

MINUTES ... REGULAR MEETING ... SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session September 11, 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

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 August 14, 2023, were presented. Mr. Ortiz made a motion to accept the minutes of August 14, 2023. Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

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

Under the financial report, Mr. Snyder reported that we have 476 monthly units available. Total cash on hand for public housing at the end of July is \$4,921,000, compared to the end of March which was \$4,172,000. Mr. Rittle asked how we utilize the cash on hand. Mr. Snyder reported it's for the central office salaries, reserves for public housing, and we have \$8.5 million in CDs that's all-public housing AMPs. Mr. Rittle asked if there's a reasonable number that we keep in hand. Mr. Snyder stated the more you have in reserves the less subsidy we'll get. So, HUD allows us to move capital funds to operating funds because we don't get a lot of subsidies. We also use the money for Capital Fund projects. In addition, he feels comfortable with the range and investments as we're getting good interest rates. With the 5% return, we're getting about 150 to 200 thousand at least for this coming year for income. The interest goes to operating funds for public housing units.

Mrs. Clifton asked with the ongoing conversations between the housing authority, City and the Choice Neighborhoods program, and if we as a housing authority are hoping to be more innovative and creative and looking for additional opportunities to expand housing moving forward, what terms of financial flexibility to create other funding streams do we have. Mr. Ritter responded we would have to go through non-profits. Mr. Snyder stated this money can't be used. Right now, they said 25% but HUD can change to a lower percentage, so we just don't know.

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

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

Nothing reported under Courtesy of the Floor.

Under Old Business, Executive Director's Contract, Mr. Ritter reported that he is protected as a civil service employee. And that the only way it would be beneficial to sign a contract would be for a salary increase and extra benefits. Attorney Matz said there's no actual contract, the Civil Service standards are the only standards we have.

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Mrs. Clifton requested a copy of the civil service executive directors' description of responsibilities. As commissioners, they're supposed to be conducting annual performance evaluations to ensure that Mr. Ritter as a new executive director has all the support that he needs with the set of goals they've created as a board and staff.

Ms. Moreno stated that we do have a Civil Service employee book and an annual evaluation. She will send the commissioners a copy. Attorney Matz said it's cycled towards the annual budget period for salaries and benefits. Mr. Snyder mentioned that in the past we budgeted the salaries for everybody except the Executive Director. Then the board would meet and vote on how much the Director would get. He would get a letter with the Executive Director's salary increase around the same timeframe as the annual budget. The fiscal year budget cycle runs from April 1st - March 31st. All staff evaluations will be done by the end of February, so that helps us with budgeting.

Nothing to Under Chairman's Report.

Under the Executive Directors' report, Mr. Ritter reported a few items. First, they will be holding health clinics at all four of our high-rise buildings on October 11th. Monocacy Tower, 9:00 AM, Litzenger 10:30 AM, Bartholomew, 12:00 PM and Bodder at 1:30 PM. It's a COVID and Flu shots clinic. Secondly, we had Field Day on August 19th, the turnout was great, and it was a great time. He thanked all the volunteers that helped out with the different stations, the set up and clean up. Lastly, Mr. Robinson will be running the bus trips on Tuesday's, alternating between Walmart, Target, Dollar Tree, Q-Mart lunch at Cracker Barrel. In addition, the Christmas Light Tour starts up the second week of December, touring Bethlehem, Allentown, and Easton. It's a four-hour tour and it runs five days a week for a week and a half. We take tenants from different buildings and it's a nice tour. Mr. Rittle added that for the Christmas Light Tour, he could get us a map for the Luminaria Night, of places that are lit up, especially in Bethlehem on December 9th. And it's a nice tour. Mr. Ritter said absolutely, he appreciates that.

Under the Committee reports, Scholarship Committee, Mrs. Moreno reported that one scholarship recipient requested their funds.

Under Resident Advisory Board, Mr. Ortiz reported that the next Resident Advisory Board is scheduled for Thursday November 16th. Secondly, regarding the food bank they had a meeting with Donna Taggart and Linda Risner, and they're preparing for training. Lastly, he has a meeting scheduled with Brandon Campos, they're kicking off their Fall Ball. And this summer they rewarded three young men a full ride to college. One went to Rutgers; one went to Penn State and the other went to a Christian university called Carin.

UNDER RESOLUTIONS - RESOLUTION NO. 2578 OF 2023 APPROVING THE CONTRACT FOR THE HVAC SYSTEMS IN BODDER AND BARTHOLOMEW ELEVATOR ROOMS. (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

Mrs. Clifton made a motion to approve the contract for HVAC Systems in Bodder and Bartholomew elevator rooms.

Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

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

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RESOLUTION NO. 2579 OF 2023 - APPROVING THE WRITE-OFF OF VACATED TENANTS ACCOUNTS. CHANGES TO THE AUTHORITY'S LEASE AND ACOP. (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the write-off of vacated tenants.

Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

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

Under New Business, the Computer Software Conversion, it was brought up for discussion. Mr. Ritter reported that after much research they've concluded that Yardi would be the best fit for our housing authority. Mrs. Clifton asked what level of tech support they offer vs the level of in-house tech support we get. Mr. Horn stated that it's an online web application, where right now it's on a server so it's an easier application to work with. They will provide training. Mr. Snyder stated that the last conversion we had with TENMAST cost us \$160,000. This one is more expensive compared to what we're paying now in maintenance fees. In addition, TENMAST, a big real estate conglomerate, bought out the public housing side to get into that. And they've been promising since 2018 to merge everything together but it never happened. Mr. Horn attended a training session last year in New Orleans. Mr. Horn stated that they have another set of software that's an online version, but they couldn't get the voucher part working in it, so what they did was take HAPPY which is another software that they bought and now they're going to convert everybody from TENMAST to HAPPY and then try to convert people to some of their newer stuff, and they just keep pushing stuff down the line.

Mr. Snyder reported that HUD keeps changing things and some of these companies can't keep up with it, and that makes it even harder. There are small companies out there that could probably help us but, it's the conversion, of things that HUD requires them to do. Yardi is already ahead with the capabilities that we need, so we're thinking about Yardi as opposed to some of the other companies. It's going to be about an 8-month conversion time period. They're meeting with them next week, and the recommendation is that we hire a consultant to help with the conversion. They anticipate starting Yardi by March 1, 2024, and be fully operational off TENMAST by November 2024. The price guaranteed is about \$80,000, plus and it will be budgeted for this year.

Under Miscellaneous Reports and Other Businesses, Board Member, Solicitor or Staff. Mr. Rittle asked for an update on the Section 8 open enrollment period. Ms. Snow reported that they opened the waiting list from August 14th-August 20th for a full week, and they received over 2,000 applications. They advertised by posting a flyer in our offices, on BHA TV's, with other agencies, in our email, website, Facebook page, and Morning Call. They are now uploading the applications and going through the application process. They're in need of more landlords so they've created a landlord informational packet, and posted in our website, and created a landlord flyer, posted in our Facebook page and website. They have 3 admissions for August and 7 for September, and they're really working hard to find units for the applicants. Mr. Rittle said that's great.

Commissioner Linares asked if we have an update on the First Tee from HUD? Mr. Kichline replied not at this time.

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Mrs. Clifton asked about the by-law's documentation sent to all commissioners. Attorney Matz added that's it's the first disperse of the history of the existing document. An executive session needs to be scheduled to review them to get a strategy together, and there's some models out there to help with discussion. He has solicited information through local authorities and state authorities, for some other samples that could be helpful to look at. Chairperson Linares will be scheduling the executive session.

Under Public Comments, Sherry Honea, Apt.#705, commented that BHA had a whistle program, where BHA gave all the residents a whistle to wear around their neck. In case of an emergency, they would blow the whistle to get someone's attention. It worked and she thought it would be a great idea for BHA to start this again for the residents. Mr. Ritter said he'll take it into consideration. Ms. Rodriguez said there is a Lifeline program out there that we can contact, and they work with the individual according to their insurance. Attorney Matz suggested maybe the blue light pole that automatically connects to the 911 emergency system where it's a locator to a specific spot. Also, Ms. Honea asked how soon the soda machine will be replaced. Mr. Ritter replied soon, we're finishing up the community room.

Chairperson Linares noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, October 13, 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

John Ritter
Executive Director