

MINUTES . . . REGULAR MEETING . . . JULY 10, 2023

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session Monday, July 10, 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. J. Marc Rittle

ABSENT

Mrs. Valerie McLendon, Vice Chairperson  
Mr. Rogelio Ortiz

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.

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

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

Under the monthly bills, Chairperson Linares asked do the tenants have to pay a pet deposit. Mr. Ritter replied yes. But, if there's no damage when they move out, they receive the deposit back.

Under the Financial report Mr. Snyder reported that he added a year to date actual and a year-to-date budget column, so it shows a variance. On Section 8, through May we're down to about 486 and that we could lease with the money we have available. We got 490 through April but because expenses keep going up that's going to drop that number down.

Mrs. Clifton questioned the unrestricted cash number reported date and numbers being the same as last month. Mr. Snyder said he keeps it the same, just year to date. Because the cash fluctuates so much between AMPs, it is easier to just get an idea of where we're at the end of the year.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the Treasurer's and financial reports for June 2023. Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

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

Under Courtesy of the Floor, Agenda Items Only, Attorney Matz stated there were some questions concerning the revised agenda that occurred today. Mrs. Clifton asked about conflicting information between a published notice about a specific item and the published agenda that lacks that item, which one do you follow. Attorney Matz said the legalized requirements are in the Sunshine Act for notice to the public, that may be to address what's on the agenda or what may be presented at the meeting that wasn't in the initial agenda. There's a Reading case that came out about a year and a half ago, two years ago that revised the notice patterns and that's become a status of the law but there's not a lot of clarification to that. His opinion is without case law behind it, it seems to be sufficient to keep it.

Nothing reported under Old Business

Under Chairman's report, Chairperson Linares mentioned that she was disappointed that in our last board meeting the recommendation to approve a one-week program to have 16 children attend a free sports camp through Grace Church was not approved due to it being a faith based related. She disagrees because the children need to be helped out.

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Mrs. Clifton had questioned whether the activity is faith based, or if it was just going to be athletics. If it's athletics plus indoctrination, as a public entity she had some mixed feelings as an agency if they should publicly support that. Mr. Ritter said it's through a church and there is an opening prayer, but he wasn't sure how far faith based it is, so he told them that we weren't going to participate. Mr. Rittle commented that they're better off and said he respects Mr. Ritter's opinion. And that he agrees with Mrs. Clifton that we're a public authority.

Under the Executive Directors' report, Mr. Ritter reported a few items. The monthly meeting with the BHA Community Police Officers will be held on Wednesday July 12th at 9 o'clock and at that time they'll discuss any drug or criminal activities on our properties. Secondly, Sergeant Moses who was part of the BHA police unit for Bethlehem Housing for the past year and a half has retired with the Bethlehem Police Department. He said, "he a great guy and thanked him for all his years of service." He has not retired completely he's working for Lehigh Valley Homicide Task Force. Sergeant Bill Marques will be replacing him, effective today. Mr. Rittle asked if Sergeant Marques was present today. Attorney Matz said the city police do not want the police officers at the meetings. It would just be good to introduce himself to the commissioners and the public. They used to be able to attend the meetings, but they were told not to. Chairperson Linares said maybe we can invite him to our next meeting. She congratulated Sergeant Moses and welcomed Sergeant Marques.

Under Committee Reports, Attorney Matz stated that the new commissioners had asked him to define the structure, role and purpose of the committees. Mrs. Clifton asked if we have existing by-laws. Attorney Matz answered old bylaws. The by-laws have a lot of resolutions going back many years. They will get an updated copy of the by-laws to the commissioners. Mr. Rittle suggested maybe we remove the personnel committee. Attorney Matz agreed that it doesn't have to be an agenda item every time but there should be at least a designation on the board as liaison to the committee. In addition, there may be times when they may become more active, at least in terms of union negotiations and other things that are required. We use Attorney Hoffman, labor counsel at Stevens and Lee for specialized matters. It's the largest law firm in the state located in Lancaster.

Nothing reported under the Scholarship, Finance and Personnel Committees.

Under Resident Advisory Board, Mrs. Flores, Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator reviewed her report. Lynfield has a lot of activities going on. They are in the works of trying to get the Second Food Harvest collaboration and it we'll be presented to the board for approval. Litzenger had their last meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup>. Monocacy, they have three positions available. The president was going to be speaking to three people in hopes that they would actually accept the position. The Central High Rise Office (CHOO office) was contacted by Paragon Home Care, and they're scheduling activities to come and visit three of our sites. And they're going to be offering bingo for about 20-30 people and they'll also be speaking about their services. On the other councils, she hasn't worked on them yet and is planning on starting that process late Fall. Mr. Rittle thanked Mrs. Flores for the great work. He asked that she work as a liaison for the other committees and bring up any issues to the board that they may have. Mrs. Linares asked if they had complained about anything. Mrs. Flores replied about the parking issue, which Ms. Rodriguez was informed.

Mr. Clifton asked are the BHA communities working as an entity. Ms. Rodriguez spoke on the high-rise parking reasonable accommodation and the recommendation of cameras on all parking lots. Mr. Ritter said they're looking into wellness clinics for the elderly tenants, entertainment such as bus trips. We do a lot of stuff during the holiday season.

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Mrs. Clifton asked if we have any policy or guidance as the partners are coming in to provide services to our tenants. Mr. Ritter responded that all services must go through management.

**UNDER RESOLUTIONS - RESOLUTION NO. 2572 OF 2023 - APPROVING THE VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT.** (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the vision and mission statement.

Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Clifton/Rittle/Linares; Nays – None

Mr. Rittle asked are the new goals going to be reflected in the five-year plan. Mr. Ritter replied that once they're approved and they're posted for 45 days for public comments, after that we would submit them to HUD for approval. Mrs. Clifton commented that the board and staff should continue the momentum of gathering regularly for the purpose of the mission-vision and strategic planning, goal setting. Because she doesn't want them to get to the annual plan and Five-Year plan approval process again without the board having been integral in the development of that along the way.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2573 OF 2023 - APPROVING THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN AMENDMENT.** (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

Mrs. Clifton made a motion to approve the five-year plan amendment.

Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Clifton/Rittle/Linares; Nays – None

Mr. Rittle asked if we still have to approve the first tee plan. Mr. Kichline stated that two things were amended in the plan, one was to add the Choice Neighborhoods project and the other we had already had the 12-unit First Tee in there, noted that we're definitely converting it to Section 8. But that's not working out like we had envisioned, so the second amendment just gives us the option to keep it as public housing or section 8.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2574 OF 2023 - APPROVING THE FIRST TEE APARTMENTS TO BE CONVERTED INTO 12 PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS WHEN COMPLETED.** (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the First Tee apartments to be converted into 12 public housing units when completed.

Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Clifton/Rittle/Linares; Nays – None

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**RESOLUTION NO.2575 OF 2023 - APPROVING THE CONTRACT FOR PEST CONTROL SERVICES FOR ONE (1) ADDITIONAL YEAR. (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)**

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the contract for pest control services for one (1) additional year.

Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Clifton/Rittle/Linares; Nays – None

Mrs. Clifton asked if the 8% increase an additional labor or chemicals costs. Mr. Ritter responded that it is not broken down into details.

Under New Business, Mr. Rittle asked if there is a search process for the deputy executive director's position as he wants Mr. Ritter to have support. Attorney Matz said he'll work with Mr. Ritter. Mr. Ritter said that would be internal and he's working on it with Attorney Matz.

Under Miscellaneous Reports and Other Businesses, Board Member, Solicitor or Staff. Mrs. Clifton commented on the need to get a position description and/or contract for Mr. Ritter's position. Attorney Matz stated that he didn't have anything further other than it was suggested by the consultant there should be one, and a change of title. He would have to look into it further. The complication on the labor should just be what Civil Service thinks, and he wants Joseph Hoffman's input on the employment contract. What is the actual impact if any on the Civil Service as he isn't certain, so, he is waiting for his input. He is supposed to get back to us by the end of this week. And that in the past it has always been a civil service position. Mrs. Clifton said that makes sense to her. She added that according to the handbook in theory the board is supposed to do an annual review and evaluation process with an Executive Director, and if there is history of the board ever doing that. And if that is the case, how can we do that without a position description in place to be part of the conversation about goal setting. And thinking longer term on how as a board they're supporting Mr. Ritter as the new Executive Director to meet the goals that they're asking of him. And once we get a response from Mr. Hoffman, do we need to schedule an executive session. Attorney Matz replied yes.

Under Public Comments, Elwood Spaar Jr. (Woody), Monocacy tenant, #906 asked when they complete the remodeling work at the Monocacy community room, if it's possible they can get the soda and snack machine back. Mrs. Rodriguez stated that they removed the vending machine because for many years we were not receiving 50% of the gains, and tenants were complaining of increased prices and stale snacks. The machines did a lot of damage to the floors, and the tiles are being replaced. We will be getting the soda machine again, but not the snack machine. In addition, they're doing a makeover in the laundry rooms, quiet rooms and community rooms and they're going to be having an open house to show the makeover and have a resident/staff meeting and invite the commissioners to come. Chairperson Linares asked is that in all the buildings. Ms. Rodriguez replied yes. Mr. Ritter said they're currently re-doing all the community rooms and laundry rooms and they're going to be stripping and waxing all four high rises and painting the hallways. It was also suggested we put a camera in the laundry room, tenants worried about someone taking their clothes. Ms. Rodriguez said she spoke to Mr. Kichline regarding the cameras.

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Sherry Honea, Monocacy Tenant, Apt #705, can we designate a spot in the community room to put things that anyone wants to give away in perfectly fine condition such as walkers and wheelchair. Ms. Rodriguez stated that if they need to get rid of furniture or medical equipment, they can call a company to pick it up, the Salvation Army or Goodwill, but we can't accommodate that.

We need to keep the community clean. Mr. Ritter stated that another reason why it's suggested not to share furniture is that at one time we had a big bedbug problem. They also asked when they are going to get the kitchen going again with hot dogs. Ms. Rodriguez said Mrs. Flores is in the process of forming a new tenant council at Monocacy.

Mary Smith, Monocacy, tenant, #209, they were told not to bring anything back here or on the tables. But people are still bringing it down. As you never know what's in that stuff, they could have bugs all over here. Mr. Ritter agreed.

Mr. Ritter announced that the Annual Field Day will take place on Saturday, August 19, 2023 at the Northeast Community Center in the Blazer Field. Commissioners are invited. Mrs. Linares said it's a nice affair. The police are there with horse carriages and it's really nice.

Chairperson Linares noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, August 14, 2023, at 4:00 P.M. at the Monocacy Tower, community room.

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

*John Ritter*

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John Ritter  
Executive Director