

MINUTES ... REGULAR MEETING ... MAY 13, 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
Mr. J. Marc Rittle

ABSENT

Mrs. Iris Linares

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

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 8, 2024, were presented and approved. Mr. Rittle made a motion to accept the minutes of April 8th, 2024. Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

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

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

Under the financial report, Mr. Snyder reported that he updated the income expense report through March, except for finishing up with entries. He expects to have something finalized by the next board meeting. They will be incorporating Capital Fund information, including all costs, expenses, and income, so the numbers will change but he doesn't expect major changes. They are still showing a positive number, which is good. Regarding the CDs, they moved most of them out of TD Bank. There's only a million dollars left, and that will be moved out in June. The majority of funds are now in brokerage CDs, with the rest in the Treasury. They opted for CDs because they offer better interest rates. Each CD is \$250,000 or less, ensuring they are covered by FDIC insurance.

He also addressed the Section 8 report. They are currently in a shortfall. The first shortfall meeting with HUD was on May 2nd. There was a questionnaire beforehand, and they confirmed our shortfall status. Several years ago, being in shortfall meant we couldn't lease any more units. HUD provides an amount we can lease up to. On the day of the meeting, we had 419 units and 12 vouchers on the street. With a 50% success rate, they rounded us up to lease up to 425 units. Hopefully, those six remaining vouchers will be leased. If not, 425 is our current cap due to the shortfall. We have another meeting on June 25th and are waiting for the paperwork to file for the shortfall. It seems like it will just be a DocuSign process, and there should be no issues with funding. We're currently maintaining about 380 units per month. HUD's concern is maintaining the 425 units, and they will fund us up to that number. As people drop off, we'll issue more vouchers.

Chairperson Clifton inquired how they handled the shortfall and whether they would fund it for 2024. Mr. Snyder responded they base it on the calendar year, and they will cover it from 2024 to 2025 if needed. Housing authorities experience fluctuations; we may briefly come out of a shortfall and then lease up again bringing the numbers back up.

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Chairperson Clifton asked about the income and expense report regarding the favorable and unfavorable, that our year-to-date budgeted amount was favorable at \$253,700, but our year-to-date actual favorable amount was \$2.3 million. Mr. Snyder replied that the income was a lot higher than he expected, especially the interest rates. For example, rent increased by \$841,000 from last year, the subsidy is up \$268,000, and interest is up almost \$300,000. Some expenses are lower than he expected, especially utilities, which are significantly less than anticipated. Usually, he tries to be conservative on the income side. Also, the interest being generated by the investments in the CDS' was budgeted at 208 and it's at 498 right now.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the Financial Report for March 2024.
Mrs. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

Nothing was reported under Courtesy of the Floor.

Under Old Business, Mr. Ritter provided an update on the deputy executive directors' position, stating that it's been approved and finalized, and in the next couple of weeks it'll be posted. Chairperson Clifton asked that we inform them so they can share it through professional networks. Noted, the Section 8 report was discussed under the financial report.

Under the Chairperson Report, Chairperson Clifton provided an update on the Lynfield Community Center lease. On April 25th, she along with Attorney Matz and Mr. Ritter met to review an updated draft of the lease. Then, on April 29th, Mr. Ritter emailed Mr. Ortiz and the Lynfield Community Center supporters, requesting a few final documents to complete the application packet. Once the documents are submitted to BHA, they can schedule a meeting to review the application packet and the lease draft with Mr. Ortiz and the community supporters. We're making progress and moving in the right direction. Mr. Ortiz added that he is working on getting the paperwork from HIS and it will be submitted soon to BHA.

Secondly, the Choice Neighborhood Steering Committee met virtually on Thursday, May 9th. Unfortunately, she was unable to attend due to a family health emergency. Mr. Ritter attended the meeting and reported that they went over the Ambassadors and discussed the festival outing, which went well. They had 75-100 tenants in attendance and a lot of vendors. As a result of the event, they ended up gaining two more Ambassadors.

In addition, they need to set a date for an Executive Session. This session will allow them to start discussing the By-Law revisions and provide guidance to the board members on completing the new Conflict of Interest Disclosures. Also, this morning, from 10:30 to 12:30 PM, the board had a training session on Teams with a couple of different HUD offices. It was a helpful overview of several issues. One key takeaway was the emphasis on the board having awareness of the housing authority's policies. We should ensure the board gets copies of these policies.

Mr. Ritter added that there were multiple housing authorities in the session, so some parts were a bit vaguer than he would have liked. However, they did review the types of questions we should be asking to get oriented. For instance, every board member should know basic information such as the number of buildings, the number of units the authority has, and the annual budget. Mr. Rittle also said it was a very good session.

Chairperson Clifton asked a couple of questions about the Executive Director's annual evaluation. They reiterated that boards should be conducting these evaluations, and our board has been rather delinquent in this responsibility. They are still trying to organize themselves around it. At the last meeting, she asked whether there is a BHA personnel policy. If there is, it should be included in the batch of policies that they may need to review. Also, Mr. Rittle added that perhaps in the Executive Session, they can discuss the board committees. She thinks the committee structure would also be part of the by-law revision.

Chairperson Clifton asked Mrs. Satullo if she had an update on the appointment of a final board member. Ms. Satullo stated that they are currently in the process of evaluating candidates and their qualifications for the position. Also, she gave an update on the Choice Neighborhood meeting, they have ambassadors coming on board, and hopefully, by the end of this week, they'll be launching the survey for the Choice Neighborhood process. Mrs. Flores attended their training and helped them go through the survey. They aimed for 75% of all Pembroke residents to complete it, and they'll also have a survey for broader BHA property residents and the community. They have several events planned, including pop-ups and events at the Lincoln and Marvine Elementary Schools. They'll be out there with gifts, t-shirts, and surveys, offering incentives and trying to get the word out. Recognizing that the survey might be intimidating, they've tried to make it as user-friendly as possible while still answering all the questions HUD requires. They understand that people might need help with the survey, so they're prepared to help them through it. Depending on how it goes they might be looking for all help, possibly going door to door to ensure they get a good response.

Under the Executive Director's report, Mr. Ritter stated that we have another Shortfalls Teams meeting on June 25th at noon with HUD. Next, the next Drug and Criminal monthly meeting will be held on May 15th at 9:00 at Monocacy Tower. Lastly, the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies (PAHRA) had a Spring Conference at Wind Creek, it was nice and a great turnout. It was for three days with different training modules, he attended a few of them as well as other staff members.

Chairperson Clifton stated that they had received an email complaint about a conflict of interest. Attorney Matz met with the board member mentioned in the complaint. We've gone through it and have gathered material on it. He drafted a letter stating that there was no merit to the concern. He'll finalize and circulate it.

Under Committee Reports, Mr. Ritter reported that Ms. Moreno has contacted the Bethlehem Area School District to help promote our scholarship program. Mr. Ortiz reported that they continue with the food bank, and they will be starting the summer camp program which is free of charge for the weeks of June 17th to July 31st. The mayor will be attending their First Collegiate Semi-Pro Teen game on June 1st. It is the first time they're playing against the Southside team, and the mayor will come out to throw the first pitch. Next, on June 8th, they're going to have the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the food truck to raise funds to help the kids buy their equipment and other necessities. The mayor and other constituents possibly will be there.

In addition, Redner's reached out to him regarding their food bank. They want them to pick up food twice a week from three different locations. However, at this time he can only manage to do it once or twice a week. He reached out to Mr. Rittle to see if New Bethany might want some access to meats, dairy products, canned goods, and other items. He will also be reaching out to the Hispanic Center as well to see if they're interested in picking up food twice a week from Redner's. This is their first time being involved in this type of program.

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Mrs. Flores reported on the June 8th BHA Community Food Distribution event. The truck was reserved, and she provided Mr. Snyder with everything he requested. They have eight volunteer residents who will be providing support. She distributed her report with further information.

RESOLUTION NO. 2590 - APPROVING THE CONTRACT TO REPLACE THE ROOFS AT MARVINE. (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 the roofs at Marvine.
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2591 - APPROVING TO HIRE AN ADDITIONAL CLERK TYPIST II AT THE FAMILY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE. (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.) THE RESOLUTION WAS TABLED.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the addition to the budget to hire an additional Clerk Typist II for the Family Development Office.
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

The increased workload and the need for improved administrative support were highlighted as primary reasons for this addition. Chairperson Clifton proposed moving forward with the hiring process, emphasizing the importance of filling the position promptly to ensure continued efficiency in office operations.

Under New Business, Mrs. Clifton acknowledged an unexpected change to the grass-cutting contract for 2024. Mr. Ritter outlined the challenges the contractor encountered from the start, such as their distant location, equipment problems, and issues with staff reliability. Mrs. Clifton expressed concern but noted that since the contract was competitively bid, they could proceed to the next bidder. She sought clarification on the procedural steps required for the approval of the new contract. Attorney Matz suggested affirming the selection of the second bidder.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the new grass cutting contract.
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

Under Miscellaneous Reports and Other Business, Mr. Ortiz brought up the hiring of two students to assist with the summer camp. It was suggested that Mr. Ortiz provide a report to be discussed further at the next board meeting.

Under Public Comments, nothing to report. Mary Smith, Monocacy resident raised concerns about the delayed delivery of mail at Monocacy, indicating that they had not received any mail for the entire preceding week. She also inquired about potential repercussions if their rent payments were delayed, questioning whether late fees would be imposed. Chairperson Clifton sought clarification on the status of the mail service, to which Ms. Smith responded that they were informed by the postal service that they lacked access to the necessary key.

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Mr. Ritter, newly informed of the situation, explained that the post office dispatches different carriers, some of whom lack access to the secure room where mail is stored. Mr. Lamana reassured everyone, stating that the postman had resolved the issue, confirming that he possessed the mail since Friday and had access to the necessary key.

Chairperson Clifton noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, June 10, 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