

MINUTES . . . REGULAR MEETING . . . JUNE 12, 2023

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session Monday, June 12, 2023, at 4:00 P.M. (IN PERSON MEETING). Those present and absent were as follows:

PRESENT

Mrs. Iris Linares, Chairperson  
Mrs. Valerie McLendon, Vice Chairperson  
Mrs. Lindsey A Clifton  
Mr. J. Marc Rittle

ABSENT

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 May 8, 2023 were presented. Mrs. Clifton made a motion to accept the minutes of May 8, 2023. Mrs. McLendon seconded the motion.

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

Under the Financial report Mr. Rittle asked Mr. Snyder to report any new information.

Mr. Snyder reported that cash is a lot lower this time. The year end cash as of March 31, 2022, is \$11 million. Currently, at the end of March of 2023, there's \$4 million but we have \$8.5 million in CDs. Prior to the rates going up, we kept the cash here because it was better to keep the cash in-house and use it against the cost of running the accounts, but now they're investing it again. Also, the audit was submitted to HUD and our net unrestricted improved by \$734,000 compared to last year. Some of the AMPs are down, some went up but in total it's like \$730,000 more. Currently, we have 12 million in cash and CD's. In addition, they got some more information on HUD, and this year we could lease about 490 units, we have lots of cash right now that we can lease up Section 8 units if we can find landlords so we're in good shape to do it.

Mrs. Clifton commented that the number reported last month was 436. Mr. Snyder agreed. He stated that HUD holds a lot of money back from us and it's hard to figure out what it is, but he received updated information, so it's about 490 right now. In the last couple of months, the HAP's been going up about \$10-\$20 thousand more. Now, 490 seems good but he'll keep us updated as the money can decrease but it's going to be between the 470-490 range in the next few months. And in January we increased the Fair Market rent, and we're allowed to go up 120% the Fair Market rent and that's starting to hit now so we're using more money up. We want to try to use as much money as we can, because if we don't HUD is subject to take it back. They'll take it back and give it to other housing authorities who need the money. It all depends on how the finances are with the government as they look for ways to get money back.

Mr. Clifton commented that it would be helpful to report a month-to-month comparison synopsis at each meeting. Mr. Snyder said no problem, that the report will be a month behind. Mr. Clifton said she appreciates it.

Chairperson Linares asked when will the audit take place. Mr. Snyder replied July 10<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>. He's not sure if it will be in person or online. He assumes that this year it would be hybrid, where they come up for a couple days and the rest of the time, they'll work from their office. They're out of Wilmington. The financials have to be in, even though HUD requires them in by December 31<sup>st</sup>, as with our agreement with TD Bank we have to have audited financial statements by October 31<sup>st</sup>, so we're like two months ahead.

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

Under Old Business, Bethlehem Housing's Mission and Vision Statement. Mr. Rittle commented that they had a retreat today from 9:00-3:00 PM. with BHA staff, Board of Commissioners and city council and two members of the mayor's staff. He said, "It was truly like a city-wide collaborative session today." Chairperson Linares thanked Mrs. Clifton for making arrangements for the Mission and Vision Retreat. It was very informative, they had a very good time, and they learned a lot. She thinks the goals were set and they're ready to go. Mrs. Clifton said they'll be looking them over again as a group one more time and they'll come before the board for formal approval next month. Mr. Ritter agreed. Mrs. McLendon said we're moving forward.

Under the Chairman's report, Chairperson Linares reported that Mr. Ortiz is requesting to hire three students to work for the summer program that he sets up every year. He usually hires two students, but the number of children in the program has increased, so he'd like to hire 2 girls and one boy for 8 weeks. The children are given homemade lunch and breakfast. And he said the girls are good at the arts and crafts and the boys are good at the sports. Mr. Ortiz has been doing it for a long time and he does a great job. Mr. Rittle asked at what rate, how many hours and if they take taxes out. Mr. Snyder said he thinks it's 30 hours per week, 6 hours per day. It used to be \$7.50 per hour but now it's \$10.00 the minimum wage, and they do take out social security taxes. Attorney Matz said it comes out to about \$900 a week. Mr. Snyder said we have funding money for the tenant services to cover that cost.

Mrs. McLendon made a motion to approve hiring three students to work the summer program at Lynfield at \$10.00 an hour, 30 hours a week.

Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

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

Under the Executive Directors' report, Mr. Ritter reported a few items. First, the monthly meeting with the BHA Community Police Officers will be held on Wednesday June 14<sup>th</sup> at 9 o'clock and at that time they'll discuss any drug or criminal activities on our properties. Second, the Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant was submitted to HUD last week, they'll find out in December if they're awarded the grant. Third, Grace Church of Bethlehem is sponsoring 12-16 of our children ages between 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade for sports camp at no charge. It's usually \$30 a kid, it runs from July 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> and they're going to waive the fees. Mr. Ortiz is going to use the shuttle to take them over. Mrs. Clifton asked is it a sports league that also evangelizes the students? Mr. Ritter said he can check on it but believes it is just a sports camp. Mr. Ritter said he'll check into it. In conclusion, he noted that we hired a new employee, Cristopher Marshall, It Assistant for the It Department. The Board of Commissioners welcomed Mr. Marshall.

Under Committee Reports, Scholarship Committee, Chairperson Linares and Vice Chairperson McLendon presented the 2023 BHA Scholarship awards The High School scholarships recipients from Liberty High School were Ebony Gee, 4.8 GPA, \$2500 scholarship. Ebony was accepted at Cedar Crest College and will be majoring in Nuclear Medicine Technology. In addition, she was awarded 1<sup>st</sup> place for the DeWitt Boosel Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$3,000 from the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Development and was presented with a \$1,500 check.

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Sanchenka Crespo, 3.98 GPA, \$2,500 scholarship. She was accepted to two colleges, Moravian University and Northampton Community College. Due to her academic accomplishments Moravian University awarded her a merit scholarship in the amount of \$29,000 per year. She will be majoring in Nursing. Sanchenka was not able to attend the meeting to receive her award. She and her mother were thankful for the scholarship. Julius Walker, 2.55 GPA, \$1000 Scholarship. He was accepted to Northampton Community College and will be majoring in Liberal Arts. He's undecided on his career choice but he's interested in Criminal Justice or Sports Medicine. Lastly, Diana Torres, 3.8 GPA, attends Northeast Middle School. Diana will receive a \$1,000 reward this year, and then she can earn up to \$5,000 for graduation, based on at least a 2.5 GPA each year. The Board of Commissioners congratulated and wished them all the best! Well deserved!

Nothing reported under the Finance and Personnel Committees.

Mr. Rittle and Mrs. Clifton asked about the personnel and finance committees. If it's necessary to have it on the agenda as they're not sure what business, they need to report. Mrs. Clifton stated that just having the committee description to connect with Mr. Snyder about what he needs in the way of board collaboration, board of finance committee and its support but she doesn't know what the responsibilities are would helpful. Attorney Matz said there's a scription that should be associated with the committee. There should be some board liaison to the committee as it may be applied. For example, the finance particularly and audit time, budget time there should be, obviously some connection to it. And beyond that at minimal personnels a little but different but he'd be glad to address it. There is a need for some input from the board for the purpose of addressing renewal of contracts and things. So, there are some functions there that are necessary in addition to the transparency of the operation questions. Mrs. Linares said she receives personnel problems as they arise.

Under Resident Advisory Board, Mrs. Gwendolyn Flores, Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator reviewed her report. She reported on Lynfield, Litzenberger, Monocacy and Bartholomew which are the four functioning tenant counsels right now. Lynfield, had some issues with the officers and they were able to resolve, and the treasurer's standpoint is taken care of. They invited Mrs. Flores to their meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup>, so she will be attending, and they will be working on the secretary position. The secretary right now will be coming off board and there is someone that's interested. Litzenberger still has no secretary, but the President and Vice President are working together on that and they're doing very well. They already started a lot of their activities. Monocacy, the President just elected has three people interested in two of the positions. No one really wants the secretary position so it's continuous work in progress. Mrs. Flores is serving as their translator, just to help them so she can get by. And Bartholomew, the President has elected a secretary, Ms. Elynin Morales-Cruz was actually nominated at the beginning but declined the position, but she ended up accepting it, and she's bilingual which is great. So, there's a lot of training going on right now, communication and just guiding them to work as a team. Mr. Rittle said good work. Mrs. Linares commented that there's progress.

**UNDER RESOLUTIONS - RESOLUTION NO. 2569 OF 2023 - APPROVING THE CONTRACT FOR THE PEMBROKE RENOVATIONS (24 APARTMENTS).** (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the contract for the Pembroke renovations (24 Apartments).

Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

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

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Mr. Rittle asked for more details on the renovations. Mr. Kichline responded that they will be renovating 24 Pembroke apartments. This contract went out to bid prior to the Choice Neighborhood Grant. It's a comprehensive renovation where it's complete flooring, window, cabinets, and bathrooms. Residents get moved out and then they get moved back. Even if the Choice Neighborhoods proceeds it's going to take quite a few years. The renovations have been changed and he took items out looking to the future of the possible Choice Neighborhood Grant. For example, the heating boilers are thirty years old, but they still work, so they'll be replaced as needed. Mrs. Clifton commented that the bid represents work that is for basic essentials to get the units through the possibility of that really significant change. Mr. Kichline agreed. And if for some reason we don't get the Choice Neighborhoods we don't have to say we should have done this. These are all interior improvements. Mr. Linares said it's a good idea. Mrs. Clifton asked, "have we used this company before? Mr. Kichline said yes. They constructed our twenty Bayard Development units.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2570 OF 2023 - APPROVING THE CONTRACTS #1 & #2 FOR CLEAN AND PAINT FOR ONE YEAR, JUNE 1, 2023, THROUGH MAY 31, 2024, WITH A POSSIBILITY OF A ONE-YEAR EXTENSION. (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)**

Mrs. McLendon made a motion to approve the contracts #1 & #2 for cleaning and painting for one year, June 1, 2023, through May 31, 2024, with a possibility of a one-year extension.

Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

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

Mrs. Clifton asked about the schedule of the service and price. Mr. Ritter stated that this service is for cleaning and painting vacant units. Mr. Jablonski said the price is 20% higher than last year. Mr. Ritter said it was split into two bids because we were hoping to get two different contractors, it's a little bit more efficient but they can win both bids. He is a good contractor.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2571 OF 2023 - APPROVING THE ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEER DESIGN PROPOSAL FOR THE ELEVATOR REPLACEMENT AT BODDER AND THE BARTHOLOMEW HOUSE. (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)**

Mrs. Clifton made a motion to approve the architectural engineer design proposal for the elevator replacement at Bodder and Bartholomew House.

Mrs. McLendon seconded the motion.

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

Mrs. Clifton asked does this replaces the elevator contract or is for the engineer proposal work. Mr. Ritter replied engineer proposal work.

Under New Business, Mr. Ritter had one item. We received a request to sponsor Jomari Sotomayor, BHA resident, for \$175 for the Cinderella production fee. We sponsored this young lady a few times in the past. This is going to be at the Pennsylvania Youth Theatre. Mrs. Linares commented that we have sponsored her before. Mrs. Clifton stated she is very supportive of assisting residents with recreation activities.

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She asked how does the tenant services work with the youth in housing and how do we make this open and accessible and equitable across the board. If there is a process by which resident/students can apply for assistance, if all the resident students who are participating in extra-curriculars and need financial support. Mr. Snyder stated that the tenant services budget gets used very little. HUD gives us so much per person per month. And we do budget for tenant services, he can get the exact amount. Mrs. Moreno said Mr. Robinson handles the recreation requests as they come to him and that's when it gets presented to the board. Mrs. Linares said we sponsor the Boys Scouts and Boys and Girls Club activities. Mrs. Maldonado, FDO property manager, stated Mr. Robinson is in charge of collecting the Boys and Girls Club football and cheerleading activities. We pay the \$50 fee they have to pay to join those clubs. Mr. Rittle said he would not have a problem just approving a set amount for tenant services at the beginning of the year and just empowering that person who's in charge of it. Because if we don't have to approve every \$50 sports fee, he doesn't think you have to approve the theatre fee either. And that we should publicize and make it fair for all. Mrs. McLendon agreed, that's a good idea. Attorney Matz said it should include purpose and process as well.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve to sponsor BHA resident, Jomari Sotomayor, production fee of \$175.00 for the Cinderella production at the Pennsylvania Youth Theatre.

Mrs. McLendon seconded the motion.

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

Under Miscellaneous Reports and Other Businesses, Board Member, Solicitor or Staff. Mrs. Clifton addressed a couple of things that were brought up but not on the agenda in terms of motions and items of business. She asked if an item has to be on the agenda before approval. Attorney Matz said for purposes of notice to public and otherwise we should have it on the agenda, if it's something you want to do or carry over from a previous one, don't want to have any surprises. Mrs. Clifton said to comply with our legal responsibilities, we should have some sort of deadline for agenda items for public notice and if it doesn't make that deadline then it needs to wait until the next meeting. Attorney Matz said that's correct, that would be an appropriate standard. Mrs. Moreno stated that she sends the board packet out the Wednesday before the board meeting. Attorney Matz said the deadline should be part of the announcement. Mrs. Clifton said that's a piece of what we are communicating to both residents, board members and staff or anybody if you need business it's got to get to the agenda by that Tuesday before in order for us to be legally compliant. Mrs. McLendon added that once it's noted and everybody knows it, then they should know to follow it and they should have it out there by Tuesday or else it will not be addressed at the meeting.

Under Public Comments, Ms. Maldonado, Monocacy Tenant, said they're having trouble with the back door, it doesn't close all the way. Mr. Jablonski said Advanced Door Service is coming through all the high rises starting on Thursday, to do their inspection of all our automatic doors. That in cases like that when the door doesn't close or lock, they should call the emergency number after hours or maintenance number during the day to report it and they'll try to fix the problem.

Chairperson Linares noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, July 10, 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.

  
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John Ritter  
Executive Director