

MINUTES . . . REGULAR MEETING . . . JUNE 10, 2024

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

PRESENT

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

ABSENT

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 13, 2024, were presented and approved. Mrs. Linares made a motion to accept the minutes of May 13th, 2024. Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report for May 2024.
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

Under the Treasurer's report, Chairperson Clifton inquired about the asbestos abatement at 1201 through 1215 Marvine, asking whether it was a one-time task or if multiple sections of Marvine would need to be addressed over time. Mr. Kichline explained that the abatement is part of the Pembroke renovation, which involves three buildings. He noted that asbestos tiles were discovered beneath flooring installed in the 1990s. Currently, they are addressing building #2, with one more building remaining to be completed.

Mr. Snyder said it is very typical, especially in this forum, and the reason is because of the subsidy. HUD, for example, looks at AMP 1 compared to AMP 4, which has about the same number of units. If the units are in individual buildings, HUD believes more money should go to them. They don't really take into consideration factors like elevators and the overall cost of running a high-rise. Therefore, there is a stipulation in HUD called fungibility, which allows us to transfer money. We transferred \$600,000 after the fact to AMP 4 to cover their expenses. I could have taken that money and disbursed it the way I wanted to balance it out, but I must follow HUD's guidelines.

Mr. Snyder explained that the Income and Expense statement provided is the year-end report. He highlighted the inclusion of two new income rows designated for a soft revenue capital fund. This fund encompasses expenses such as moving costs, which are not eligible for capitalization. A corresponding expense row was also added, resulting in a new bottom-line surplus of \$1.241 million, excluding depreciation.

Chairperson Clifton pointed out three instances where spending exceeded the budget and asked if this was typical. Mr. Snyder responded that this is indeed typical, especially in this context, due to the way subsidies are allocated by HUD. He explained that HUD compares different Asset Management Projects (AMPs), such as AMP 1 and AMP 4, which have a similar number of units. HUD tends to allocate more money to units in individual buildings without considering factors like elevators and the overall cost of operating a high-rise.

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Mr. Snyder further explained the concept of fungibility in HUD's guidelines, which allows for the transfer of funds between AMPs. He mentioned that \$600,000 was transferred to AMP 4 to cover their expenses. While he could have distributed the funds differently to balance the budget, he emphasized the need to adhere to HUD's guidelines.

Chairperson Clifton asked about the Central Office, and Mr. Snyder responded that efforts were underway to reduce costs, with funds reallocated to support the Section 8 program. Chairperson Clifton remarked positively on finishing the year with a surplus. Mr. Snyder mentioned that the next shortfall meeting is scheduled for June 25th, and the organization is maintaining stability. They have applied for two eligible fundings and are awaiting HUD's response. One application is for shortfall funding, and the other hinges on an increase in expenses from the previous year. There's optimism about receiving at least one of these funding sources, if not both.

Additionally, Chairperson Clifton inquired about the decrease in leased units from May to June and the simultaneous increase in over-leased units. Mr. Snyder clarified that despite the unit cap being set at 425, costs had risen. He also mentioned that vouchers would soon be issued to meet the target. Finally, Mr. Snyder noted that by the end of June, all CDs except those related to affordable housing and scholarships had been moved out of TD Bank.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the Financial Report for April 2024.
Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

Nothing was reported under Courtesy of the Floor.

Under Old Business, Mr. Ritter provided an update on the Deputy Executive Director's position, noting that Ms. Moreno, now back from leave, will initiate the process. Chairperson Clifton sought details on the imminent posting date, which Mr. Ritter confirmed. She then inquired about the duration for which the position would be open. Ms. Moreno outlined that typically, positions are posted for 5 to 14 days, but they can extend as needed. Chairperson Clifton advocated for a longer posting period and sought input from the board. Mr. Ritter clarified that the Civil Service selects the first top five candidates for interviews. Mr. Rittle raised a question about the posting location, which Ms. Moreno specified as the Civil Service website. Chairperson Clifton suggested widely sharing the link to attract candidates through platforms like Indeed. She further inquired into how the Civil Service selects candidates, prompting Mr. Ritter to explain that selection criteria include test scores and preferences set by BHA, approved by Civil Service. He underscored the significance of non-profit experience in the candidate selection process.

Secondly, under Old Business, Mr. Ortiz reported that the application is completed and signed, but he is encountering difficulty accessing it on his phone. He plans to visit the office tomorrow to sign the necessary documents and submit them early in the morning. Chairperson Clifton acknowledged Ortiz's update and thanked him for clarifying the signature process. She confirmed that upon receipt of the documents, they will have everything necessary for review and can proceed to schedule a meeting to discuss the lease draft, aiming to sign and execute it promptly.

Mrs. Linares asked if anyone else required a lease. Mr. Ritter mentioned Parkridge, indicating that they are currently working on one for Mrs. McLendon, as she continues to utilize the facility.

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Lastly, under Old Business, there was a request to hire two residents for the Lynfield Community Center Program. Details, including the breakdown of costs, scheduling, and duration, were provided. Mr. Ortiz noted a correction on the dates, updating the end date to July 29th.

Mrs. Linares raised a question about the Boys and Girls Club, inquiring if a similar approval process is followed. Mr. Ritter confirmed that BHA sponsors the Boys and Girls Club annually with a budget allocation of \$20,000. Mr. Snyder provided additional details on the costs associated with the summer program, noting it has been a recurring initiative for several years. It involves employing two residents every year for a six-week period, totaling 30 hours per week at \$12 per hour.

Mr. Rittle inquired about the approval process for such initiatives, questioning if it is integrated into the annual budget. Mr. Snyder explained that while it is included in the budget without a specific line item, they could formalize this practice in future budgets. The discussion then focused on the need for board approval despite budget inclusion, with Mr. Snyder clarifying that detailed annual numbers were requested at a previous meeting to ensure transparency and accountability.

The board expressed support for integrating such recurring expenses directly into future annual budgets. Mr. Snyder agreed with the suggestion to streamline this process. Chairperson Clifton concluded the discussion by emphasizing the practicality of including anticipated expenses in the annual operating budget.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve hiring two residents for the Lynfield Community Program. Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Linares/Rittle/Clifton; Nays – Ortiz -abstain.

Under the Chairman's report, Chairperson Clifton asked Mrs. Satullo about the next Choice Steering Committee meeting. She indicated it was scheduled for July 11th at 9:00 AM, though there was a possibility of moving it to the end of the month. She mentioned a pop-up event scheduled for Friday aimed at increasing survey responses. Mrs. Satullo provided an update on the survey progress, noting that thirty out of 180 Pembroke households had completed it, with a goal of achieving 70% participation. She also highlighted efforts to boost visibility through community engagement, including an upcoming pop-up event featuring music and grilling, which had generated excitement. Despite the survey's length, there had been no refusals to participate, and respondents were patient and cooperative. Chairperson Clifton thanked Mrs. Satullo for the update, and Mr. Ritter expressed optimism about favorable weather for the Saturday night event to ensure a strong turnout.

Secondly, immediately following today's board meeting, they will hold an Executive Session to commence work on and discuss the bylaw revision. They anticipate completing the Conflict-of-Interest paperwork without any issues. The discussion on the bylaw revision will also encompass talks about the committee structure, its purpose, and composition.

Under the Executive Director's report, Mr. Ritter mentioned attending the PHADA EDP training in New Orleans on May 31st through June 1st. He reported that the training went well and highlighted those other executive directors attended it. The training courses focused on maintenance and personnel management.

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Secondly, the Choice Neighborhood Barbeque event is scheduled for June 14th from 6:00-8:00 PM, featuring food, music, and activities aimed at increasing survey participation. Additionally, plans are underway for a visit to Camden Housing Authority soon to observe their completed neighborhood project, although a specific date has not been set. Also, the Drug and Criminal monthly meeting is scheduled for June 12th at 9:00 AM. During the last meeting, all individuals on the banned list were re-evaluated, resulting in the removal of a total of nine people from the list.

Lastly, this past Saturday, they held the community food distribution event at Parkridge. It was a great turnout with excellent weather. A total of 561 people were served, supported by thirty-nine volunteers, including eight from BHA. The extra food was distributed to various facilities to minimize waste, making the day successful.

Under Committee Reports, Scholarship Committee, Mrs. Linares presented the recipients for the 2024 BHA Scholarship. Javian Ayala, a student from Liberty High School with a 4.8 GPA, was awarded the \$3,000 high school scholarship. He will be attending Moravian University in the fall to study Education. Christopher Batka, a student at Northeast Middle School with a 4.1 GPA, received the \$1,000 eighth grade scholarship, with the potential to earn up to \$5,000 upon graduation based on maintaining a minimum 2.5 GPA each year. The Board of Commissioners congratulated both recipients and wished them the best, acknowledging their outstanding achievements.

Under Committee Reports, specifically the Resident Advisory Committee, Mr. Ortiz announced that the summer program will commence this Monday and will run for six weeks. Additionally, this week, Mayor J. William Reynolds, Representative Steven Samuelson, Donna Taggart, and other city officials attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the upper field in the Southside for their food truck, aimed at fundraising for the baseball program. They also celebrated the establishment of an East Coast Collegiate baseball team named the Southside, comprised of college students. Mr. Ortiz expressed his enthusiasm by proudly wearing the team's T-shirt.

In addition to the collegiate team, there are also teams for 18-year-olds, 16-year-olds, and 12-year-olds. All participants play baseball for free, and those aged 16 and 18 have the chance to earn a four-year scholarship through local showcases held bi-annually. Local collegiate managers visit the park on these occasions to scout and recruit players for their colleges, providing a pathway for these young athletes to attend college on a four-year scholarship.

The food bank continues to serve over three hundred people every two weeks, supported by food donations from Redner's Supermarket to benefit the community. Additionally, the Roberto Clemente field is being enhanced with professional assistance from Dominic Albanese, the director of the Elite Championship Tournament Baseball (ECTB), Holdings. The team will be named the Southside Junior Sluggers and will include all neighborhood children interested in playing baseball. Those displaying advanced skills will have opportunities to participate in tournaments.

The games are scheduled every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 8 AM to 6 PM, with the upper field hosting games from 8 AM to 8 PM. Our program runs from March 16th to the middle of November. Additionally, Roberto Vines, a sportscaster from 69 News, featured a segment with me and Dillard, the manager of the Southside team. He plans to do another segment to honor those who paved the way for us to continue playing baseball, celebrating the revival of baseball in a significant way. Our collegiate teams play both during the week and on weekends.

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Mrs. Flores reported that the June 8th BHA Community Food Distribution event was a success. Chairperson Clifton gave it two thumbs up and extra hats off to Mrs. Flores for her initiative in organizing the event and bringing the vision to life. Thank you.

RESOLUTION NO. 2592 - APPROVING THE CONTRACT TO REPLACE SPRINKLER SYSTEMS AT MONOCACY AND LITZENBERGER. (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.) THE RESOLUTION WAS TABLED.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the contract to replace sprinklers systems at Monocacy and Litzenberger. Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

There was discussion regarding the usage history of the proposed company for sprinkler-related work. Mr. Rittle questioned the frequency of their engagement, noting consecutive years of service. Mr. Kichline clarified that while BHA has engaged with three other companies, this company has been used for major sprinkler-related work rather than just small repairs. He emphasized that there has been no recent cost increase. Concerns about periodic inspections for these systems were raised by Mrs. Linares, which Mr. Ritter confirmed are conducted annually by professional inspectors.

RESOLUTION NO. 2593 - APPROVING THE CONTRACT FOR PEST CONTROL SERVICES. (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.) THE RESOLUTION WAS TABLED.

Mr. Ortiz made a motion to approve the contract for pest control services.
Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

There was a discussion regarding the annual contracts for pest control if we're able to do longer contracts. Mr. Ritter clarified that we have a one-year contract with a possible one-year extension, we don't extend beyond two years. Mr. Rittle asked if this a special exception or is this routine pest control, and if we're satisfied with their past work. Mr. Ritter affirmed that this is an annual renewal contract, and we have used them before, and they provide exceptionally good service.

Under New Business, Mr. Ritter explained that they have completed the ACOP, incorporating all the HOTMA changes, with the aim of obtaining board approval by the next meeting to ensure compliance for the re-exams starting in September. Currently, there is some uncertainty regarding HOTMA readiness, but they are proactively preparing. The ACOP has been color-coded to highlight new, old, and HUD-required sections. Chairperson Clifton expressed concern about potential changes before the next meeting and emphasized the importance of maximizing time to make any necessary adjustments. Mr. Ritter reassured us that the ACOP is fully completed at this stage.

The Administrative Plan is still undergoing finalization and will be adjusted before submission. Mr. Rittle inquired about a notable change or inclusion in the ACOP. Mr. Ritter highlighted significant revisions in Chapters 3, 6, and 9. Specifically, there's now a 10% annual income criteria adjustment, replacing the previous 3%, which aims to streamline processes. Mrs. Maldonado emphasized the importance of these changes for compliance, particularly as they prepare for January re-exams. Mr. Ritter confirmed that the ACOP is now ready, with the Administrative Plan scheduled for completion within the next month. Each board member will receive a copy for their review.

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Under Miscellaneous Reports and Other Business, Chairperson Clifton requested a status update on the approved Project-Based Voucher RFP. Mr. Ritter explained that although the RFP was approved, it cannot be issued until the current shortfall is resolved. Chairperson Clifton inquired if project-based and Section 8 vouchers come from the same cost center, which Mr. Ritter confirmed. Currently, they are leasing up to 425 vouchers, currently at 414, aiming for 425. Mr. Snyder elaborated on HUD's requirement for reserves to cover Project-Based Vouchers, emphasizing that additional funding is not provided.

Mr. Rittle sought clarification on whether the Section 8 cap includes Project-Based Vouchers. Mr. Snyder explained that they are currently capped at 425 vouchers due to the shortfall. Once the shortfall is resolved, the cap will increase to 513 vouchers, which includes sixty project-based vouchers. Additionally, he expressed interest in hearing about the consultant's recommendations or the process in a future Executive Director's report.

Under Public Comments, Allison Krokus, a Monocacy Tenant, raised concerns about several issues affecting residents. She highlighted the urgent need for HVAC system renovations due to extreme temperatures in different areas of the building, which result in both discomfort and potential health risks. Allison emphasized the importance of proper ventilation, particularly in elevators, and expressed frustration over unresolved maintenance requests. She also noted ongoing elevator issues and restrictions on holiday decorations, all which impact residents' quality of life. Allison concluded by asserting that residents deserve better living conditions in their homes.

Mr. Jablonski, Maintenance Superintendent, provided an update on HVAC issues, particularly focusing on hallway temperatures, acknowledging that resolving these issues takes time. He clarified that the building's heat is maintained at 76 degrees. Residents are provided with oil heaters as needed rather than electric ones. Mr. Ritter addressed changes in decorating policies aimed at preventing damage, highlighting recent investments in hallway renovations and infrastructure upgrades across various developments like Bodder and Bartholomew. He noted similar projects planned for Litzenberger and Monocacy, emphasizing the policy of avoiding premature upgrades that could later be disrupted.

Mr. Ritter assured attendees that maintenance efforts are ongoing but acknowledged the challenges of managing a building of this size, where parts are not always readily available. He encouraged residents to communicate concerns through the manager or by contacting him directly, emphasizing their commitment to addressing issues promptly. Other attendees echoed the importance of clearer communication and timely resolutions for all resident concerns.

Chairperson Clifton noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, July 8, 2024, at 4:00 P.M. at the Monocacy Tower, community room. There being no further business to transact, Chairperson Clifton declared the meeting adjourned.

John Ritter
Executive Director