

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

October 28, 2021

(A condensed transcription of taped minutes taken on Thursday,
October 28, 2021, Imprevduto Towers, 600 County Road,
Secaucus, New Jersey.)

Executive Director Christopher Marra called meeting to order.

ROLL CALL

Present:

Vice-Chairman Michael Schlemm
Commissioner Richard Fairman via Zoom
Commissioner Patricia Mondadori
Commissioner Raj Pardasani
Commissioner Carmen Rivera

Also Present: Executive Director Christopher Marra
Deputy Executive Director Jake Naszimento

Absent: Chairman Michael Harper
Commissioner Antonio Suarez

ED Marra read the Open Public Meetings Act.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

“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 and Secaucus Homes News on December 7, 2020. 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

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR MEETING & CLOSED SESSION

Motion to accept minutes made by Commissioner Mondadori; 2nd by Commissioner Pardasani..

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5) Absent: Harper/Suarez

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS FOR MONTH OF OCTOBER

Highlights of bill list are \$50,000 to AJM Contractors for milling/paving parking lot at 600 County Avenue and main road out to Dorigo Lane; \$92,000 and \$62,000 to Larocco as partial payments towards completion of the bathroom renovations at Kroll Heights.

Motion to approve made by Commissioner Rivera; 2nd by Commissioner Mondadori.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5) Absent: Harper/Suarez

FINANCE COMMITTEE

In 2 weeks, Commissioners will receive financial statement through September 30th. In tonight's report is bank balances through 9/30.

Commissioner Fairman: Re: Balance Report – in looking at Account 2 and 4 over last 2 recording months, it looks like a large transfer from one account to another – is there any way it can reflect (inaudible) practice or policy. ED Marra: In Account 4 – Housing Choice Voucher where all HAP money goes and all of administrative fee money goes, they needed to move administrative fee, which had not been moved for about 10 months out of there, and into Operating, as it's the administrative fee SHA needs in Office for not only DED Naszimento, but since all Staff is funded with administrative fee. It was mentioned at last meeting. In August about \$500,000 was moved into Account 2 out of that. Commissioner Fairman: Really an allocation of funds (inaudible) to appropriate account (inaudible) through these monies. ED Marra: Hopefully, allocation will be made on quarterly basis, not have so much time go by.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Two meetings ago, SHA agreed to do job with Cliffside Park Housing Authority entering into an interlocal agreement with them; for them to perform 3 tasks as Independent Entity. Commissioners were given paper stating "See the attached information. This email will certify that Joseph Capano, Executive Director of CPHA, has prepared the OCAF and Rent Reasonableness determination for the Secaucus Housing Authority." This past week CPHA sent

inspector to inspect 54 units over two days, completed and perhaps 3-4 failed out of 54 units.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

SHA recently hired a young woman – Tanya Oquendo – to work in Office; Linda Fanning is becoming Housing Choice Voucher Coordinator and Tanya is replacing Linda's job. Working towards April 1st budget, ED Marra considering Linda might need some assistance and giving that person title of Housing Choice Voucher Specialist; and have found Ms. Angela Oliveros in the past. She lives in Secaucus, getting her Associates Degree from Hudson Community College in Sociology. ED Marra wants to hire her as an intern after January 1, 2022 for 8 weeks working 30 hours/week at \$15/hour of which New Jersey NAHRO will reimburse SHA \$7.50 on every hour. If, in this internship, we'd know if she'd be someone SHA would hire maybe April 1st under new budget for another person in our Office. NJNAHRO had their meeting this AM, approved this application and ED Marra will speak with Ms. Oliveros next week; having spoken with her a few times. She wouldn't start until January; recently moved to a unit in Baker Complex/Riverside Court. She has husband and 2 children, bought an Affordable Unit that Affordable Housing Board created 15 years ago in Baker or Riverside Court Complex. Someone wanted to sell their home, and her family qualified and bought it. She is familiar with housing programs having used Section 8 and now having qualified to buy affordable unit.

POLICY COMMITTEE

Adoption on December 14th 2021 of By-Laws. They can be adopted at January 2022 meeting as we need a 45-day notice. Our next meeting is December 9th. You saw the small changes necessary due to the fact that we will not have a Deputy Executive Director. Same exact By-Laws that we introduced in April/May. Now small adjustment. I would like to know from existing Board members tonight, so we can make adjustments appropriately is, shall we consider these at January meeting instead of having a 20-minute special meeting to adopt them. **Everyone approved.** They will be adopted in January 2022.

BUILDING & GROUNDS

SHA nearing end of bathroom renovations at Kroll Heights; according to contractor should be completed, Friday, November 19th. Going out to bid for renovation and upgrade of elevator equipment at 600 County Avenue; preparing bidding documents for removal and replacement of outside EFIs and windows at 777 5th Street. There may be more that SHA will do after ED Marra sits with Bill Katchen in January to prepare budget for April 1st. These are 3 projects SHA is working on right now.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM (HCVP)

There is a Resolution 2021-32 for Establishment of Payment Standard for Section 8 Program. This resolution is passed every October; basically creating a payment standard for what is allowable for certain bedroom sizes in Housing Choice Voucher Program. These numbers are getting to better reflect Secaucus rental situation here. On Page 3 it actually tells you what the small area fair market rents are and what they concluded is that it's \$2,200 for 1-bedroom apartment. We are trying to get people to rent 2-bedroom for \$2,000; 2-bedroom for \$2,560; 3-bedroom for \$3,160. SHA adopts that payment standard at 90%, which we are allowed to do under HUD regulations, scaling it down a little bit to just under \$2,000 for 1-bedroom; \$2,300 for 2-bedroom; \$2,800 for 3-bedroom. This is a lot of money; SHA has to do going forward is – just because it says that's what payment standard is for an apartment, does not mean that SHA must pay that. There's a big difference between someone's 2-family house built in 1950 and you living upstairs when they haven't renovated it since 1990. Another 2-family built 2000-2001 has a washer/dryer. Not everybody gets \$2,400 for 2-bedroom.

SHA hasn't done that although ED Marra has been a participant; made it easy and have been keeping price low for most part. We will see how it plays out next year, as it hard to find these bedroom sizes and prices that we can do this with. Any questions on Resolution 2021-32?

RESOLUTION #2021-32 ESTABLISHING THE PAYMENT STANDARDS FOR THE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

WHEREAS, on November 16, 2016 HUD published its final rule in the Federal Register establishing Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMR) parameters and naming 24 metropolitan areas that met the selection criteria, for which the Town of Secaucus, specifically zip code 07094 was included and were designated for mandatory use of SAFMRs commencing on October 1, 2017; and

WHEREAS, on August 10, 2017 HUD exercised its authority under 24 CFR 888.113(c)(4)(iii) to suspend SAFMR designation for 23 of the 24 designated areas that would have gone into effect on October 1, 2017 until October 1, 2019; and

WHEREAS, On December 23, 2017 the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia entered a preliminary injunction, voiding that suspension, thereby giving Public Housing Authorities until April 1, 2018 to implement these new rates; and

WHEREAS, a Public Housing Authority (PHA) uses the published SAFMR as a guide to establish Payment Standards per bedroom size for the Housing Choice Voucher Program; and

WHEREAS, a PHA may establish Payment Standards anywhere between 90 to 110 percent of the published FMR without obtaining HUD approval; and

WHEREAS, the Payment Standards are used to calculate the housing assistance payment (HAP) that the PHA pays to the owner on behalf of the family leasing the unit; and

WHEREAS, the Payment Standard set by the PHA directly effects the amount of subsidy a family will receive and the amount of rent that will be paid by the tenant; and

WHEREAS, a PHA must also determine that its annual budget authority for the Housing Choice Voucher Program will support the established Payment Standards; and

WHEREAS, a PHA must also ensure that the program participants will be able to find safe, decent and affordable units within the PHA's jurisdiction within the standards established; and

WHEREAS, applicants/participants have experienced cost related obstacles to leasing safe, decent and affordable units within the SHA jurisdiction, and;

WHEREAS, HUD has released its 2022 SAFMR for all bedroom sizes in zip code 07094; and

WHEREAS, the Secaucus Housing Authority has determined the Payment Standard shall be set at 90% of the 2022 SAFMR for the 0 bedroom, 1, 2, 3, and 4 bedroom units, the payment standard per bedroom size will be:

2022 Secaucus Housing Authority Payment Standard

Bedroom Size	SAFMR
0	\$1,881
1	\$1,998
2	\$2,304
3	\$2,844
4	\$3,123

WHEREAS, the Payment Standards have been reviewed and approved by William Katchen, our accountant; and

WHEREAS, his review has confirmed that sustaining the payment standard for all bedroom sizes is within the best interest of the SHA and the clients they serve

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus that the payments standards as set forth above are to continue for the period commencing October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022.

Motion to approve made by Commissioner Mondadori; 2nd by Commissioner Rivera.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

Absent: Harper/Suarez

Commissioner Fairman: If it is reasonable to understand that new numbers could influence landlords to make enhancements and improvements to their rental

properties that would benefit people that this program serves. ED Marra: Yes, but will be more specific about one thing – what happens sometimes is that landlords make wrong observation where they rented an apartment to somebody who has a 2-bedroom in early 2020 for \$2,000. Now they see that payment standard for 2-bedroom is \$2,400; they believe that in 2022 they can raise their rent \$400. They cannot! This payment standard is for all **new** rentals going forward. ED Marra asks them nicely would you raise anybody else's rent \$400 in that apartment, if you didn't have Section 8 voucher. Of course, answer is no. So voucher program doesn't allow that. In the future it may have some landlords who have some units, make more improvements to them, which would then – all very subjective going forward; some objectivity but also a lot of subjectivity. Landlords think all of their properties are spectacular. We don't have a very big program; a lot of housing stock has remained the same, but over last few years you can see some housing stock has improved. There are properties where people lived and now house is used as rental property.

Commissioner Fairman: There is a general perspective to this, it should be enhancement to the policy. ED Marra: They will have a better selection.

ED Marra: There is a memo re: HCVP through October, you can see how many vouchers SHA had, how many were being billed for; what SHA is actually spending. SHA is totally using 229 vouchers for about \$226,000/month through month of October 1st.

CORRESPONDENCE

In Commissioners' folders there is letter from Tom R. Davis, Director of Office Recapitalization. Board told at July meeting SHA had written to HUD on advice of Bill Katchen making sure SHA explains to HUD that we had not used all of our rehabilitation funds due to fact that energy project that The Elms could not come in on budget; that we requested them not to penalize SHA for that. Their response to our request, which basically allows it, with a couple of conditions in there. Letter sent to ED Marra at beginning of October, but must call them as one condition is I have not signed Certification – they haven't sent one to sign. Of course, we'd move money into Replacement Reserve Account. More information will be available at December meeting and what actions are based upon Bill Katchen's advice. They did respond to our July letter.

Last letter on agenda, but not included in meeting package, is one written to Mayor Gonnelli, copied to Gary Jeffas, asking them when they go to County for Community Development Funds, that SHA wants \$250,000, following President Biden rule of ask for \$3.5 trillion and get \$1.7 trillion. We would use towards upgrading elevators at 600 County Avenue – discuss with them the fact that it would leave SHA with extra money to do the job on Fifty Street. The County has a lot of community development money, because many projects they intend to fund never actually occur. Then there is money that they have to reprogram.

Last time SHA did this was about 8 years ago; getting \$191,000 for renovations of bathrooms at The Elms.

Vice-Chairman Schlemm: Re: Letter from Tom Davis – in reading it, they want SHA to certify work that SHA has done the 3 projects that SHA had. Two are complete, so we should be able to produce information. ED Marra: Yes. We had 4 projects; completed 3 of them; already outlined in letter, but will sign certification that we did that.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT & UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A representative from a company called DLVR, which has a contract with Amazon, came to see ED Marra. This goes to issue of missing Amazon packages. Residents are experiencing: they are left in lobby. PERIOD! They came here yesterday and installed something where you swipe in your key to get into building – installed in each of 3 buildings. According to this man there will be more consistent Amazon drivers who come here – 4/5. When they get to 600 County Avenue, they'll send a signal on a device on their belt; when they come up to the door, they will scan this in and door will open. Packages will then be delivered to your front door; knock on your door. Answer – you will take package. If you don't answer, they will leave package/take a photo of package in front of your door. Sometimes there are issues when package put in front of your door; still disappears. Make a buddy with your neighbor; you aren't home; package gets delivered in front of your door; call neighbor and ask them to bring it in so it doesn't disappear. DLVR came to SHA and they're tired of replacing your missing packages. The 1 million missing packages that went missing over last years. More information will go out. It isn't starting tomorrow – probably middle of November.

This has been done in other housing authorities and DED Naszimento said Brick Housing Authority is doing it also and has greatly reduced package theft.

Three days ago Brick Housing Authority Board of Commissioners met at regular meeting and passed a Resolution making Jacob Naszimento their full-time Executive Director effective November 22nd. (Applause) Jake came to work at SHA in February of 2010, been here 11-1/2 years, for last 4 years Authority has been sharing him with BHA; has been their part-time Executive Director through an interlocal agreement with SHA – being there about 10 days/month. A good opportunity for him; lots of other things going on in his life right now and that is why Linda Fanning is being moved to HCV Coordinator. You will see less of Linda and more of Tanya Oquendo – becoming new Linda Fanning. Tanya speaks Spanish fluently, helping tremendously in office. Long-time Secaucus resident living in North End, 2 children in school; been on PTA

Vice-Chairman Schlemm thanked Jake Naszimento for all his time and effort, working with Jake 7-1/2 years, saying you are an individual caring about your

work, about people that are here; an asset to this community and to this Board. I know you will do well in Brick, and looking forward to seeing you on the street saying how well it's going. It will be fantastic for you and your family. If you ever need anything, please reach out to us; more than happy to help.

REMARKS OF CITIZENS

MARY DE BLASSIO – #307 – 2nd time it has happened that there was no email, no notification of an incident that happened in this building. If we were told: be on the lookout, be present when you come into the building. If strangers are looking around, call police. It is a danger to us. Never afraid in this building, now afraid of coming in at night or leaving early in morning for a doctor's appointment. I walk with a cane and cannot outrun anyone. Give us a head's up – text or email, note on the door. Look out, be aware; something is going on in the building. Take care of each other.

CHARLOTTE REINER - #404 – I went to office and said someone rang my bell at 12:15 A.M. Have you had a chance to look at video?

ED Marra: On the first incident, October 4th – a Sunday. Something happened on October 3rd, a tiny power surge in this building. Around 200 PM on Saturday, cameras in Rocco Towers went off. Kroll Heights' camera was still on and I was able to watch Kroll Heights all Sunday during this incident. We sent video to Police Department on an individual who was on Kroll Heights property, a pretty clear video. Then cameras worked; company helping us with cameras – we have to replace a piece of equipment – Surge Protector. For a couple of days in Rocco, they did not have cameras on. They were on in Kroll, but not in Rocco. Reason they turned them off, was if there was a surge and no surge protector in place, then all equipment gets destroyed. As of last Thursday, every day cameras in all 3 buildings have been on, but I didn't see a person ring doorbell on that night. I've brought people into office to show them certain times of incidents that they come and I'll bring you into office and show you the camera about what happened, but I saw nothing.

LINDA CROWLEY - #304 – I met a neighbor on Tuesday, she told me what happened on October 3rd, I was awake whole night thinking about this neighbor. I took different pictures and ask you questions. This is camera in our 1 elevator, but what is this thing (showing to ED Marra at table). ED Marra: It's not a camera. There is a camera on both elevators. I'll look at it. (Showing more photographs of cameras – asking if cameras are working. ED Marra said yes to each photograph: Joe's office; lobby; and one where person lived.) Upset tenants were not notified.

ADELE FITZPATRICK - #103 – Her daughter has 2nd card for this building; can't get in. She has one because of my blindness. ED Marra: Bring card back to office, we'll look at it. Has she done that? We need to see the card. Have her bring it

back to office, if she can during the day or leave it with you one day, we'll come and get it and look at it.

Vice-Chairman Schlemm: To answer original question, this Board will make sure that policy is from now on that you're notified within 24-hours of something that goes on. There's probably no excuse for it; I don't have all the information so I'm not going to go any further than that. From this point on, we'll make sure and if it's not and you're still dissatisfied, please let us know. Every effort will be made from this point forward to make sure that you're notified when something like this happens; not minor incidents, but something like this you need to be notified and made aware. Adele: Rumor mill is more hurtful. Vice-Chairman Schlemm: Cameras are a deterrent in some respects; can go look at what's occurred and hopefully will stop people; they'll know cameras are visible and they are being recorded.

MARIA - #401—Re: Security. We all have cards to go in and to go from one building to another. Cards are not working in going from one side of bridge to another: from Rocco to here. She has seen people that don't live here come from one building to another.

At main entrance of building, it is not clean enough. Entrance is so dirty, cats/mice – there are containers left there. The carpets are dirty. She lives on 4th floor and every Monday, they vacuum floor but she hasn't heard them in a long time, they are not washing the carpet either. Not changing water when they wash floor. Vice-Chairman Schlemm: It is the whole building, not just main entrance, but that in particular.

She also noted the smell of gas for a while, but today is less and had informed Linda. ED Marra: Sunday was first day of smell of gas. Company came and shut down air handler and that is gas powered. That heats the common areas by where the seats are. Daiken came; supposedly fixed it; it ran for a day and smell came back. Last night firemen were here and firemen had Daiken shut that piece of equipment down. Tomorrow Daiken is coming – each year at end of October they come and empty – or shutdown chiller unit for season – thing that provides air-conditioning. So when Daiken is doing that job tomorrow, they'll come back and look at that piece of equipment out there. It is that piece of equipment that was causing a smell of gas; it is gas powered; it provides heat in common area during wintertime.

ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

Absent: Harper/Suarez