting. So there is nothing new to report.

#### **5. Discussion & Approval:**

##### **Gas Grill Policy**

Ms. Medeiros reported that since the Board approved the Gas Grill Policy last month, suggestions for improvement were received. The revised policy is included in the Board packet. Now one grill is allowed for every unit. But use is not allowed at all on balconies, and on patios unless there's a certain minimum distance from the buildings. Mr. Scheideler and other Commissioners and residents suggested additional changes to the draft. Chair Foster suggested that the policy was not yet ready for Board approval, and he a deferred further consideration to a future Board meeting.

##### **Air Conditioner Policy**

Ms. Medeiros walked the Board through the proposed new policy. She noted that the current policy had not been updated since 2004.

A lively discussion ensued. Mrs. Evans asked questions about the installation/removal fees and how that would work. She suggested incentivizing the use of portable A/Cs, but noted that they take up scarce floor space in units.

Ms. Bennett is concerned that certain A/C installations can be a fire hazard. Also what about waiving the installation fees for elderly tenants? Mr. Scheideler agreed.

Richard Dey noted that the policy does not acknowledge that some units have adding in the through-the-wall A/C units. These units don't have to be installed in the Spring and removed in the Fall.

Ms. Medeiros will take all these recommendations under advisement. There will be a new version of the A/C Policy drafted.

**6. Discussion & Approval: Minutes of NHA Board Meetings**

The 5/20/2021 Board meeting minutes were not completed in time for review and approval at this meeting. This agenda item will be deferred to the next Board meeting.

**7. NHA Designated Representative to the Needham Community Preservation Committee**

Ms. Kirk is currently the NHA-designated representative to the CPC with two more years to serve on her term. As reported at last month's meeting, she would like to step down. The NHA Board needs to appoint another Commissioner to replace Ms. Kirk, preferably by the end of the Summer.

**8. Status Update: After School Program and Related Issues**

Ms. Medeiros updated the Board on the Cooks Bridge After School Program. Unfortunately it had to be suspended during the pandemic period...closed since March 2020. When the program reopened earlier this Spring, only two children were showing up. Ms. Medeiros and Ms. Tambeau are working to reboot the program. They are looking into partnerships with the Needham Schools. In their initial meetings, School personnel offered the following thought: their impression is that the Cooks Bridge After-School kids have been missing out on many program offerings in the programs in the Needham community, and the opportunity to be integrated in with their other peers at their schools.

Ms. Medeiros also reported that they're thinking of using 164 Linden Street as the first-ever community room for the High Rock families. They've also initiated discussions with the High Rock School personnel about starting a new after-school program for the High Rock kids using the 164 Linden St. space. The school personnel have indicated that if the NHA can make the space available, they'd definitely be interested in creating a new afterschool program for the High Rock kids in the area. Ms. Medeiros concluded her report by saying that the meetings with the School Department have just started. Everyone is going back and forth with ideas, and nothing is "set in stone" yet.

Chair Foster invited questions and comments from the Commissioners. Mr. Scheideler indicated that he had some questions, but Ms. Kirk wanted to go first and Mr. Scheideler yielded the floor. Ms. Kirk asked Ms. Medeiros what was going to happen to the archival boxes that had been being stored at 164 Linden St. Ms. Medeiros indicated that they'd be relocated to a small storage building at the top of Linden Street. Chair Foster asked Ms. Kirk whether she had any more questions for Ms. Medeiros regarding rebooting the Cooks Bridge After-School Program and starting a new afterschool program for the High Rock families. Ms. Kirk said she had none.

Chair Foster then invited Mr. Scheideler to continue with his questions. Mr. Scheideler started by reading a written statement addressing the mission of the NHA. He made an analogy to the TV show Blue Bloods and how the philosophy of its leading characters

applies to the NHA. Mr. Scheideler went on to state that the elected NHA Commissioners work at the pleasure of the Town voters have elected them, except for the state appointed Commissioner, and that we all work for the NHA residents. Mr. Scheideler went on to state that the NHA Executive Director works at the “pleasure” of the of the Board of Commissioners and also works for the same residents of the Needham Housing Authority. Mr. Scheideler went on to state that the NHA residents are made up of adults and children. The NHA is not going to “change the trajectory” of the adults, but we can make major changes in the trajectory of the children of the NHA.

Mr. Scheideler went on to recount some of the history of the Cooks Bridge After-School program. Several years ago, the Governor cited the High Rock and Elliot Schools for a tremendous increase in MCAS scores, and the Principal at Elliot attributed that increase to the Cooks Bridge After-School program. Contributing to the success were the tutors brought in from Babson, Olin, Nobels and the Needham High School.

Mr. Scheideler then recounted a recent tour by Ms. Kirk of the Cooks After-School rooms. Ms. Kirk discovered that all of the “accumulated support materials” were missing, and that one of the rooms was being used by the NHA’s part-time investigator. Ms. Kirk felt that she did not receive a satisfactory response to her questions as to what had happened. She received three different explanations.

Mr. Scheideler went on to cite various quotations from a one of three commissioners manual that have been used by the NHA over the years. In one form or another, the quotations read by Mr. Scheideler addressed the oversight responsibilities of Commissioners, and the methods for exercising that oversight.

Having concluded the reading his statement, Mr. Scheideler started to make a motion, but Mr. Foster interrupted him, stating that the Chair had not yet opened the floor to motions. Rather, we were doing Q & A on Ms. Medeiros’ status update on the After-School Program reboot, and we had not yet heard from all other Commissioners. Ms. Medeiros asked Mr. Scheideler if he had any questions, and Mr. Scheideler said he didn’t want to ask any questions, he just wanted to make a motion.

Chair Foster then asked Ms. Bennett whether she had any thoughts, questions or comments for Ms. Medeiros. Ms. Bennett said she had very deep feelings for the Cooks Bridge community room and After-School Program. She worried that children were not attending/returning because the program is not staffed by the right person. While the Covid pandemic has certainly been a big part of the problem over the past 15 months, yet over recent years she’s seen the program dwindle away. It’s really important to get the program rebooted, because there will always be new families that need the program.

Chair Foster then asked Ms. Evans if she had any questions or comments. She responded that she’s just in “listening mode” for now, but might have questions later.

Chair Foster then closed the Q&A period and invited Mr. Scheideler to make motion he’s been wanting to make. Mr. Scheideler said:

“I make a motion that the Executive Director schedule a meeting with Reg, Angie, Deb, Deondre and Commissioner Kirk in attendance; that this meeting should be scheduled for next week to discuss and determine what happened to all the supplies and materials that are now missing and to determine how to prevent that from happening again. Also

the in-house detective is an outside contractor and therefore should not be given an office on the premises, especially in an after-school study room. I move that he will not be allowed to use that study room.”

After a moment of thought, Chair Foster ruled that Mr. Scheideler’s motion out of order because he did not inform the Chair in advance of his intention to do make the motion, and also because the subject matter was not on the duly posted agenda for tonight’s meeting. Mr. Scheideler replied that he thought he could introduce his statement and the motion and as “New Business”, and that he also thought they were sufficiently related to the “Status Update: After School Program” agenda item that is on the posted agenda.

Chair Foster, Mr. Scheideler, Ms. Kirk continued to debate to the role of the commissioners; whether or not Mr. Foster knew about Mr. Scheideler’s and Ms. Kirk’s intentions while finalizing the meeting’s posted agenda; and the applicability of the Open Meeting Law to the situation. At the end of the discussion, after listening to all points of view, Chair Foster reiterated that he would still rule that the motion out of order. Mr. Scheideler said he’d like to re-introduce the motion at the next Board meeting.

Chair Foster then ruled that it was in order to pose the question contained in Mr. Scheideler’s and Ms. Kirk’s motion to Executive Director Medeiros, and asked her to reply. Ms. Medeiros responded that when Covid closed down the program in March 2020, she asked Deondre to identify all supplies and materials worth saving. The remaining stuff was thrown away.

Ms. Kirk said this was the first time she heard this explanation. Ms. Medeiros disagreed. Ms. Medeiros went on to say that the stuff that was discarded was old books, broken crayons, and the like.

There being no more questions about the reboot of the After-School Programs, Chair Foster proposed the following. For the next Board meeting, let’s see if we can work in a more cooperative way. If a Board member wants to introduce a complex new motion that is preceded by a lengthy statement to be read into the record, he recommends that the Board member give it to the Chair in advance so the Chair isn’t surprised and forced to make a ruling on an instantaneous basis. This approach also avoids the possibility that the Chair, hearing the statement/motion for the first time, might mis-hear or misunderstood the motion, and rule incorrectly.

Chair Foster also opined that there seems to be a lack of common understand with regard to the oversight responsibilities of the Board and the day-to-day management responsibilities of the Executive Director and her staff. He will work to come up with a proposed solution and bring it to the Board at our next meeting.

Before closing out the After-School Program agenda item, Chair Foster said he wanted to give his views on what he heard in the status update report, noting that he was speaking as a single commissioner and not as the Board as a whole. Mr. Foster commended Ms. Medeiros and the NHA staff for what has been done so far to reboot the Cooks Bridge program, and also especially getting something going for the High Rock families. He thought it’s a great idea to involve the Needham Schools with the problem-solving, especially because they have millions of dollars of resources. He thought it’s a great idea to use the 164 Linden St. building for a High Rock after-school program and community room. Mr. Foster doesn’t have a comment yet whether it’s a better idea to recreate the Cook’s Bridge After-School

program as it was before, or whether there's a different way it can be recreated in a way that takes more advantage what the Needham Schools have to offer...he didn't think he had enough information to form an opinion yet. Again speaking as an individual commissioner, he encouraged Ms. Medeiros to move "full speed head" in her rebooting initiatives. Whether supplies should have been thrown out or not, he feels it's the Board's responsibility to help find new supplies and the funding for the relaunched programs in the Fall.

Chair Foster closed out the agenda item by again saying he'd like to see if we can have a more constructive discussion at next month's Board meeting.

A resident asked whether there should be resident input at this point, and Chair Foster said of course there needs to be resident input, but he honestly didn't feel that the Board and staff "had their act together" sufficiently to hear the input tonight.

**9. Information & Discussion: Executive Directors Report, Financial Report, Vacancy Report, Workorder Report.**

Chair Foster asked Ms. Medeiros to highlight any other items she felt were important in her monthly report, and whether the Commissioners had any questions. Ms. Medeiros said she decided against submitting a proposal to the Hopkinton Housing Authority. In response to a question from Ms. Kirk, she said the NHA parking sticker logo is being redesigned to have a graphics-only logo, so a casual observer would not know what it is.

HUD has announced a new onsite lunch program. Ms. Medeiros is looking into getting that started up. Ms. Tambeau will be reaching out to those residents in need.

Since things are calming down with COVID-19, the daily sanitation program will come to an end.

Chair Foster asked for a status update re: filling the vacant units at Linden/Chambers. Ms. Medeiros said that 6 new residents moving in soon and the momentum continues..

**10. Approval: NHA Bill/Check Warrant June 17,2021**

**RESOLUTION #2020-168**

To approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant dated June 17, 2021, in the amount of \$314,855.01 as follows:

Section 8: 112 vouchers	\$ 134,504.00
Payroll checks (5/19/20201) #502139-502152	\$ 10,910.46
Payroll checks (5/26/20201) #502153-502166	\$ 10,767.74
Payroll checks (6/2/2021) #502167-502182	\$ 10,913.75
Payroll checks (5/5/2021) #5020109-502124	\$ 11,330.87
A/P Checks (5/21/2021) #33520-#33521	\$ 2,746.00
A/P Checks (6/10/2021) #33522-#33574	\$ 133,682.19

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.

**11. Approval: HRH LCC Bill/Check Warrant**

**RESOLUTION #HRH2020-35**

To approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant dated June 17,2021, 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 Evans, it was approved unanimously by a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Motion to adjourn by Chair Foster and seconded by Commissioner Bennett, it was approved by a vote of 5 in favor.