

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

May 26, 2022

This is a condensed transcription of taped minutes taken Thursday,
May 26, 2022 at The Elms, Secaucus, New Jersey.

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner Patricia Mondadori (Via Zoom)
Commissioner Raj Pardasani
Commissioner Carmen Rivera
Commissioner Antonio Suarez

Also Present: Executive Director Christopher Marra
Charles D'Amico, Esq.,
Counsel to the Authority - Via Zoom

Absent: Chairman Michael Harper
Vice-Chairman Michael Schlemm
Commissioner Richard Fairman

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 Annual 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 December 12, 2021. This body wishes to advise you in accordance with N.J.S.A 26:3D smoking is prohibited in open or closed session.”

FLAG SALUTE

MINUTES – APRIL 28, 2022 REGULAR & CLOSED SESSION

Motion to accept both Regular & Closed Session made by Commissioner Suarez;
2nd by Commissioner Rivera.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (3)
Absent: Harper/Schlemm/Fairman

Abstain: Pardasani

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS – May 2022

Commissioner Pardasani asked about air handler bill - \$19,252.25. ED MARRA: Actually 2 bills for work done on chiller unit at 600 County Avenue. Pumps located in ground floor unit; separator needed to be installed for those pumps to work.

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

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)
Absent: Harper/Schlemm/Fairman

REMARKS OF CITIZENS

VINCENT - #505 – Why are there no fire extinguishers in each apartment? ED MARRA: SHA has not been required in any building to provide any tenant with fire extinguisher. In any multi-unit building – garden apartment – Town of Secaucus requires apartment have fire extinguisher and checked by proper authorities that you have carbon monoxide alarm and extinguisher in the kitchen. Because of fire on April 8th, and will receive notice on June 1st, that on June 15th Bureau of Fire Prevention will come to this building; June 14th they will be at Kroll and Rocco, to do presentation about fire safety in apartment buildings. SHA is considering at present time, even though not required to provide kitchen fire extinguishers, we might offer them to residents. Residents will have to sign a waiver about fire extinguishers: if you drop on your foot and break your foot – no suit against SHA for providing extinguisher; if you mistakenly discharge it in your kitchen where there was perhaps no fire and do damage to your kitchen – SHA not responsible for repairs to that kitchen. Not everyone is physically capable of handling a kitchen fire extinguisher. We will potentially make it available to all as long as SHA is not violating through Bureau of Fire any type of laws, etc. COMMISSIONER SUAREZ: SHA and other municipalities don't have rules about fire extinguisher is for your own protection, meaning, Fire Departments in many municipalities would rather, you the resident, vacate property ASAP. If you have a fire extinguisher/hose, then people will take it upon themselves to try to fight a fire they're not trained for and put themselves at risk. I find your lives more important that you're losing. I'd rather you not have fire extinguisher and be able to vacate property; let material go where it is.

VINCENT – I have no way of getting down stairs. COMMISSIONER SUAREZ: That's an independent situation; I'm giving you one of the reasons why. There are exceptions to the rule and different circumstances that would change that; please bear in mind the reality of recent situation on the aggregate, which is fire life safety.

A VOICE: Why doesn't this building have sprinklers? ED MARRA: This building was built in 1975 before sprinklers were required to be installed. We are not required to put sprinklers in this building. CARMELLA - #410 – If they say stay in your apartment, I get out. Why do they say stay in your apartment? ED MARRA: When you come to June 15th presentation by Bureau of Fire Prevention, you can ask them all these questions.

MARGARET = #211 – Item on TV about 2 people dying from carbon monoxide and air-conditioning. Is there anything in this building that has carbon monoxide; if there is, I want to buy a detector. ED MARRA: Only thing that has carbon monoxide that I'm aware of is emergency generator, as it has diesel. This is an all electric building. Let me rephrase that: when SHA replaced air handler on rooftop in 2014-15, it was originally all-electric handler, then we ran a gas line, so when you get heat in wintertime, it is not being produced by electric, it's produced by natural gas, and is on the roof. In your unit, it's all electric. Unit is serviced every spring/fall. When it went down this past year, it was serviced and fixed; constantly monitored for that.

VINCENT – Isn't it prudent for The Elms to have a Suicide Prevention Hotline number on each floor? We all know somebody in this building committed suicide and burnt their apartment out. ED MARRA: We don't know that at this moment, #1; and #2, we can certainly provide that simple number. Yes, we can provide that. We can perhaps put it on magnet that we provide residents.

FRANK - #217 – Do Kroll and Heights have sprinklers? ED MARRA: Yes, one built in 1986 and 1993 when it was required to have a sprinkler system.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Everyone has account balances; SHA working with JIF – J.A. Montgomery Loss Control Report and helping us with Right-to-Know Report that we have to submit by July 15th and audit of SHA for fiscal year ending 3/31/2022 will be July 26-27.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

RESOLUTION #2022-21 – ADOPTION OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT 4.2.21 TO 3.31.24

This Collective Bargaining Agreement is for 3 years – April 2, 2021 through March 31, 2024. This CBA was sent to Commissioners about week ago; if there are any questions, now is time to ask them. If none, I need motion to move resolution. COMMISSIONER MONDADORI: Are there currently any employees who opted out of this? ED MARRA: No; there are only 2 people in SHA not in the Union – Theresa Weinbrecht, that was made some 20 years ago, but traditionally she has and still receives same benefits as Union members. Other person is me – Christopher Marra. Everybody else in it and everybody else participate in it.

Resolution 2022-21
(Approval of Collective Bargaining Agreement)

Whereas, the collective bargaining agreement with the employees of the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus expired on 3/31/2021; and

Whereas, the Personnel Committee has met with the union representatives in order to negotiate a new contract with the employees, and

Whereas, the Personnel Committee and the Secaucus Public Employees Association have arrived at an agreement on all personnel issues;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus that the collective bargaining agreement dated 4/1/2021 through 3/31/2024 be hereby ratified;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all non-union employees (except for the executive director), shall receive the same 3.0% salary adjustment or \$2,000 (whichever is greater), for each year of the contract as the union employees and shall be bound by the same working conditions and benefits outlined in the CBA document;

Motion to approve Resolution #2022-21 made by Commissioner Rivera; 2nd by Commissioner Mondadori.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)
Absent: Harper/Schlemm/Fairman

POLICY COMMITTEE

HUD has now made this a Board Resolution to be done annually; a Certification and Board Resolution that says SHA will carry out their public housing programs in accordance with U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, Fair Housing Act plus other Acts according to Code of Federal Regulations.

1. RESOLUTION #2022-23 – ADOPTION OF ANNUAL CIVIL RIGHTS
CERTIFICATION

Motion to approve Resolution #2022-23 made by Commissioner Suarez; 2nd by Commissioner Rivera.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)
Absent: Harper/Schlemm/Fairman

BUILDING & GROUNDS

Geocon Industries was awarded contract to remove/replace 84 apartment doors at 600 County Avenue; anticipate starting job at end of July.

Excel Elevator & Escalator Company will begin modernization of elevator equipment at 600 County Avenue some time after Labor Day.

Main Access Systems has been awarded contract and probably some time during 2nd week of June, which residents have been participating in, will be changing over access control system. During past 3 days, Housing Authority Staff has taken photos, printed out soon for distribution new access cards for residents. Current access cards will be used now and between June 10th-15th, they will get new card; system switched over and old card no good. If there are extra cards with family, that card will have to be replaced. Commissioners, Staff, contractors will no longer be issued cards; issued fobs only and presumably this will make system work more efficiently.

At next meeting in June at next regularly scheduled Board meeting, which is at 600 County Avenue, Authority will hear presentation from Architect Lee Mestres about projects that we're going out to bid for, which is removal and replacement of EIFs and windows at 777 Fifth Street. After that presentation, one will be done here for residents at The Elms so they understand how this project will potentially affect them and how it's going to work. Panels will be taken off building, replacing windows a phase at a time, section at a time. It will not be completed in 60 days; completed over up to a year to do all different parts of building.

Finally, removal and replacement of 2 small roofs at 600 County Avenue; one for elevator room, located on 16th floor, which Authority is working on now and probably will be completed by end of July.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

1. As Commissioners know we opened list from April 18th to April 22nd at which time Authority received only about 165 applications during that week. Other times we received over 250-275 applications in a week. We had orientation for first 25 on list this past Tuesday night; 22 out of 25 showed up. We have another orientation for #26-50 on June 8th. Trying to give people information to be ready for this as we go through trying to provide people with a voucher.
2. In your packet is report about where we are with voucher list; gives you a trending of how many vouchers we're using; how many vouchers we're funding each month. Currently funding 228 vouchers for about \$226,000/month. We are allotted 250 vouchers; hope by end of year to be doing regular monthly average of about 240 vouchers. As a reminder for residents of all 3 buildings – at any point in time, unless we don't have a voucher available, you're always eligible to come down to Office and say that you would like a voucher as you would like to move out of building.

That was not always an option for residents. That happened after Authority converted from Public Housing Program to Section 8 Program to know you all have a Project Based Voucher to provide subsidy for your unit.

3. RESOLUTION #2022-25 – APPROVAL OF THE SUBMISSION OF SECTION EIGHT MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (SEMAP) CERTIFICATION FORM TO HUD

RESOLUTION #2022-25
FYE16 ANNUAL SEMAP CERTIFICATION FORM 52648

WHEREAS, pursuant to 24 CFR Sec 985.101, PHAs administering a Section 8 tenant-based assistance program must submit an annual Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) Certification within 60 days after the end of its fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the information from the housing authority concerns the performance of the housing authority and provides assurance that there is no evidence of serious deficient performance; and

WHEREAS, HUD uses the information and other data to assess housing authority management capabilities and deficiencies, and to assign an overall performance rating to the authority; and

WHEREAS, there are fourteen performance indicators: Selection from the waiting list, Reasonable Rent, Determination of Adjusted Income, Utility Allowance Schedule, HQS Quality Control Inspections, HQS Enforcement, Expanding Housing Opportunities, FMR Limit and Payment Standards, Annual Reexaminations, Correct Tenant Rent Calculations, Pre-Contract HQS Inspections, Annual HQS Inspections, Lease-Up, and Family Self-Sufficiency Enrollment, as well as a Deconcentration Bonus Indicator which shall be assessed individually and then combined by the Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) into the agency's PHAS score for the purposes of identifying management capabilities and deficiencies; and

WHEREAS, HUD's verification of the accuracy of the information reported shall determine the authority's capacity to administer Section 8 rental assistance within the Federal law and regulations; and

WHEREAS, PHA's can utilize this assessment to conduct internal audits of their operations and correct identified deficiencies. The results of the assessment can be utilized by a PHA's Board of Commissioners and Executive Director, resident organizations, and the community to understand more comprehensively the PHA's operations; and

WHEREAS, the assessment will be based on a certification completed by the office of the Executive Director and submitted covering performance for fiscal year ending March 30, 2022.

4. NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus, New Jersey, that the SEMAP Management Certification Form HUD-52648 to the Real Estate Assessment Center covering performance measurements for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2022 was submitted by the Housing Choice Voucher Coordinator on May 6, 2022, which was before the deadline of May 30, 2022.

We've never done it in 11 years ED Marra is here, but we were supposed to provide you with resolution – ask for submission of our SEMAP Certification – something that ED Naszimento always submitted; always got 100 on every year to HUD. Linda Fanning took over his spot, signed her up and Angie Oliveros for training, including me, and at this training it said SHA supposed to provide Commissioners with Resolution showing what you will submit for SEMAP. By end of July/early August we will receive back our score.

On June 14-15, Bureau of Fire Prevention, Frank Walsh and Vinny Nissaro (ph) will give presentation about fire safety in your home/apartment buildings. There will be Q&A.

Residents of this building spoke with ED Marra and ED Marra has no answer yet, but somewhat of answer tonight. Why hasn't 6th floor been fixed yet; what is SHA waiting for. By the end of April, ED Marra had next of kin sign a document that said apartment could be emptied; person went in, looked at it, took what they wanted. The next Monday we were going to start emptying the unit. Next day I got letter from next of kin's attorney – said don't touch apartment. We want to come and inspect it. That took 4-5 days to arrange an appointment for that inspector to come; our inspector also had to be there. It was done. SHA still under hold of don't do anything with apartment. SHA has a lawyer, not Mr. D'Amico, assigned to us through JIF – Joint Insurance Fund. We are in touch with them; he's contacted their law firm 3 times, not responded to him. Residents will want to know why we aren't working on 4th floor. Attorney called them this A.M.; they don't call back. He wrote them a letter, basically, says "As you know we represent the Authority, this follow-up is on my letter of May 18th wherein I asked you to confirm that your clients no longer need access to the apartment and Housing Authority can dispose of any personal property left in the apartment. To date you have not responded to my letter. As your expert has had an opportunity to inspect the fire damage to the apartment, be advised that the Authority will begin making repairs to the apartment on or about June 1st, 2022. Any personal belongings in the apartment at that time will be removed and thrown out. Thank you for your prompt attention in this matter." June 1st we will start to empty apartment; rehab will start. Hallway will be painted; new rug put down – apartment emptied completely before new rug comes down and begin to rehabilitate apartment; hallway will then be painted; then rug will go down. By end of August it should be done and someone will live there.

CAMILLA: What about fan? Is it going to run all those months? ED MARRA: Fan can be turned off tomorrow. VINCENT: Do those fans have filters? ED MARRA: Rapid Resource Recovery put them there; don't know. Greg will come tomorrow and unplug it. By now, 6 weeks later, they've filtered everything out by removing rug, books. CAMILLA: All 3 fans are black. A VOICE: Soot still coming out of my air-conditioning. I turned it on when 90 degrees and soot came out.

OLD BUSINESS

Commissioners have a copy in their packet of Leased Housing Corporation's financial compilation through 3/31/20 done by Nova-Braddock. Polcari will now be doing it for Leased Housing Corporation for the FY that ended on 3/31/21 and 3/31/22.

REMARKS OF CITIZENS

CAMILLA: When new people come into the building, do you screen them before they come in? ED MARRA: SHA goes through same procedure that Exchange goes through; Harper goes through. No one gets psychological test. There is criminal and credit background check. Giving us all your financial data and that's what SHA has been doing since 1975. No psychological test. No ability to decline them. We would be sued and prejudice. MR. D'AMICO: Procedure that SHA follows is established by HUD.

CAMILLA: We can't have security because of budget; no video cameras because of budget. ED MARRA: We do have video cameras, but not on each floor.

KATHY - #417 – Can anything be done about fleas and ticks outside; you can't sit out there. ED MARRA: We will put things out there, and should be better now that tree was cut back.

GEORGE: What about ATM machine or vending machines? ED MARRA: No. Store is not even 20 feet away. Vending machine is not free. (Discussion about pods for laundry since no liquid is used.)

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Suarez; 2nd by Commissioner Rivera.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)
Absent: Harper/Schlemm/Fairman

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Alvarez
Secretary/Transcriber

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:37 P.M.