

**NEEDHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**NHA REGULAR BOARD MEETING,
HIGH ROCK HOMES, LLC BOARD MEETING
MINUTES**

Thursday, June 16, 2022

ROLL CALL BY CHAIR FOSTER TO CONVENE THE REGULAR MEETING

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Eleanor Evans, Vice-Chair
Ed Scheideler, Treasurer
Janice Bennett, Commissioner
Penny Kirk, Commissioner

NHA STAFF PRESENT:

Steve Merritt, Interim Executive Director
& Secretary
Cheryl Gosmon, Assistant Executive
Director
Gary Kuphal, Facilities, and
Maintenance Director

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Reginald C. Foster

This is a Hybrid meeting. Vice-Chair Evans called the meeting to order at 7:44 pm and roll called the Commissioners present on June 16, 2022, for the NHA and High Rock Homes Regular Board meetings. Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by the Secretary of the Needham Housing Authority (NHA) by preparing a Public Notice dated June 13, 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR: (matters that could not be reasonably anticipated in advance of the meetings)

Vice-Chair Evans had no additional comments.

RESIDENT/COMMUNITY INPUT:

Jessica Reese, President of the Cooks Bridge Tenant Association (CBTA) provided an update on Needham Community Farm's support of gardening activities at Needham Public Housing properties. She also provided an update on items that the CBTA will be discussing at their monthly meeting, which will include the pet policy and starting a Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program.

Sue Biasizzo, Treasurer of the CBTA reiterated that she and Jessica Reese will meet with Nayda Sanchez, Leasing and Occupancy Coordinator for the NHA to talk about the FSS Program. Ms.

Biasizzo stated that on June 28, 2022, the CBTA will hold a special meeting for residents to help them better understand their lease. The conversation veered to a discussion on FSS.

Ross Donald stated that he is glad that the Needham Housing Authority Mission Statement is on the agenda. He stated that three years ago when this item was being discussed, the number one mission statement was to be the best landlord, and the second one was to do long-range strategic planning. He added that a resident-centered approach should be considered in the mission statement and long-range strategic planning. He stated that he would like to see a Resident Advisory Board (RAB) or a local tenant organization for the Linden/Chambers community. He added that a RAB would be easier to do for business or social engagement. Mr. Donald stated that Isabella from Springwell is leaving, noting that Linden/Chambers will lose that component of social services. Mr. Donald stated that there are newcomers to the Linden/Chambers community and that it would be a great idea to hold a cookout and invite the newcomers out for an opportunity to get to know their neighbors. Mr. Donald expressed concern for waste management and noted that the picnic table was thrown away. He stated that there are opportunities for food waste, composting, energy recycling, and a cooling program. He stated that today was the fourth mowing of the season. He stated that he is critical of it and that he thinks it could be better for the residents. He stated that the town is doing a drainage clearing project next to the housing authority property.

Mr. Merritt stated that he spoke with Mike Retzky, Superintendent of the Water, Sewer & Drain Division of the Department of Public Works (DPW). He added that he is in conversation with them to see if the NHA needs to do anything regarding this process.

The discussion veered to a conversation initiated by Commissioner Bennett regarding starting a local tenant organization for the Linden/Chambers community. Commissioner Bennett suggested Mr. Donald contact the Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Tenants and speak to Margarita Morales who would come out to meet with him and help the group organize.

DISCUSSION/APPROVAL ITEMS – NHA & HIGH ROCK HOMES LLC:

A. Review & Approval:

1. NHA Bill/Check Warrant

RESOLUTION #2022-244

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Kirk and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant date June 16, 2022, in the amount of \$469,055.02

Discussion: Commissioner Kirk asked what happened at Seabeds Way that generated a \$5K invoice from Barry Smith Plumbing and Heating, LLC. Gary Kuphal responded that the invoice from Barry Smith Plumbing and Heating, LLC is for multiple units, not just one unit. He noted that check/bill run backup reflecting the per-unit costs should have been included in the Board Packet. He added that the backup would show each invoice and what was done at what location.

Commissioner Kirk also asked about the Constable Service invoice. Mr. Merritt responded that the Constable services were for 14-day notices that were served to

residents adding that the notice provides an opportunity for residents to speak with staff to resolve issues.

Commissioner Kirk asked about the status of mold testing that was done at Seabeds Way from J. Brian Day, Inc. Gary Kuphal responded that J. Brian Day, Inc. came out to Seabeds Way to test two units. He stated that their costs are approximately \$350.00 just to have them come out and it cost \$50 per test. He stated that both units came back with minimal to nothing at those units. Commissioner Kirk stated that she has received multiple complaints of mold. Mr. Merritt responded that there have been a series of complaints, but the findings don't back up the complaints. He stated he has a meeting scheduled with the Needham Board of Health in July to talk about the matter. He reiterated that multiple tests have been done costing the housing authority approximately \$2000 over the last couple of months. He added that the housing authority has only had one item that was an obvious problem, and that work is being remediated. Mr. Merritt stated that there is green patina on some of the outside buildings that have not been completely washed off, adding that this work is ongoing.

Commissioner Kirk asked about the invoice for Morgan, Brown & Joy, LLP in the amount of \$5K. Mr. Merritt responded that this invoice is for legal services filed in a lawsuit from a former employee.

Commissioner Kirk asked about the invoice from Revolution Drain, Inc. for services provided to 111 Fairview Road. Gary Kuphal responded that the invoice is for multiple locations, not just one unit. He added that backup for these invoices should be included with the bill/check run.

Commissioner Scheideler asked about work order #5001, DHCD CapHud #20306 for \$110,441.78. Mr. Kuphal replied that this is a capital project for security cameras at Linden/Chambers.

Vice-Chair Evans called the roll of Commissioners in favor of this motion:

Commissioner Kirk, Aye; Commissioner Bennett, Aye; Commissioner Scheideler, Aye; and Commissioner Evans, Aye.

The motion carried. The vote was unanimous 4-0.

2. HRH LLC Bill/Check Warrant

RESOLUTION #2022-46

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Bennett and seconded by Commissioner Kirk to approve payment of the bill roll/check roll listed on the Warrant date June 16, 2022, in the amount of \$22,740.36.

Vice-Chair Evans called the roll of Commissioners in favor of this motion:

Commissioner Kirk, Aye; Commissioner Bennett, Aye; Commissioner Scheideler, Aye; and Commissioner Evans, Aye.

The motion carried. The vote was unanimous 4-0.

B. Review & Approval -- Board Minutes:

5/19/2022 NHA, NHA ANNUAL MEETING, AND HRH LLC Regular Board Meeting.

RESOLUTION #2022-245

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Kirk and seconded by Commissioner Scheideler to approve the Minutes of May 19, 2022, NHA, NHA Annual Meeting & HRH LLC Board meetings as submitted.

Vice-Chair Evans called the roll of Commissioners in favor of this motion:

Commissioner Kirk, Aye; Commissioner Scheideler, Aye; Commissioner Bennett, Aye; and Commissioner Evans, Aye.

The motion carried. The vote was unanimous 4-0

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

1. Monthly Financial Report.

Mr. Merritt referred to the NHA Analysis of Financial Position report prepared by Rick Shaw, CPA, Milne, Shaw & Robillard, P.C., as of April 30, 2022. He provided a brief report, noting that there are no significant changes. Commissioner Scheideler asked that the Board receive a detailed report on the Management Account/Program operating receipts and operating expenses. He noted that he had discussed this with the Chair as there is no budget number entered in Management Account/Program covering the consultant fees. He stated that it would be advantageous to have the same reporting for this account for the consultant fees that we have for all the other accounts. He asked that Rick Shaw add this detail to the budget. Mr. Merritt responded that he would speak with Rick Shaw about it.

Mr. Merritt commented on the NHA's accounting services. He noted that the HRH LLC is just wrapping up its annual audit, which was handled by Marcum LLP. He stated that Marcum has suggested that the NHA procure its accounting services going forward, which would be for the calendar year 2023 starting January 1st. The services would include some of the extra things Commissioner Scheideler is asking to be included in the budget reports. He stated that the NHA has a few months to work on the Request for Proposal (RFP) which would come before the Board.

2. New monthly Management Report

Mr. Merritt stated that this report was started last month, and he would send a hard copy of the June report to the Commissioners. He stated that the Management Report includes the vacancy report and work order report for May. He stated that as of May 31st, vacant unit totals are 14. He stated that 76 work orders were written, and 71 work orders were completed. Mr. Merritt reported on rents received as of May 31st. He stated that the Federal Public Housing total tenant rent billed was \$72, 606 and the total tenant rent collected was \$69,033.80 for a percentage of 95.08% rent collection. He stated that at Seabeds Way total rent billed was \$19,522 and the total rent collected was \$19,522 for a percentage of 100% rent collection. He stated that for the State Public Housing total rent billed was \$44,290 and a total of \$41,921 was collected for a percentage of 94.65% rent collection. He stated that the total rent collected across all programs is 94.92% for May.

3. Newsletter – comments from Board members

Mr. Merritt stated that the NHA has contracted with Illustratus.com to publish a quarterly newsletter for both families and seniors. A general conversation followed. Commissioner Kirk complimented Ilene Hoffman for the pictures that she contributed to the senior newsletter, and she mentioned that she liked having the Board of Commissioners listed. Commissioner Kirk also mentioned that in partnership with Needham Council for Arts and Culture she is hosting a musical program at the Linden/Chambers community room on July 27, at 5 pm. She stated that David Polansky will be performing.

Commissioner Bennett asked about monthly notification for the meetings and whether robocalls would continue. Mr. Merritt stated that robocalls would continue for meeting notices.

4. NHA YouTube channel

Mr. Merritt reported that the NHA now has a YouTube channel. Mr. Merritt provided a brief demonstration for the Board's consideration. The site contains all the videos for the 2022 NHA Board meetings.

5. Linden Chambers Camera Installation

Mr. Merritt provided an update on the camera project at Linden and Chambers. He stated that the cameras are in place and operation, but that there are some glitches to work out. He stated that it is a fairly complicated technology and that the NHA is experiencing some malfunctioning, but the NHA is working with the company on this. Gary Kuphal stated that he is working with the NHA's IT consultant to understand and troubleshoot the problem.

Commissioner Bennett asked that when the cameras are up and running who will be able to view the footage. Mr. Merritt responded that the camera software is on his PC as well as Cheryl Gosmon, Nayda Sanchez, and Gary Kuphal. He added that the cameras are not for public viewing. Vice-Chair Evans stated that if residents have concerns, they should report to Steve Merritt, and his staff, and they would look into.

6. TD Bank Signature

Mr. Merritt reported on this item. He is looking into changing banks and has contacted TD Bank as a possible choice. He stated TD Bank is active in the public housing industry. He stated that the NHA has an account with them with a balance, but that TD Bank does not have the required signature cards on file needed to withdraw funds. He stated that having the signature cards on file would allow the NHA to move the money to another account. He stated that the signature card would be for the Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, and Executive Director.

7. HRH Audit Update

Mr. Merritt reported that we don't have the final word on the audit. He stated that there are some suggestions that the auditor has made, one of which is the procuring of accounting services to include all the services we need for both High Rock Homes and the NHA as well as other initiatives that may be on the table going forward.

8. Mission Statement

Mr. Merritt provided a copy of the NHA and Norward Housing Mission statements for Board consideration. A general discussion followed. Commissioner Bennett stated that she would like to see language in the mission statement that demonstrates the housing authority's support of resident organizations. Vice-Chair Evans suggested that the Board solicit comments from the local tenant organization. This item will be brought back for further discussion at the next meeting.

D. Search Committee Status Update: New Executive Director Search

1. Advertisement

Mr. Merritt reported that the status update on the Executive Director search is that the first round of advertising has brought one candidate who was not endorsed by the search consultant. He stated that the consultant will extend the time to receive applications to the end of July.

Commissioner Kirk asked if the positions of Resident Service Coordinator and After School Program Director have been posted. Mr. Merritt responded that he and Ms. Gosmon have interviewed one candidate and will schedule an interview for another person who has expressed interest in the position.

E. Status Updates – External Initiatives:

1. Housing Plan Working Group

Commissioner Scheideler provided an update on this item. He reported on the Needham Community Housing Survey Results. He stated that the major issue that is being discussed among the Housing Plan Working Group is the multi-family zoning requirements for MBTA communities. He stated that Needham would need to do rezoning that would allow for an additional 2000 multi-family housing units. He stated that this initiative is still being drafted and final guidelines will be issued during the summer of 2022. He stated that Jean McKnight and Oscar Mertz are working diligently to accomplish areas of rezoning that would allow for an additional 2000 multi-family units in Needham.

2. Preservation & Redevelopment Initiative (PRI)

- Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) Report

Mr. Merritt reported that NHA and CHA are meeting every other week via Zoom. He stated that the process to move the ARPA funding that Representative Garlick helped to secure for Needham has moved to the next project phase and we can hopefully move forward with the designer selection meeting for August.

- Dietz Existing Conditions Report

Mr. Merritt reported on the Dietz Property Conditions Report for Seabeds Way, Captain Robert Cook Drive, and Linden/Chambers. He stated that the reports are in draft form now and that he will be meeting with CHA to finalize the reports. He stated that he would provide a high-level summary at the next Board meeting.

F. Status Update – Internal Initiatives:

1. Report from Cooks After School Program Steering Committee (Janice Bennett, Penny Kirk, Jessica Reese, Steve Merritt)

Commissioner Kirk reported that the Steering Committee met today with Lisa Vergara, Founder/President of Storytime Craft, Inc. Commissioner Kirk stated that Storytime Craft, Inc a local nonprofit has donated over 17 boxes of new books for the after-school program. Commissioner Kirk also stated that the after-school program now has art materials, notebooks, and paper that have all been donated. She stated that there is even a small pinball machine, which was given to us for free.

Commissioner Kirk stated that she has submitted a list of things needed to Sandy Robinson, Executive Director of Needham Community Council and that the after-school program has received so far, a set of dishes, silverware, and cooking utensils. Commissioner Kirk stated that she has not set up a budget list because she keeps getting donated items. She added that within the next month she will have a list of things that have not been acquired.

Steve Merritt reported he and Ms. Gosmon met with Margaret Burgess, Literacy Coordinator for the John Eliot Elementary School. He stated that the John Eliot school administration would very much like to meet with this group because they're very interested in being partners with the after-school program. He stated that he would like to set up a meeting.

Commissioner Bennett echoed the comments of Commissioner Kirk. She pointed out that the principals and teachers at the John Eliot Elementary School are some of the best people in education. Commissioner Bennett stated that she would love to have a reopening ceremony of the after-school program and invite the John Eliot Elementary School Administration.

2. Restoration of Community Center at 28 CRCDD - **In Process**

Mr. Merritt reported on the restoration process for the Community Center at 28 CRCDD. Gary Kuphal stated that the office side has already been stripped painted and cleaned just waiting on flooring. He stated that flooring has been ordered and the whole place will be done in one shot. He stated that on the other side, all the walls have been taken down, and work is being done on all the electrical. He stated that the painter is there now and will be back on Monday to paint that side once he completes the trim work. He stated that all the flooring has been ordered. He stated that there will be offices for the after-school program as well as an office for NHA staff. He stated that he is a month ahead and looking to be done by August 1st if not sooner.

Commissioner Kirk stated that the after-school program needs all the space it can get. She stated that if there are to be meetings and using an office space it needs to be before the after-school program, Monday through Thursday before 3:00 pm. The conversation veered to a discussion on the ROSS Grant and the role of the Resident Service Coordinator in regard to the after-school program.

3. Plan to return Unit 42 CRCDD to service - **In Process**
Steve Merritt reported that Maintenance will be working on moving some of the storage out of Unit 42.
4. After School Program – Fall 2022 Budget.
Commissioner Kirk is working on this item and will report at the next NHA Board meeting.
5. Paving Project – Seabeds Way and CRCDD. Mr. Merritt reported that partial funding has been set aside for this project. He added that with the new capital fund appropriation he is hoping to expand this project.
6. Seabeds Way/CRCDD CCTV System Begins Spring/Fall of 2022
Mr. Merritt reported that he is waiting for the engineering report to come back and will report on this at the next meeting.

G. New Business: There was no new business to discuss.

H. Adjournment

Vote on the motion

Upon a motion duly made by Commissioner Kirk and seconded by Commissioner Bennett to adjourn the NHA and HRH LLC Board meeting at 9:26 pm.

Vice-Chair Evans called the roll of Commissioners in favor of this motion:

Commissioner Bennett, Aye; Commissioner Scheideler, Aye; Commissioner Kirk, Aye; and Commissioner Evans, Aye.

The motion carried. The vote was unanimous 4-0.

Minutes Prepared by

Cheryl Gosmon