

**NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

MINUTES

**NHA REGULAR BOARD MEETING
HIGH ROCK HOMES LLC BOARD MEETING
Thursday, January 20, 2022, 7:30 PM**

ROLL CALL BY CHAIR FOSTER TO CONVENE THE REGULAR MEETINGS

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

NHA STAFF PRESENT:

Angie Medeiros, Executive Director
Gary Kuphal, Facilities, and Maintenance

GUESTS: Timothy Marciante, Marcum Accounts
Paula Dickerman, Equal Justice Needham (EJN)

Chair Foster called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM and called the roll. All Commissioners present were present. The Secretary of the Needham Housing Authority (NHA) provided adequate notice of this meeting by preparing a Public Notice dated January 14, 2022, setting forth the meeting's date, time, and place. 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:

There were no Chair Announcements.

RESIDENT/TENANT INPUT:

Chair Foster stated that the residents in attendance are Ross Donald, Sue Biasizzo, Jessica Reese, Kalpana Shaw, Richard Dey, and Steve Scarfati.

Ross Donald commented that it is hard to keep up with the meetings. He stated that there have been several meetings that residents have attended either with the consultants or at the NHA presentation to the CPC. He said he was not aware of these meetings and would have liked to be included in the announcements for the meetings. He expressed concern for poor communication and coordination on these matters.

Chair Foster stated that there is a proactive outreach effort to let residents know about the meetings whenever the NHA has a meeting.

Sue Biasizzo stated that there was a meeting this evening with the Public Safety Officer, Angel Rosario, and she had a chance to meet Angel. Sue Biasizzo asked if Deb Tambeau was still working as Resident Services Director and how often. Executive Director Medeiros replied in the affirmative, noting that that Deb Tre... is on vacation.

AGENDA AND DISCUSSION

A. Presentation and Review: 2020 NHA and High Rock Homes Audit Reports

Chair Foster welcomed NHA's Auditor Timothy Marciante from Marcum LLP. Chair Foster stated that Mr. Marciante had completed the 2020 Financial Statements for the Needham Housing Authority and High Rock Homes, LLC. Chair Foster noted that Mr. Marciante had been scheduled for the November 2021 meeting agenda for our annual meeting with our auditors. However, the presentation was deferred to tonight's meeting because of too many other agenda items in the November and December meetings. Chair Foster then invited Mr. Marciante to share a summary of the finding of the 2020 NHA Audit and the HRH Audit.

Mr. Marciante started with the NHA Audit. He referred to the summary page of the Audit Report. He stated that despite the lengthy report that has been issued, the summary page provides a summary of everything in the Audit for the year ending December 31, 2020. He stated that the Audit involves financial statements and federal awards. He reported that the NHA had received an unqualified opinion, meaning that in the independent auditor's judgment, the NHA's financial statements were fairly and appropriately presented. This is the cleanest opinion to receive from an audit with no weakness or significant deficiencies noted. Further, there was no non-compliance related to the financial statements and federal awards. Mr. Marciante noted that the NHA is listed as a low-risk auditee.

Mr. Marciante continued with management discussion and analysis. He stated that total revenues increased by \$1.6 million from the prior year, while total expenses increased by \$447,686. He reported that the current ratio, which is the current assets over current liabilities, increased during the year from 8.05 to 9.49. He also noted that the NHA's total debt decreased from \$4,282,073 to \$4,250,544. Mr. Marciante provided a summary of revenue, expenses, and changes in net cash positions. Mr. Marciante provided an overview of the statement of cash flows, highlighting that the NHA is operating in a healthy manner.

Mr. Marciante then moved on to the 2020 High Rock Homes LLC audit and provided a high-level summary of the audited financials and audit findings. He stated that there is nothing to be concerned about. He noted that the operating loss is less than the prior year. He noted an increase in revenue of \$21K. He stated that overall, the NHA is in good financial condition.

The Commissioners expressed their appreciation to Mr. Marciante for the helpful report. Commissioners also expressed their appreciation to Executive Director Medeiros for the excellent financial management of the housing authority. Chair Foster concurred, noting that 2020 is Ms. Medeiros' first full year as executive director. In 2019 and years past, NHA had never received a "clean audit" report. Chair Foster closed by notifying Mr. Marciante that the NHA is embarking on the Modernization and Redevelopment Initiative, and an orientation session for Mr. Marciante and his team should probably be scheduled.

B. Annual Resident Survey (including survey information submitted by EJN)

Chair Foster welcomed Paula Dickerman from Equal Justice Needham. He stated that there are two Resident Surveys to review, one was initiated by EJN in the Spring of 2020, and Executive

Director Medeiros initiated the other in October 2020. Chair Foster invited Ms. Dickerman to talk about EJM and present survey findings.

Ms. Dickerman stated that she is a volunteer with EJM, a diverse and multigenerational grassroots group of concerned community members from Needham, Massachusetts, formed through local organizing in solidarity with the national uprisings over the police murder of George Floyd in late May 2020. Ms. Dickerman stated that EJM supports NHA as the largest provider of affordable housing in Needham. She said EJM had a desire to learn more about the NHA and thought it would be a good idea to talk with residents of the NHA. She stated that EJM reached out to 10 residents at the various NHA properties and had a lovely conversation with them. Ms. Dickerman stated that EJM thought it would be helpful for the NHA to share a report. She summarized her report and stated that EJM found that residents wanted anonymity. They are grateful to live in housing they can afford in a town like Needham. They liked having maintenance on site and liked having that neighborhood feeling. She stated that safety was not an issue. She added that some of the non-English speaking residents could use more assistance. She stated that the most significant message was the need for more programming and better communication.

Chair Foster opened the floor to questions and comments, noting for the record that Commissioners Scheideler and Kirk are members of EJM. Commissioner Kirk mentioned that she applied for a Needham Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) grant to have several acapella groups entertain residents with a special performance for children. She stated that the grant is for \$750. She stated that this would help with the need to have more programming. Chair Foster asked how EJM came up with the sampling of residents. Ms. Dickerman responded that EJM reached out to a resident who suggested some people. Chair Foster had several questions on recommendations within the EJM report. A brief discussion followed.

Chair Foster invited Executive Director Medeiros to present the first Annual NHA Resident Survey findings. Executive Director Medeiros stated that surveys were sent to residents of Captain Robert Cook Drive, High Rock Estates, Seabeds Way, Chambers, and Linden for a total of 252 surveys. She stated that she received 52 surveys back. She referred to the previously distributed bar chart summarizing the survey results to questions on how satisfied residents are with their units, building, property maintenance, property management, and social services. Executive Director Medeiros stated that overall, most residents are pretty happy, as you can see from the chart.

Chair Foster opened the floor to questions and comments, plus suggested improvements for the October 2022 annual survey. Commissioner Kirk stated that going forward she would like to see the questions from the EJM survey and the NHA survey mutually combined. She would like an opportunity to review the October 2021 surveys and comments from residents. Ms. Medeiros said she would follow up to distribute the surveys to the commissioners. But since the NHA promised anonymity, first she would have to redact personally identifiable information from some of the surveys.

Commissioner Bennett commented that the level of communication is important. She added that kindness goes a long way. Ms. Dickerman noted that the Needham Public Health Department conducted an extensive Resident Survey in 2018/2019. Chair Foster stated that the staff and Board took that survey under consideration for two or three months and developed an Action Plan to address the findings.

Chair Foster suggested that we ask the NHA executive director and staff to think about the input and suggestions for improvement received tonight. At a later board meeting (perhaps this

summer), the executive director can present the proposed, improved October 2022 annual survey document and methodology.

C. Status Update:

1. COVID Pandemic – Omicron Spike

Executive Director Medeiros provided an update on the uptick in Covid cases due to the Omicron Variant. She reported that staff had sent out a letter to residents notifying them that masks are now required in all common areas.

2. Freeze on Transfers unless an Emergency Case

Executive Director Medeiros stated that there had been over 17 transfers. She stated that this is overloading the maintenance staff and that she is placing a hold on transfers with the exception of an emergency situation until the maintenance staff has a chance to catch up.

3. Housing Plan Working Group

Commissioner Scheideler stated that the group held its first official meeting on December 9 the same day as the NHA Budget meeting and as such he was not able to attend. He presented a status report from the minutes of that meeting. The next meeting is tomorrow night, so he will have another status update at the February board meeting.

4. Community Preservation Committee

Chair Foster provided an update on the NHA's four proposals to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) on January 12, 2022. He noted that Cambridge Housing attended this presentation as well. He stated that CPC expressed strong support for the proposals. Chair Foster reported that the CPC Liaisons to the NHA are Laura Dorfman, Rick Zimbone, and Chris Gerstel. He also stated that CPC would like to receive a high-level timeline for Seabeds Way/Cooks, High Rock Holmes, and Linden/Chambers from the NHA for these projects. Chair Foster also mention that there is a funding request increase... He stated that there will be a public hearing in March. The following week the CPC will determine which projects would go before Town Meeting in May.

5. Modernization and Redevelopment Initiative Update (Foster)

Chair Foster reminded the Board of the two 12/15/2021 meetings held by CHA with NHA residents on the Modernization and Redevelopment Initiative. He noted that residents that attended these meetings were quite appreciative of the presentation. He stated that on December 21, CHA, Angie Medeiros, and he presented to the Select Board the four proposals for CPA funding. On January 5th a presentation was given to EJM Housing Subcommittee on the four proposals for CPA funding. He reiterated the January 12 CPC meeting as well as a meeting with Representative Denise Garlick on the same day thanking her for her support and her help in securing ARPA (America Rescue Plan Act) Funding. Chair Foster added that he and Executive Director Medeiros reached out to the newly elected Select Board member, Kevin Keane. A Needham Housing Authority 101 meeting with him is scheduled for February 1, 2022. Chair Foster noted the CHA monthly status report which went out to the Board under a separate cover.

D. Approval: Change order on the Chamber replacement door project

Executive Director Medeiros stated that this is a change order for selective replacement of one side jamb in 10 doors, including new strikes installation and finish carpentry.

RESOLUTION #2022-192

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to approve the K&G Remodeling change order to the Chambers exterior door project.

Discussion:

Commissioner Kirk commented that the doors are a big improvement. She also commented that the nameplates have been updated which is a huge improvement.

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

**E. Approval: NHA Bill/Check Warrant
RESOLUTION #2022-193**

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant dated January 20, 2022, in the amount of \$412,107.79.

Discussion:

Commissioner Scheideler asked if checks are mailed before the Warrant is approved. Executive Director Medeiros stated that she implements two check runs every month to pay vendors within thirty days. Commissioner Scheideler stated that when a check warrant is ready to be signed, a list of the check register could and should be sent electronically to Commissioners for their consideration. If any commissioner has a question on any individual payment, he or she can get back to Executive Director Medeiros within a 24-hour timeframe.

Commissioner Kirk had several questions on various checks. Executive Director Medeiros responded affirmatively with her answers.

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

**F. Approval: HRH LLC Bill/Check Warrant
RESOLUTION #HRH2022-42**

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Kirk to approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant dated January 20, 2022, in the amount of \$55,633.04.

Discussion – None

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

G. Information and Discussion: Executive Director's Report, Financial Report, Vacancy Report, and Work Order Report

Executive Director Medeiros stated that she's discovered that erroneous vacancy reports were being delivered in past board packets because of a data timing issue. From now on, she will be sending vacancy reports to the Board from the previous month and not for the current month, which she had been doing. For example, the February 2022 board meeting packet will contain the January 2022 vacancy report.

Executive Director Medeiros took a moment to thank Rep. Denise Garlick on behalf of the NHA and its residents for securing state-aide funding for capital improvements for the Linden-Chambers in the amount of \$1.25 million and \$1.5 million.

Executive Director Medeiros reported on her conversations with DHCD and HUD regarding the 2022 NHA Budget, which went smoothly. In particular, they supported putting unit #42 Capt. Robert Cook Drive back online, returning the space at 28 Capt. Robert Cook Drive to residents for a community room/after-school program and finding off-site leased office space for the NHA administrative staff.

Executive Director Medeiros reported that the paving project would begin for the Linden Street parking lot. Executive Director Medeiros also reported that she secured a Safety Grant in the amount of \$250K for the Security Camera Project at Capt. Robert Cook Drive and Seabeds Way. A brief discussion followed on the Executive Director Report.

H. Presentation and Discussion: Executive Director 2021 Annual Performance Review and 2021 Goal Evaluation

2021 Performance Evaluation & Goal Evaluation

Chair Foster stated that the Evaluation of the Executive Director is done annually. It is performed in an open meeting, as required by the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. He stated that the purpose is to give constructive feedback to the executive director so that can improve her overall growth. Chair Foster stated that each Commissioner had individually completed a draft performance evaluation of Executive Director Medeiros and submitted them in early December. We are here tonight to listen to each other's evaluations and present our constructive feedback to Ms. Medeiros. He then asked each Commissioner to present her/his performance evaluation to Executive Director Medeiros.

Each commissioner in turn expressed their thoughts on Executive Director Medeiros's 2021 performance and acknowledged improvement and growth as well as an appreciation for her management of the NHA. Commissioners also expressed that they are looking forward to continued improvement.

Chair Foster then asked Executive Director Medeiros if she wanted to present her own self-evaluation, or whether she had any comments or responses to the constructive comments she'd received from each of the commissioners. She responded by thanking everyone for their critiques.

Chair Foster closed by saying that it has been the NHA's practice to allow for a brief time when each commissioner could reflect on our collective performance evaluation. Each commissioner would have the opportunity to adjust their individual performance evaluation, based on what she/he heard tonight. Chair Foster requested that such adjusted final evaluations (if any) be submitted to him by COB Friday, January 28, 2022. After that point, the five documents would become the final, official 2021 performance evaluation in Ms. Medeiros's personnel file.

I. Proposed 2022 Goals for the Executive Director

Chair Foster noted that this document had been sent to the commissioners, but this agenda item had been inadvertently left off of the posted agenda for this evening. Commissioner Scheideler suggested that we postpone the agenda item to the February meeting.

J. Review and Approval of Minutes:

**1. 11/3/2021 and 11/8/2021 NHA Special Board Meetings – Federal Property Repositioning
Motion and Vote**

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Kirk to approve the minutes of the 11/3/2021 and 11/8/2021 NHA Special Board Meetings – Federal Property Repositioning as submitted.

Discussion and corrections – there were none.

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

2. 11/18/2021 Minutes of NHA and 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 the 11/18/2021 NHA and HRH LLC Regular Board Meetings as submitted.

Discussion and corrections – there were none.

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

3. 12/9/2021 Minutes of NHA Special Board Meeting – 2022 NHA Budget

Motion and Vote

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Foster and seconded by Commissioner Scheideler to approve the minutes of the 12/9/2021 NHA Special Board Meeting – 2022 NHA Budget as submitted.

Discussion and corrections – there were none.

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

4. 12/16/2021 Minutes of NHA and 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 the 12/16/2021 NHA and HRH LLC Regular Board Meetings as submitted.

Discussion and corrections – there were none.

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

K. Status Update:

1. NHA Office Relocation

Executive Direct Medeiros and Facilities Maintenance Manager Gary Kuphal reported on two proposals for the relocation of the NHA Administrative office: 21 Highland Circle and 200 Reservoir Street. Drawing attention to the comparative pros/cons analysis in the Board packet, they explained the differences between the locations and demonstrated that 21 Highland Circle was the most advantageous proposal for the NHA. It is also the best location for NHA residents. The 7-year cost of the two proposals are essentially the same. Two draft leases have been received and reviewed both need some changes, but not major revisions. Ms. Medeiros and Mr. Kuphal have determined that Highland Circle appears to be the best choice for the NHA, subject to our general counsel initiating and completing the negotiation of satisfactory lease terms.

A general discussion followed with many comments, questions, and answers made by the Commissioners and Ms. Medeiros, and Mr. Kuphal.

Then Commissioner Scheideler expressed concerns and reservations about the potential costs, he supported this initiative at several past meetings going back to the September 28, and 29 2021 special board meetings on this initiative, and that for the past month, he'd been seriously considering changing his mind and opposing the initiative.

Chair Foster responded to Mr. Scheideler, noting that the Board was receiving a status update report tonight. We're not making the final decision to approve the office relocation. Once a final lease had been negotiated for 21 Highland Circle, it will be brought back to the Board for approval, along with the budgetary expense for the new office and the moving and relocation budget. The Board agreed that these were the correct next steps.

Chair Foster then re-summarized what he heard as the advantages of 21 Highland Circle. He confirmed with Ms. Medeiros and Mr. Kuphal that they had the input they needed from the Board, and encouraged them to negotiate the best possible terms for the NHA in the 21 Highland Circle lease.

2. After School Program Reopening; Restoring 28 Seabeds Way as a Community Center; Placing Unit 42 back into Service as an Apartment

Executive Director Medeiros and Facilities Manager Kuphal presented a status report. The planned After School Program re-opening has been put on hold until the Omicron spike recedes back to safe levels. After NHA staff vacate the 28 Capt. Robert Cook Drive office

for 21 Highland Circle, a minimum of a month will be needed to reconfigure the space for use as a Community Center, longer if NHA staff is used to reduce cost. Ms. Medeiros reported that HUD and DHCD are pressuring NHA to rent out Unit 42 ASAP, given the significant shortage of 4-bedroom affordable units in our region.

The Commissioners and Executive Director engaged in a lengthy, vigorous, and passionate discussion on the plans and timing of these interdependent initiatives. Commissioners Bennett and Kirk recapped the past 19 years of history of 28 Seabeds Way and unit 42. Chair Foster encouraged all to focus on the present. He stated that after hard work by the Board and staff since September 2021, we're within 1-2 months of achieving three important goals that we all strongly support. Specifically, we will (1) have a much better Cooks Bridge community room and facility for the Afterschool Program, (2) have a much better NHA office and (3) be able to, after 19 years, return Unit 42 to service as a 4-bedroom affordable housing unit.

Given the strong feelings expressed, Executive Director Medeiros made the following proposal: she will hold off renting Unit 42 until the end of the 2022 school year. The Afterschool program will reopen as soon as pandemic conditions permit and continue in that location. The office move can take place in the March timeframe, then the 28 Capt. Robt. Cook renovations can start thereafter. This proposal will provide ample time to accomplish all our collective objectives.

A few more minutes of discussion ensued wherein each commissioner commented and Mr. Kuphal and Ms. Medeiros provided further details of their proposed plan. Commissioner Kirk stated that she thought it was a good compromise. Commissioner Scheideler recommended that the Board suspend discussion and move to debate motion #4, which is further down the agenda.

Responding to Mr. Scheideler, Chair Foster noted that it was after 11 pm and everyone was very tired. Rather than taking up a new agenda item, he suggested the Board agree that NHA staff now has all the input to develop a fully baked plan/proposal that covers all five interrelated initiatives: Afterschool Program reopening, office move, restoration of 28 Capt. Robt. Cook back into a community center and restore Unit 42 as affordable housing. The fully baked plan/proposal would cover everything: budget, timing, final office lease terms, relocation costs, etc. NHA staff can present the fully baked plan/proposal at the next board monthly meeting, or even sooner at a special board meeting if it can be prepared that quickly.

The Board agreed to proceed on this basis.

- L. The time being approximately 11:10 pm the Commissioners did not have the energy or alertness to get to the rest of the agenda, which consisted of:
- Discussion & Approval:
 - Board Procedure Improvements
 - Rules of Procedure – 2022-1-14 Draft
 - 12 motions submitted since November 2021 by Commissioners Scheideler and Kirk (some of which were addressed in previous agenda items):
 1. "To start a monthly Grievance Process Status Report" (Kirk 11/2/2021)
 2. "To start a monthly Public Safety Officer Status Report" (Kirk 11/2/2021)
 3. "To reinstate the Resident Service Director's monthly report" (Kirk 11/2/2021)

4. "To place Unit 42 Captain Robert Cook Drive back online for rental purposes, within the following requirements:
 - a. The Needham Housing Authority administration staff will seek a new location vacating 28 Captain Robert Cook Drive, with the new location to be approved by the NHA Board of Commissioners
 - b. The Captain Cook Community Room will be moved from the current location at #42, into the space currently occupied by the NHA administration staff, at 28 Captain Robert Cook Drive
 - c. The Captain Cook Community Room will continue to host the Cook's Bridge After School Program within the new location at 28 Captain Robert Cook Drive
 - d. All necessary improvements will be completed and determined ready for occupancy before the Community Room is approved by the NHA Board of Commissioners
 - e. Unit #42 will not be placed online, for rental, until the Captain Cook Community Room, with the Cook's Bridge After School Program, is moved into the new location at 28 Captain Robert Cook Drive." (Scheideler 12/1/2021)
5. "To have two 1 ½ hour [regular NHA Board] meetings per month because we have not finished the agenda for the last several meetings." (Scheideler 12/4/2021)
6. "To rescind the 12/9/2021 NHA Board vote approving the 2022 NHA Budget" (Scheideler 2019-12-19)
7. "To rescind the 12/9/2021 NHA Board vote regarding the 2022 NHA Budget authorizing \$70,000 [to fund an offsite office for NHA staff]." (Kirk 2021-12-21)
8. "To rescind the motion to adopt the NHA 2022 budget, which included funding of \$70,000 for the purpose of leasing an off-campus office space." (Scheideler 2021-12-23)
9. "To request that the Chair prepare a list of day-to-day examples, for clarification and cooperation, of activities that the Commissioners are not supposed to get involved in." (Scheideler 2021-12-27)
10. "Since the Driscolls [NHA General Counsel Jonathan Driscoll and LHA Board best practices expert Jeffery Driscoll] were introduced as guests, not as paid legal consultants for the December NHA Board meeting, I move that NHA does not pay any legal fee for the conversation that we had." (Scheideler 2021-12-27)
11. "Because of the upsurge of the Omicron virus, move to postpone the opening of the after-school program until a date agreed upon by the full board." (Kirk 2022-1-4)
12. To require copies of the responses including the personal remarks from the 52 residents who participated in the NHA survey to be distributed to all the commissioners. (Kirk 2021-1-11)

M. Adjournment

Motion and Vote

At approximately 11:12 PM, Commissioner Foster moved, and Commissioner Kirk seconded the motion to adjourn the NHA Board meeting of January 20, 2022.

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

Minutes Prepared by

Cheryl Gosmon