

NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

HIGH ROCK HOMES LLC MEETING

ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday May 20, 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 May 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:

Chair Foster began by letting everyone know the Board will be going into executive session at the end this evening’s portion of public meeting, then adjourning without reconvening in open meeting.

Chair Foster also noted that due to the expiration of Governor Baker’s emergency order, we may need to resume meeting in person starting with the June Board meeting.

Resident Input:

Kalpna Shah questioned if there will be a security camera in the parking lot. Chair Foster stated that we’ll get to all security camera-related questions during the first agenda item, and residents then will have an opportunity to pose questions and express opinions. So in this portion of the meeting, he’s inviting resident input on all other questions.

Ms. Kalpana went on to note that there are many open work orders; she would like to know if a residents can get a note when maintenance is done to their apartments. She requested that the paper be used instead of doing everything electronically. Ms. Medeiros responded that she will follow up on this idea.

Sue Biasizzo inquired about Ms. Slutsky going around looking at the bushes growing on buildings, she believed it would be better to get a professional landscaper since maintenance is not trained and are already short staffed. She stated the website has very old policies and guidelines from 2007, residents are supposed to be getting handbooks. Ms. Medeiros noted she updated the handbook last year and will investigate if new residents have been getting the handbook when they move in. Ms. Biasizzo suggested a robo-call to see how many residents would like an updated handbook, and that she would like to review the updated handbook to see if anything needs to be updated or changed. Ms. Medeiros will send her a copy.

Some people are having trouble accessing the website. Ms. Medeiros will look into this.

Ross Donald thank Ms. Biasizzo for her input and agreed with her on getting professional landscapers. Also, can the 5 Chambers St community room be open on the weekends, not just daily 9-5? He also expressed concern about gas powered maintenance machinery as it is not good for the natural environment.

Ms. Medeiros responded: now that the Covid situation is better, we'll be going back to regular hours for the community rooms and locks will be changed to provide resident access. Regarding getting a landscaper, she'll ask Mr. Kuphal to get a few quotes. But the NHA budget can't afford much, which is why we rely on resident volunteers. Chair Foster added that everyone is supports electric lawn mowers for environmental reasons, however they are double the price and it is not currently in the budget.

1. Discussion: Security Cameras for NHA Properties

Chair Foster said he was aware that there was a divergence of opinion. Some residents thought that installing a CCTV system is a great idea to improve security at NHA properties. Other residents thought it was a bad idea...creepy, an invasion of privacy and "big brother watching you".

Chair Foster continued by providing some history. The demand for security cameras at NHA started after the dreadful murder of Laura Shifrina on May 31, 2017. There were several months of meetings with understandably upset NHA residents...how could this happen?

At the end of 2017, the Board voted to make two changes to meet the concerns of residents. The judgement was: if these safety measures had been placing, the Laura Shifrina might not have happened.

- The first was to upgrade NHA's background checking process from using the State CORI system(which only checks in-state records and has other shortcomings), to the Federal Interstate Identification Index background check (which contains records from all states.)
- The second was to seek funding to install security cameras at the Linden/Chambers and Seabeds/Cook properties

At the time, one particularly compelling argument for installing a CCTV system was: most other big buildings and apartment complexes in Needham have CCTV systems. If it is a best practice in the private sector, then it should be a best practice for the NHA.

Chair Foster then invited resident input on this agenda item.

Ross Donald was against the idea at first, but he now would like to propose a remote program that allows certain individuals to check their videos, himself and others have remote cameras in their windows. If there is a community of people may be more familiar if they had a personal remote camera.

Richard Day commented on the fact that he wrote a letter on to the Board on this topic and he is opposed to installing a CCTV system focused on the apartments, because it's an invasion of privacy. He doesn't think it's a problem having security cams for the NHA maintenance facilities. He thinks spending tens of thousands of dollars for cameras watching the dumpsters is ridiculous. If there's a problem with illegal use of NHA dumpsters, the town should enact a fine for illegally dumping, and/or put up a sign stating "residents only". A much better use of the money involved would be towards modernization and redevelopment.

Jessica Reese asked if there was any information about how many cameras there'd be and the locations in which they'd be installed. or if there is any information"? Ms. Medeiros affirmed that she hasn't received and proposals yet. The NHA will be relying on the professional expertise of the security companies to propose where and how many cameras we need.

Ms. Shah suggested that the residents should be able to see who is at the door.

Mrs. Kirk comments that there are pros and cons to having cameras, but she would suggest using as few cameras as possible.

Laurie _____ supports the installation of security cameras, but she does not think that many cameras are necessary. Too many cameras is an invasion of privacy; she understands the parking areas and driveways and dumpsters but not so many as it seems like a lot of money.

Sue Biasizzo recommends having 1 to 2 residents be involved to review the recommended CCTV camera configuration. Ms. Kirk mentioned that the Needham Police Department monitors the area and we don't want to give the impression that we're a "police state."

Mr. Scheideler questioned if investigator Angel Rosario would be replaced if the CCTV are to go up? Ms. Medeiros responded that he would not be. Mr. Scheideler wanted to know what his role would then be. Ms. Medeiros responded Mr. Rosario himself does not do a security camera-type function. But might certainly use the CCTV tapes if needed for investigating a case. She noted that Mr. Rosario is used to investigate and document matters involving certain lease violations and other resident incidents that must be dealt with, in a legally airtight way.

Chair Foster suggested that when we're closer to CCTV implementation, the Board should probably consider approving a policy on how the system is used, which NHA

staff has access to the live feeds and tapes, retention time for the tapes, etc. He suggested the Ms. Medeiros consult with other LHA's for example policies we can use as a template.

Mr. Kuphal added that the currently security cameras were installed in 2015 because someone rented the community room, some items in a car were stolen. There were also issues with other tenants vandalizing the office so cameras were placed at those locations. "There is no exact number of cameras being installed now, it is only an estimate". He made the point that if something were to happen to someone else or someone else's family, the housing authority will be questioned why there was not enough cameras.

Chair Foster thanked all involved for a constructive discussion of the pros/cons. He hoped everyone had a better understanding of the issues. He will continue to put this topic on the monthly Board agendas for regular status updates.

2. Approval: NHA Federal 5 Year Capital Funding Plan

Ms. Medeiros introduced the agenda item. NHA staff developed a 2021-2026 five year capital funding request. A public hearing was noticed and held to receive input from residents and other members of the public. Now, the NHA Board must approve the plan before it can be submitted to HUD.

Ms. Bennett questioned if the Plan could be revised yearly within the 5 years, and whether additions and subtractions can be made. Yes, Ms. Medeiros replied. The Plan can be adjusted annually, as conditions change.

Ms. Kirk stated that while funding paving and roofs are important, there has been shade in the playground in the past, and this should be considered again.

Ms. Kirk also asked about the remodeling of the kitchens as they are in need. Mr. Kuphal explained the NHA gets approximately \$300,000/year for everything, which is not enough to go around. Top priority has to be given to keeping roofs and siding weather tight, or buildings potentially become uninhabitable.

RESOLUTION #2021-156

Chair Foster made a motion to approve NHA Federal 5 Year Capital Funding Plan for 2021-2026. The motion was seconded by Mr. Scheideler. The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion 5-0.

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

Chair Foster reported that the RFP approved by the Board last month was issued on April 28, 2021. The RFP was duly noticed in the Needham Times, the Central Register and other places as required by Chapter 30B. We also conducted a proactive campaign to get the word out, using the resources of CHAPA (Citizens' Housing & Planning Association.)

An optional site visit was held on May 12, 2021, attended by two prospective RFP respondents. As of this date, three prospective respondents have indicated an intention to submit a proposal.

Proposals are due May 28, 2021. Chair Foster went on to discuss the how the process works through proposal selection, all done strictly “by-the-book” in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 30B.

Given the complexity of the factors to be weighted, Chief Purchasing Officer (CPO) Angie Medeiros and Chair Foster intend to convene a Proposal Selection Committee be established. Technically under Chapter 30B, whether or not to have a selection committee is at the sole decision of the the CPO...Board approval is not involved. But given the importance of the selection to the future of the NHA, Ms. Medeiros intends to form a selection committee. She is briefing the Board, and is interested in receiving input.

The Proposal Selection Committee will be comprised of representatives that bring difference skills and perspectives to the selection process. The Selection Committee conduct the detailed evaluation, check references and submit a recommendation report to the Board. The full Board will approve the proposal that is “most advantageous” to the Needham Housing Authority.

The desired composition of the Selection Committee will be, at a minimum: Ms. Medeiros, Gary Kuhpal, Mr. Foster, an NHA resident, a 2nd NHA Commissioner, a neighbor and a representative of the Town of Needham.

Mrs. Kirk and Ms. Bennett believes there should be representatives from both tenant’s associations, as their perspective are likely to be different. Ms. Medeiros and Chair Foster said they’d try to do this. Mrs. Kirk also suggested reaching out to the Equal Justice Needham group for a Selection Committee member. This will be looked into.

4. NHA Resident-Commissioner Seat – Process for converting from Town-elected to Select Board-Appointed

Chair Foster briefed the Board on the background of this agenda item.

At the beginning of 2021, DHCD finally determined the process for ensuring that at least one commissioner on the Needham Housing Authority Board is a resident-commissioner. This change has been pending since legislation was enacted in 2014. DHCD PHN 2021-01 mandated how the transition is to be made.

The new law goes into effect last week on May 15, 2021. After this date, the next elected NHA commissioner seat to become vacant, either by expiration of its term otherwise (resignation, etc.), is converted into a commissioner seat that is appointed by the Needham Select Board from a slate of nominees submitted by the NHA tenant association(s).

The next elected seat whose term expires is Penny Kirk’s. Her term is up in April 2023. NHA is also fortunate to have a long tradition of having a resident-commissioners. We already have a resident-commissioner...Janice Bennet. She was elected in April 2021 and her term expires in April 2026.

PHN 2021-01 makes allowance for towns that already have an elected resident-commissioner. The NHA and the Town can file a waiver stating that the incumbent's resident commissioner seat should become seat that is converted into the Select Board-appointed seat. In other words in Needham's case, Janice Bennett's elected seat becomes the Town appointed elected seat in April 2026. The waive would need to be filed each year for the next five years.

Chair Foster is seeking a sense of the Board as to whether to we should wait until 2023 for Penny Kirk's seat to become vacant (and thus convert from an elected seat to a Select Board-appointed resident-commissioner's seat.) Or should we endorse submitting the waiver to DHCD designating Janice Bennett's seat to be the resident-commissioner seat.

Chair Foster has consulted with the Chair of the Select Board and the Town Manager. They would like to schedule this matter for consideration on the agenda of the June 8, 2021 Select Board meeting.

After some discussion among and between the Board members, the following resolution was voted upon.

RESOLUTION #2021-162

To approve the submission of a one year waiver to DHCD designating Janice Bennett's seat as the seat that will converted to the Select Board-appointed seat in April 2026.

Upon a motion made by Chair Foster and seconded by Mr. Kirk, the motion was *unanimously approved* by a vote of 5-0 in favor.

5. Gas Grill Policy

Ms. Medeiros provided the background for this agenda item. The NHA does not have an up-to-date Gas Grill Policy. Our residents have numerous gas grills of various different types, some safer than others. Grills are situated in various different locations, some that are safe and some that could pose a fire or smoke hazard to residents. In many cases, there is no provision for fire extinguisher in case of emergency.

Ms. Medeiros is requesting that the Board approve the Gas Grill Policy included in the Board packet.

After some discussion, the Board considered the following resolution.

RESOLUTION #2021-163

To approve the NHA Gas Grill Policy

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

6. NUARI Vision Statement

Chair Foster reported that, as we all know, a Town-sanctioned Committee Needham Unites Against Racism Initiative (NUARI) has been working since Spring 2020 to make recommendations that would address systemic discrimination in Needham. Their first report was delivered to Spring 2021 Town Meeting earlier this month. NUARI proposed

a warrant article containing Vision Statement for the Town (the text of which is in our Board packet), and recommended that it be adopted by Town Meeting. Town Meeting did approve the Vision Statement by unanimous consent.

NUARI also recommended that all other Needham boards and committees adopt the Vision Statement at their next regular meeting. Chair Foster recommended that the NHA Board adopt the Vision Statement, and the other Commissioners heartily concurred.

RESOLUTION #2021-164

To approve and adopt the NUARI Vision Statement for the Needham Housing Authority.

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

7. Juneteenth Holiday

Juneteenth (June 19 every year) has been adopted by Massachusetts General Court as an annual State holiday for State employees. However technically, NHA employees are not State employees. Ms. Medeiros believes that the Board should consider adopting this holiday for our NHA workers.

Chair Foster noted that the NHA is currently in collective bargaining with our union. There are already 12 holidays in the agreement. Chair Foster recommended that the Board take this matter under advisement pending input from the negotiation process. The Board concurred.

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

After a brief discussion and the identification of typos and minor corrections, the Board approved the following minutes.

RESOLUTION #2021-166

To approve Minutes of the following Board Meetings:

- 4/15/2021 Regular NHA Board Meeting
- 4/15/2021 High Rock Homes LLC Board Meeting

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

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

Ms. Medeiros presented highlights from her executive director report. She called the Board's attention to two new reports covering rental collections and work order turnaround. She went over the data in the reports. In their first exposure to the numbers, Ms. Kirk and Mr. Scheideler were concerned as to whether the reports were accurate. Ms. Medeiros said she'd look into their concerns and reconfirm whether the reports were

accurate. Mrs. Evans expressed appreciation of Ms. Medeiros efforts to provide the Board with these new reports.

Given the amounts of rent in arrears, Mr. Scheideler asked if NHA residents should be taking advantage of the new Needham rental assistance program. Ms. Medeiros reminded Mr. Scheideler that as an LHA, we could already make rent adjustments with tenants based on changes to their income, and we don't need to take advantage of the Needham rental assistance program.

Mrs. Kirk questioned "If the Wi-Fi was working in the community room"? Ms. Medeiros explained it is working and she has updated it to high speed. She also brought up the parking stickers and what needs to be changed regarding the logo.

Ms. Medeiros also said she was considering submitting a proposal to the Hopkinton Housing Authority, for NHA to take over management of the LHA. Mrs. Evans expressed her concern of being over-taxed by taking on the management of another housing authority. Ms. Bennett and Mrs. Kirk expressed the same concern.

10. Approval: NHA Bill/Check Warrant

RESOLUTION #2020-167

To approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant dated May 20, 2021, in the amount of \$339,280.26 as follows:

Section 8: 113 vouchers	\$ 135,829.00
Payroll checks (4/15/2020) #502060-502074	\$ 11,333.78
Payroll checks (4/22/2020) #502075-502095	\$ 13,524.30
Payroll checks (3/28/2021) #502096-502108	\$ 10,312.69
Payroll checks (5/5/2021) #5020109-502124	\$ 11,858.70
Payroll checks (5/12/2021) #502125-502138	\$ 11,476.48
A/P Checks 1 st batch (4/29/2021) #33442-#33480	\$ 88,466.29
A/P Checks 2 nd batch (5/12/2021) #33483-#33519	\$ 56,282.02

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

11. Approval: HRH LLC Bill/Check Warrant

RESOLUTION #HRH-34

To approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant dated May 20, 2021 in the amount of \$29,888.55 as follows:

A/P Checks (4/30/2020) #3130-3134	\$ 12,219.66
A/P Checks (5/12/2020) #3135-3137	\$ 17,668.89

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

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MINUTES OF THE NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY

ANNUAL MEETING

MAY 20, 2021

1. Call to Order

Chair Foster called to order the May, 20 2020 Annual Meeting of the Needham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, and called the roll. The following Commissioners were present:

Reginald C. Foster
Penny Kirk
Eleanor Evans
Ed Scheideler
Janice Bennet

2. Election of the 2021-22 Officers: Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasure

Having declared a quorum, Chair Foster moved to the first agenda item. He opened the floor to a discussion and presentation of nominations for NHA Officers. Mr. Foster also announce that he'd received notice that he'd be re-appointed to a new five year term as the State-designated Commissioner on the NHA Board.

After a thorough discussion by all the Commissioners as to which of us would be most advantageous to the NHA in which positions, Mr. Scheideler proposed the following slate:

Chair – Reg Foster
Vice-Chair – Eleanor Evans
Treasurer – Ed Scheideler

As called for in the NHA Bylaws, Executive Director Angie Medeiros would continue to serve as ex-officio Secretary of the Board.

RESOLUTION #AM-01

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Scheideler and seconded by Ms. Bennett, the following slate of NHA 2021-22 Officers *approved unanimously* by a vote of 5-0 in favor:

Chair – Reginald C.
Foster
Vice-Chair – Eleanor Evans
Treasurer – Ed Scheideler

Mrs. Kirk would like to see if anyone is interested such as Ms. Bennett in her CPC position. Chair Foster asked, "If anyone else is interested"? He would like to hold off on voting until the position is explained to Ms. Bennett.

3. NHA-Designated Nominee to the Community Preservation Committee

Ms. Kirk is presently the NHA’s CPC designee and has 2 years to run on her term. Due to time constraints, Ms. Kirk would like to step down and have another person take over the remainder of her term. Chair Foster noted that Needham Town Bylaws require that this CPC seat be filled by a sitting NHA Commissioner, i. e one of us.

After some discussion, this matter was tabled for further action in a future meeting.

4. NHA Nominee to the Council on Aging

Chair Foster said when he last checked, Sandra Prinn was the NHA’s representative. However, when he looked to see if the CoA is still meeting during this Covid period, he couldn’t find anything out. Chair Foster and Ms. Medeiros will look into this matter further and report back to the Board.

5. Resolution Authorizing any Two Commissioners to be able to sign Checks

By way of background, Chair Foster reminded Commissioners that the NHA Bylaws state that all NHA checks must be signed by the Treasure and one other commissioner. For administrative flexibility, it has been the practice of the NHA to authorize that any two commissioners can sign checks. Accordingly the following resolution was considered.

RESOLUTION #AM-02

To authorize that any two NHA Commissioners can sign NHA checks.

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

6. Discussion: Best Date and Time for Regular NHA Monthly Board Meetings

It has been the Board’s practice at the Annual Meeting to review the best date/time for our regular monthly meetings. During the Covid period, it has been the 3rd Thursday of each month at 6pm.

Mrs. Evans noted that sometime in the near future, she would have to return to in-person work at her office, at which point the 6pm start time would become impossible because of rush hour traffic. Chair Foster, Mrs. Kirk and Mr. Scheideler stated that their schedules are flexible, Ms. Bennett stated meetings on the earlier side than on the late side.

The Board decided to defer further discussion to the June 17, 2021 meeting, which will continue to be held at 6pm.

7. Annual Report by Executive Director

The NHA Bylaws call for Executive Director to present and Annual Report to the NHA Board each year. The report was included in the Board Packet.

8. Adjournment

A Motion to Adjourn the Regular Meetings of the NHA and HRH LLC, and to adjourn the NHA Annual Meeting, was made by Chair Foster and seconded by Commissioner Bennett.

Chair Foster noted for the record that the NHA would immediately be reconvening in Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation, whereby such discussion if in an open meeting, may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the NHA.

The motion was approved 5-0 by a roll call vote as follows

Mr. Foster – Aye
Ms. Evans – Aye
Mr. Scheideler – Aye
Ms. Kirk – Aye
Ms. Bennett -- Aye