

MINUTES ... REGULAR MEETING ... FEBRUARY 13, 2023

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session Monday, February 13, 2023 at 4:00 P.M. (IN PERSON MEETING). Those present and absent were as follows:

PRESENT

Mrs. Iris Linares, Chairperson
Mrs. Lindsey A Clifton
Mr. Rogelio Ortiz
Mr. J. Marc Rittle

ABSENT

Mrs. Valerie McLendon, Vice Chairperson

Also present were: William W. Matz, Jr., Esq., Solicitor; John Ritter, Secretary-Treasurer; Diana Moreno, Assistant Secretary; Staff Members and members of the general public.

Chairperson Linares commence the meeting by introducing and welcoming our new commissioner Mrs. Lindsey Clifton, recently appointed by Mayor William Reynolds.

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 12, 2023 were presented. Mr. Ortiz made a motion to accept the minutes of January 12, 2023. Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes - Clifton/Rittle/Ortiz/Linares; Nays - None

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the monthly bills for January 2023.
Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes - Clifton/Rittle/Ortiz/Linares; Nays - None

Nothing reported under Courtesy of the floor. Nothing reported under Old Business.

Under the Interim Executive Director's report, Mr. Ritter reported two items. First, we received approval from HUD for our Five-Year Annual Plan for fiscal year April 1, 2023. Second, our monthly meeting with the BHA Community police officers will be held on Wednesday, February 15th, 2023, at 9:00 AM. At that time, we'll be reviewing any drug and criminal activity occurring on our properties. The Meeting will be held at the Monocacy conference room, 4th floor.

Mrs. Linares asked is this the approval for the First Tee Project. Mr. Ritter replied no, we're still waiting on the approval for that project. Mrs. Linares explained to the board that the First Tee building used to be a golf center for the tenants, but now we're working with HUD on building Section 8 units there. It's still pending HUD's approval.

Mr. Curt Kichline commented that we started this back last Fall. We've had multiple phone conversations with HUD about our plans to take a vacant ex-golf building and build apartments and they gave us the go ahead. We had to hire a consultant as some the Board members know, and we submitted the application mid-December. And then HUD said they don't quite have the regulations finalized for what we want to do, but it should be done right around the first of the year and then we can proceed. But the regulation hasn't been released yet, so that's what we're waiting for.

Mr. Rittle asked would the intent be for BHA to own the building and we would manage the tenants since this wouldn't be public housing. What would be the relationship.

Mr. Ritter responded we do own the building currently and we are going to be the landlords for the 12 Section 8 units. Mr. Snyder stated that it'll run under our Affordable Housing Program, they would be the landlords as long as HUD approves it that way. Rent will be determined by HUD, it's under a program call RAD, Rental Administration Demonstration, the rents are usually lower than what you can get on the market. But then we'd be responsible for all the bills for the building, so we're going to get less money. But HUD does not move fast in their regulations, so it could take months.

Mr. Rittle asked who would handle the operating expenses. Mr. Snyder replied that the RAD program, is not operated under public housing funds, basically they're setting money aside each month to cover expenses from the rents they get. Right now, they're estimating about 500 or something dollars a month, and that would include the 30% that the tenant kicks in, so we're really talking like \$6,000 a month in rent and then we'll be responsible for all the bills. That's what HUD is going towards this RAD program. Mr. Rittle replied that he was just curious if there was another partner. Mr. Snyder said, it will just be ours. That we'll be paying it through our Capital Fund program, out of the development that's there that would be the other part of it. Chairperson Linares thanked Richard.

Under Committee Reports, Scholarship Committee, Ms. Moreno reported that she reached out to the Bethlehem Area School District, and she received the list of 12th grade and 8th grade students for 2023. And will be sending out scholarship applications to all eligible students. In addition, we received a PAHRA scholarship offer for our BHA tenants for any 2023 H.S. graduating student and for any adult continuing their education. We have won few PAHRA scholarships in the past. The PAHRA mailing was sent out to all tenants.

Under the Finance Committee, Richard Snyder reviewed his monthly financial report containing our cash and investment, scholarship reconciliation, Section 8 Utilization Report, Affordable Housing Reconciliation as of December 31, 2022, the Income and Expense report for all developments and public housing operating income and expenses.

Under the Personnel Committee, Chairperson Linares stated that they had an executive board session regarding the Executive Director's position. She suggested they have another Executive Board Session. Mr. Rittle questioned whether they should actually meet as a committee to discuss the search, but to his understanding the personnel committee does not discuss the Executive Director's search. Chairperson Linares stated that under personnel committee, staff personnel issues are reported to the board by the executive director.

Attorney Matz stated that Commissioners are liaisons to the administration's personnel issues, so it's not a committee. Mr. Rittle reiterated that if there is a personnel issue, then the board would join the Director in whatever the personnel issues might be for back up and support. Attorney Matz responded yes to the extent that you want to be involved and to report, if necessary, to the public forum as to what may apply that can be disclosed. As this topic is a collective issue, it was easier to do an Executive Session because all the Commissioners are in charge of that. As such, sensitive issues are best handled as an Executive Session that doesn't require the public.

Under the Resident Advisory, Mr. Ortiz reported a few items. First, he stated they continue with the Lynfield Community Center averaging about 20-25 kids, Monday through Friday. Second, they're going to be starting up the garden in the Spring, thanks to the generosity of Ms. Donna Taggart who donated 2,500 for a new pollinating garden. Third, Wind Creek donated 7,500 to the Lynfield Community Center organization so they could purchase appliances during the Summer, so they could cook fresh breakfast and lunch as needed. As needed as the kids are tired of the school luncheons. They were able to get a popcorn machine, cotton candy machine and snow cone machine for the kids. Everything is free of charge for the kids.

Fourth, Dominic Albanese from ETCB, sometime in April is going to start fixing the baseball field and they're going to add a third team, 17 and under and they've been on their fourth week of the academy practices. They want to redo the field to make it look professional. They want to recruit kids 12 and under at the Southside Lynfield. And those kids once they ready to play, they'll be put into a travelling team, but they won't have to travel at all. All the games are at home to benefit them, and everything is free for them. Last year, with the help of Community Action, they donated about \$10,000.00, and they bought new football and baseball equipment that was pretty costly. Community Action has been very helpful. Now that COVID pretty much passed us, they're to have the kids come back out and get involved in sports and because they don't want the streets raising our kids.

Last, they applied for the Iron Pigs grant, which is \$28,580, he said it's remarkable so they can fix the concession stand since it's outdated. They want to bring up the electrical system up, put new beams, siding and an exhaust fan. That building was built in 1958 and they've been trying to work with the city. But the HSI, Humanitarian Social Innovation they were able to apply for a grant with the Iron Pigs so she said that should be doable, that they could work it out.

Mr. Rittle asked if the other commissioners can help to secure that. Mr. Ortiz said they have someone searching for grants. She takes 10% of everything that she brings in, and she handles all the money. They're just trying to make it positive for the kids in the community. Mr. Linares said she would like to see more things like this at Marvine. Mr. Ortiz said he went to the school district to recruit other kids. It costs \$1,200 per kid, it's a travelling team. It's open to all BHA kids, but they're parents would have to provide transportation. All fees are waived to join the team and they also get a new uniforms. Mrs. Linares asked if they're aware of it.

Mr. Ortiz stated that the school board is sending fliers for free baseball signups for whoever's interested. As of today, they have three signups and there are a total of seventeen spots.

Mr. Rittle mentioned he knows Winston Alozie, he is also on the school board and he runs the Girls and Boys Club in the Marvine area. Mr. Ortiz said they want to speak to the athletic department, there are some kids that play high school ball and don't make the cut, so they'll take those kids. They also need coaches and managers. They have a strong support system now. Mr. Rittle said he visited the Boys and Girls Club last Friday and there were like 75 kids there. Mr. Ortiz said in the summer they get like close to 40 to 50 kids. But during the school year they'll get about 20-25. It's growing every week. Chairperson Linares responded very good.

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Mr. Ortiz reported that the next Resident Advisory Board (RAB) Meeting will be on Thursday, March 16, 2023 at the Monocacy Community room. At that time, they will update and discuss the five-year plan goals.

UNDER RESOLUTION - RESOLUTION NO. 2557 OF 2023 - APPROVING OF THE OPERATING BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING 3/31/2024.

NOTE: (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the operating budget for fiscal year 3/31/2024.
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Lindsey/Rittle/Ortiz/Linares; Nays – None

UNDER RESOLUTION - RESOLUTION NO. 2558 OF 2023 - APPROVING OF THE CONTRACT FOR THE GRASS CUTTING SERVICES FOR ALL DEVELOPMENTS FOR ONE (1) ADDITIONAL YEAR.

NOTE: (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

Mrs. Clifton made a motion to approve the contract for the grass cutting for one (1) additional year.
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Lindsey/Rittle/Ortiz/Linares; Nays – None

UNDER RESOLUTION - RESOLUTION NO. 2559 OF 2023 - APPROVING OF THE PROPOSAL FOR REMOTE SERVICES FOR PUBLIC HOUSING ANNUAL AND INTERIM RECERTIFICATIONS.

NOTE: (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

Mr. Ortiz made a motion to approve the proposal for remote services for public housing annual and interim recertifications. Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Lindsey/Rittle/Ortiz/Linares; Nays – None

APPROVING OF THE WAGE ADJUSTMENT FOR THE CLERICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEES.

Mr. Ortiz made a motion to approve the wage adjustment for the clerical and administrative employees. Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Lindsey/Rittle/Ortiz/Linares; Nays – None

Under New Business, we had two items. First, there was a discussion whether we should continue to have Hybrid or just in person board meetings. Chairperson Linares suggested and the board agreed to continue to have Hybrid board meetings for the next three months while they work on a policy. Attorney Matz agreed to work on some templates for the Commissioners to consider and to debate then over the public forum.

APPROVING HYBRID BOARD MEETING FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS UNTIL THEY WORK ON A POLICY.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve Hybrid meeting for the following three (3) months.
Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Lindsey/Rittle/Ortiz/Linares; Nays – None

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Second, Mr. Rittle stated as discussed in their executive board session, they should move forward in securing a consultant to help them facilitate the search for an Executive Director.

APPROVING TO CREATE AN RFP TO BEGIN THE PROCESS TO HIRE A CONSULTANT TO FILL THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S POSITION.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve to create an RFP to begin the process to hire a consultant to fill the executive director's position. Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes - Lindsey/Rittle/Ortiz/Linares; Nays - None

Nothing under Miscellaneous Reports, Other Business - Board Members, Solicitors, and Staff.

Under Public Comments, Douglas Reed, Monocacy tenant, expressed his concerns regarding the laundry room hours. Apparently, residents are using the machines after closing hours and disturbing the peace of other residents. Stephanie Mathers, Monocacy tenant, stated she is having a problem with a tenant. Mr. John Ritter replied, all issues and concerns should be reported to the property manager, and that he will look into it.

Secondly, Ms. Sara Satullo, Deputy Director of Community Development, City of Bethlehem, was present at the meeting and introduced herself. Moving forward she will be attending the board meetings representing Mayor William Reynolds. Ms. Satullo noted if we need zoom capabilities, we can reach out to her. Chairperson Linares and Mr. Ritter thanked Ms. Satullo.

Chairperson Linares noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, March 13, 2023 at 4:00 P.M. at the Monocacy Tower, community room.

There being no further business to transact, Mrs. Linares declared the meeting adjourned.

John Ritter

John Ritter
Interim Executive Director