

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
SECAUCUS HOUSING AUTHORITY
700 COUNTY ROAD
SECAUCUS, NEW JERSEY

February 27, 2020

This is condensed transcription of taped minutes taken on Thursday,
February 27, 2020 at The Elms, 777 Fifth Street, Secaucus, New Jersey.

Chairman Michael Schlemm called meeting to order.

ROLL CALL

Present:

Chairman Michael Schlemm
Vice-Chairman Michael Harper
Commissioner Patricia Mondadori
Commissioner Rajkumar Pardasani
Commissioner Carmen Rivera
Commissioner Antonio Suarez

Also Present:

Executive Director Christopher Marra
Deputy Executive Director Jake Naszimento
Charles D'Amico, Esq., Counsel to the Authority

Absent: Commissioner Richard Fairman

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT – Chairman Schlemm

“Adequate notice of this meeting, as required by the Open Public Meetings Act, has been provided by the filing of a Regular Meeting Notice with the Municipal Clerk, the posting of said notice on the official bulletin board in the Municipal Government Center, and delivery of same to the Jersey Journal on December 19, 2019. This body wishes to advise you that, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 26:3D(1), et seq. (Smoking in Public Buildings), smoking is prohibited while this body is in open or closed session.”

FLAG SALUTE

Executive Director Marra introduced new Commissioner Rajkumar Pardasani, member of Library Board, on Facebook, resident of Secaucus 21 years; very involved with homeless and senior citizens.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES – January 23, 2020 & Closed Session

Motion to approve made by Commissioner Harper; 2nd by Commissioner Suarez.
27 February 2020

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)
Absent: Fairman

Abstain: Schlemm

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS – February 2020

Motion to approve payment of claims made by Commissioner Harper; 2nd by Commissioner Rivera.

Commissioner Pardasani asked about large electric bill. ED Marra said The Elms only has 1 meter; SHA pays for entire building. The Elms built in 1975 during gas crisis. Commissioner Pardasani asked about truck repair; Chairman Schlemm said SHA owns truck; they are not leased. Contract for \$9,000 – management computer – ED Marra said it is annual cost for licensing for PHA Web, software that SHA uses for dealing with residents and Section 8.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

Absent: Fairman

FINANCE COMMITTEE

In Commissioners' packets are comments from N.J. Department of Community Affairs re: budget & process to amend current budget. There were 4 questions and were sent to ED Marra and Mr. Katchen; Mr. Katchen will primarily answer them; get an approval from NJDCA; pass budget at next meeting in March.

Commissioners got copy of memo ED Marra gives to Fran Pine every year in March, notifying the Board that SHA is increasing our annual deposit for replacement reserve effective 4/1/20, which must be done each year. It is bank account, which will help fund all future capital repairs for 3 properties. Commissioners also received monthly account balance report from banks through January 31st.

No monthly savings report on electric consortium given out from NJSEM, but SHA has been notified that NJSEM is to go out to bid; SHA needs to notify them by March 10th whether or not SHA is opting out of process this year. SHA has a few more options, which will be explored over next 9 days before SHA officially opts out, hoping to find another consortium or first auction allowing SHA to save more money over next 2 years. NJSEM made mistakes in accounting and sent SHA back \$27,000 this year; contract ends May 31st. Looking for someone else to begin June 1st. DED Naszimento said Brick Housing Authority is using MX, a broker company, energy auction. ED Marra will look at them within the next 8-0 days.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

3 resolutions: #2020-5 through #2020-7, which is to hire Fee Accountant; Audit Services and Legal Services.

RESOLUTION #2020-5
(Accounting Services)

WHEREAS, the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus has need for fee accounting services for the fiscal year commencing on 4/1/2020; and

WHEREAS, the Housing Authority solicited for proposals for accounting services and received one (1) proposals in response to its duly advertised Request for Proposals; and

WHEREAS, the proposal was reviewed and rated by the Professional Services Committee and it has been determined that the contract should be awarded to the highest rated proposal in compliance with the RFP; NOW THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus that the proposal submitted by:

William Katchen, CPA
596 Anderson Avenue
Cliffside Park, NJ 07010

in the annual amount of \$32,700.00 and an hourly rate of \$125.00 be hereby approved; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this award has been made through a Fair and Open Competitive process in accordance with the rules of the State of New Jersey

RESOLUTION #2020-6
(Award of Audit Contract)

WHEREAS, there exists a need for financial auditing services to be rendered to the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus for the Fiscal year ending 3/31/2020; and

WHEREAS, the Housing Authority duly advertised and solicited proposals for these services in accordance with the requirements of HUD Handbook 7460.8 and PIH Notice 90-47; and

WHEREAS, the Housing Authority received one (1) proposal in response to its RFP and the Professional Services Committee has reviewed the proposal in accordance with its established rating system; and

WHEREAS, the highest rated proposal was submitted by the firm of:
Polcari & Co.
2035 Hamburg Turnpike, Unit H
Wayne, New Jersey 07470

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus that a contract for auditing services be hereby awarded to:

Polcari & Co.
2035 Hamburg Turnpike, Unit H
Wayne, New Jersey 07470

in the amount of \$12,900.00 and

BE IT, FURTHER, RESOLVED that a copy of the proposal is on file in the office of the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus and this award was made through a fair and open competitive process in accordance with rules of the State of New Jersey.

**RESOLUTION #2020-7
(All Legal Services)**

WHEREAS, the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus has need for ordinary legal services for the fiscal year commencing on 4/1/2020; and

WHEREAS, the Housing Authority solicited for proposals for legal services and received two (2) proposals in response to its duly advertised Request for Proposals; and

WHEREAS, the proposals have been reviewed and rated by the Professional Services Committee and it has been determined that the contract should be awarded to the highest rated proposal; NOW THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus that the proposal submitted by:

Charles M. D'Amico, Esq. LLC
700 Plaza Drive Suite 212
Secaucus, New Jersey 07094

in the annual amount of \$25,000.00 and an hourly rate of \$125.00 be hereby approved; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this award was made in accordance with a Fair and Open competitive process in accordance with the rules of the State of New Jersey.

Motion to move all three made by Commissioner Harper; 2nd by Commissioner Pardasani.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6) Absent: Fairman

Chairman Schlemm noted all 3 have been awarded contracts before by Secaucus Housing Authority.

POLICY COMMITTEE

ED Marra didn't have memorandum for Commissioners; resolution and memorandum will be available at March meeting. SHA has a waiting list to get into SHA buildings; there is a preference point system: live in Secaucus; work in Secaucus or you or spouse were a vet. 20 years ago SHA created a 4th category, which said: a family member of a Secaucus resident – perhaps a mom. All credentials would be sent to office, mom would get on list and work her way up and move into building. Effective April 1st, 2020 it will be eliminated. In future, it is

you either live in Secaucus; work in Secaucus or you/spouse are a vet. If you have 1 of first two and you/spouse were veteran, you get a second point putting you at top of list. This has been in place since 1975, no intention of changing it, but issue of a family Secaucus resident will be changed. Discussed in committees, with Commissioners and staff. It will take place at next meeting.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

All maintenance men prioritized projects for 2021-2025 for all buildings. ED Marra will write memo to B&G Committee re: those projects and SHA will fund over next few years. Fire pump at The Elms is being replaced, but not completed. Breaker boxes will be replaced in apartments because next project is to upgrade heating/cooling system in each apartment. Planned to start in first 10-12 days of March, anticipating being done within 30 days; in an apartment just a few hours.

End of March, SHA expects PSE&G and MaGrann will meet with Buildings & Grounds Committee with bid documents ready to go out to upgrade heating/cooling system in apartments at The Elms.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM – DED Jake Naszimento

For February there were 205 payable landlord transactions with 6 family transactions, meaning SHA helped 6 families pay their utilities. \$179,569 was for landlords. \$171,000 was direct deposit. \$7,199 paper checks including \$261 sent to 6 families for utilities. \$19,491 was paid out direct deposit to 8 other housing authorities for families that used to live in Secaucus. There are 4 new families leasing up within town at the end of February. SHA is not issuing any new vouchers at this time; we are mailing out criminal background check authorization forms to applicants in preparation to issue other vouchers in the future.

CORRESPONDENCE

Commissioners received letter from Director in Newark Office of HUD stating SHA didn't submit annual plan and 5-year plan; SHA was late. Mr. Marra believed that SHA was no longer in public housing program and annual plan revolves around submitting information about capital fund program, that SHA no longer required to submit it; but SHA is required – an abbreviated type of plan. ED Marra has email correspondence back/forth with woman; he has completed the form and needs a form signed by County person, Randy Moore. She signs, sends it back and ED Marra will send Newark Office the annual plan.

There is update on PHADA/NAHRO lawsuit, which will be dragged out through the summertime before any resolution is forthcoming. Funds to be received from that law suit are yet to be seen.

NEW BUSINESS – nothing at this time

Attorney Charles D'Amico thanked the Commissioners for opportunity to serve again as Attorney for SHA.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – nothing at this time

REMARKS OF CITIZENS

INGA - #517 – Inga is concerned about smoking detection. She does not smoke in her apartment, but admits her clothing and hair does smell of smoke; she smokes outside. Inga is a chemical engineer all her life. Now she's received a warning letter and believes the testing company doesn't have the proper validation to detect the smoke. ED Marra explained Powers Environmental and company that produces testing equipment. Powers is an authorized company to come to conduct the test; went into her apartment; left device there; came back and collected it; sent it to lab. Please read material online, test states it is not detecting smoke in the unit, but detecting lit cigarettes. SHA will stand by lab report – 2 separate companies authorized to conduct that test, but it is lab that gives results back to Powers, which gives it back to ED Marra. SHA will stand by that test; it is a warning letter. ED Marra will get Inga more validation report for that test for Inga's specific test. Inga admits her clothing and furniture smells of smoke, but she doesn't smoke in apartment.

MARYANN - #318 – Reported there is a problem with elevator; it wasn't even on the floor. She did report it to maintenance. Today, elevator door only opened a bit.

CAMILLA - #410 - stated she smelled smoke for 2 days in her apartment; didn't report it to the office. Someone is smoking in their apartment. Letters are sent out and no one gets evicted. Mr. D'Amico explained HUD issued policy in all of public housing regarding no smoking. SHA gets funds from HUD and SHA has to abide by their rules and regulations: you must have a no smoking policy. Also, part of policy is SHA must send letters, if office has a reason to believe, someone is smoking in their apartment. There is procedure to follow before it gets to Court – 3 steps: 1st step is send a letter, otherwise you cannot go to Court. (Discussion among many tenants.)

ANGELA - #405 – people take shopping carts upstairs, but they do not return to area near elevator for other tenants to use.

Woman asked who is in charge of paying bill to have heat on in Community Room when bingo is played. It is too cold. Temp at 72 degrees. Tonight it's set at 75. ED Marra answered they would set it at 75 for bingo.

TERRY - #404 – Town of Secaucus sent out letter regarding lead in water. She asked what the problem is. ED Marra said letter sent out again from Suez Water. A

year ago SHA received same letter. Water was tested in all 3 buildings and results posted. There were no high lead levels within found in any of 3 buildings. 10 samples from 10 apartments in each property – 30 samples. They were taken early in the morning, as instructed. SHA learned this: if you live across the street in a 1-family house and pipe is coming in, but if you live in this building Floors 2-10, the further away you are from pipe, the less lead you will actually register. Suez Water is really talking about pipe in the street, coming from main to building. SHA tested in each building and ED Marra sent out memo to everyone, and can send out again tomorrow – no lead in SHA's water.

ANDREA – Would like results sent out again.

BOB - #606 – Bob would appreciate test results memo once again.

Commissioner Pardasani spoke regarding the tests being done 4 times, and water is very safe, and that reservoir was also tested. ED Marra said it is about pipes in the streets of Secaucus, having been there a long time.

MARYANN - #318 – Asked about pet license memo SHA sent out. Town has been late in sending out licenses/receipts. Tenants receive notices that pets must have license. Maryann called Fran; Fran said she knows Town is a month behind. Why does SHA send a letter to tenants, if they know Town is a month behind? Mr. D'Amico answered SHA has to follow the law. ED Marra noted it's a standard letter and they must write about eviction to make sure tenants follow letter of the law. SHA is working with their tenants and understands. (Discussion among many regarding licensing of animals.)

One woman stated a dog is peeing in the elevator. ED Marra asked when does it happen, and why isn't Office told about it. She said all the time. Mr. Marra said there are cameras in the elevator. The tenants should not tell Harry; they need to call the Office. Telling maintenance man about a problem in your building and expecting there is accountability from the Office that he is to follow up on it, is impossible, because no one has told the Office. If dog doing something in the elevator on a Saturday, call 1-800 number to have maintenance come and clean it. It cannot be left there the entire week-end. If something there right now, call 1-800 and have him come and take care of it.

CAMILLA – #410 - Demands cameras on each floor as "stuff" is being stolen and a man is walking around knocking on doors. No one knows who he is. Chairman Schlemm asked if they called the Office or Police. No was the answer. Tenants have to help Commissioners.

MARYANN - #318 – Kids from high school stole wheelchair, Office had photos and didn't do anything. ED Marra asked what they would be charged with. Wheelchair was in Community Room for months and eventually was thrown away. (Discussion among many.) Extension cord and jewelry was also stolen last week.

They told Harry, but not the Office. Commissioner Suarez said everyone has to work together and be conscious of what's going on. He understands everyone wants to have security and be safe, but tenants have to help neighbors.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Harper; 2nd by Commissioner Mondadori.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

Absent: Fairman

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Alvarez