

**MINUTES . . . REGULAR MEETING . . . JUNE 14, 2021**

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session Monday, June 14, 2021 at 4:30 P.M., Teleconference (Virtual Meeting). Those present and absent were as follows:

**PRESENT**

Mrs. Iris Linares, Chairperson  
Mrs. Valerie McLendon, Vice Chairperson  
Mrs. Susan Acevedo  
Mr. Greg Solderitch  
Mr. Rogelio Ortiz

**ABSENT**

Also present were: William W. Matz, Jr., Esq., Solicitor; Jay D. Schuster, Executive Director; Diana Moreno, Assistant Secretary; Housing Authority Staff Members; members of the general public.

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 10, 2021 were presented. Mrs. McLendon made a motion to accept the minutes of May 10, 2021. Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Acevedo/McLendon/Ortiz/Solderitch/Linares; Nays – None

Mr. Solderitch made a motion to approve the monthly bills for May 2021.  
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Acevedo/McLendon/Ortiz/Solderitch/Linares; Nays – None

Under Old Business, Mr. Schuster reported two items. He welcomed our new commissioner, Mrs. Susan Acevedo. The Board of Commissioners' welcomed her aboard. Mrs. Acevedo was happy to be there and thanked the board. Secondly, our former Commissioner Mr. Long, was presented with a recognition award from the Board. Mr. Long expressed his gratitude for his 19 years of service, and we wanted to show it to him. Mr. Schuster shared the pictures of Mr. Long accepting the award. The plaque read "In recognition of 19 years of enthusiastic and dedicated service to the Bethlehem Housing Authority, 2002-2021, Joseph E. Long, BHA Board of Commissioners". The Commissioners' replied he looks great.

Under the Chairman's Report. Mr. Schuster reported that an Executive Session of the Board of Commissioners with our police department was held today. The subject of matter was to review an ongoing challenge that we have with information exchange. Mrs. Linares stated that it was a very informative meeting. She learned what the government and state issues are, and that we have to comply with them. Mrs. Linares expressed to the Board that we should continue with the City police and the contract as we have been doing.

Mr. Ortiz was not able to attend the meeting and asked why the drastic change since we used to share information with one another. Mr. Linares replied that the state and federal government has outlines and rules that the police department must follow. Evidently, the police department themselves were a little lax and they were doing it and they weren't supposed to be doing it. Mr. Ortiz, said it's important that they have some form of communication with the residents, a relationship with the residents here, even though they don't live in BHA. He feels that officers that lived and were born and raised in South Bethlehem, should patrol our community, not officers

who are not familiar with the area because it's a whole culture change. The word "culture" is a big thing when it comes to policing, you need to be involved with people you can relate to. That's why this whole thing is happening in this country. "Mrs. McLendon said we're under a new regime. Chief Kott cares about the people and community. She was speaking about some things and getting them into the communities and being seen, where the people and the community can get to know them. She has that passion, and knows that things are changing. And she also stated that she respected the relationship that BHA had with the Bethlehem Police over the years. Mr. Linares said that she admires what we're doing. She was talking about putting officers out on bicycles so that they get to know the people, she might even switch their shifts around.

Mr. Kevin Lynn said they changed the 911 call center to Upper Nazareth Township, yet this is the City of Bethlehem and we lost our 911 call center. Mr. Solderitch said the change was due to cutting state funding. The state basically mandated that Allentown and Bethlehem go to the County dispatch system, Bethlehem and Allentown couldn't do it anymore.

Under the Executive Directors' report, Mr. Jay Schuster reported a few items. He reported that it was a really productive meeting with a sincere and dedicated police chief. The new police chief seems to be very reasonable and open to ideas. She is very cognizant of the fact that she has to abide by federal and state rules, and brought that to our attention. He's confident that moving forward she's going to try to make the information that we're allowed to get, beneficial as possible for the Housing Authority. Secondly, he mentioned that on July 1<sup>st</sup>, BHA is going to be reopening the high rise community rooms to the residents. It will be in a limited fashion with the rules in place for safe distancing and the continuation of mask requirements as we see the need to exercise a little additional caution in at the setting in our high rise community rooms. But the rules will be open as of July 1<sup>st</sup> and signs will be posted.

Mr. Kevin Lynn asked of the restrooms will be opening. Mr. Jay Schuster, we haven't discussed that, but that seems to be a reasonable expectation. Mr. John Ritter said that's the plan, when the community rooms open up the bathrooms will be open in all four high rises. Mr. Kevin Lynn said he also heard that the office staff at Monocacy comes back in September. Mr. Jay Schuster reported that the Family Development office over on Fritz Drive is now open to the public by appointment. The Main Office public opening date is planned for September, we're still doing some minor renovations. Although, many of us will be working in the office as we are now prior to that date, opening to the public is scheduled for September 1<sup>st</sup>. Lastly, the BHA Community Police are sponsoring a basketball tournament on June 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> at the Pembroke and Marvine parks if anyone would like to attend that tournament. It's a nice effort on the police department to really make the community get together. In fact our community police officers are taking the leadership role in making that happen.

Mr. Kevin Lynn asked with the remodeling of the Monocacy officers can the tenants get a tour of the offices. Mr. Jay Schuster said that probably will not happen. Not to the residents, but certainly to the Commissioners if they would like to see it. Attorney Matz asked Mr. Kevin Lynn to please wait until Public Comments, the last point on our agenda to ask questions. Mr. Jay Schuster thanked Attorney Matz.

Under Committee Reports, Scholarship Committee. Mrs. Linares presented the three 2021 BHA Scholarship recipient awards. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade scholarship was awarded to Kayla Medina who



6/14/2020

(3)

attends Northeast Middle School. She wants to become a Child Advocate Attorney. She's going to receive a \$1000 this year, and if she continues to keep a C+ and above GPA, she can earn up to a \$5000 Scholarship when she graduates High school. Ja'Najah Thomas, from Liberty High School was awarded a \$2000 Scholarship. She has been accepted to Penn State Lehigh Valley Campus, and is undecided as to her academic major. The last scholarship was awarded to Liberty High School Vo-Tech student, Jiovanny Figueroa for \$1000. He's been accepted to Northampton Community College, and he is going to major in film and video. He has done some work already. Jiovanny also received a scholarship from PAHRA, the PA Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies for \$500. The Board of Commissioners congratulated all our 2021 BHA Scholarship recipients. Kayla Medina and Jiovanny Figueroa were in attendance and thanked the board.

Under Personnel Committee Chairperson Linares reported that effective Monday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Zulma Rodriguez vacated the position at the Family Development Office as the Project Manager and assumed the same role at the High Rise office. Mr. Schuster also reported that Miriam Maldonado is now serving as the property manager at the Family Development office. Mrs. Linares congratulated both Miriam and Zulma. She said they both do an excellent job.

Under Resident Advisory Committee, Roy had a few items to report. They finally opened up the Southside Little League after it's been flooded for almost two years. Fortunately, they partnered up with the third largest baseball organization in the nation, which is ETCB, Elite Tournament Championship Baseball. They're fixing all the fields down there at the Southside Little League, all three diamonds. They have a two year agreement. He's bringing good quality baseball back to the Southside. They already donated over \$20,000 in the last two weeks fixing the fields up. They're getting kids from Maryland, Baltimore, Washington, Long Island, kids that play professionally. He's also the owner of the Lehigh Valley Academy on Union Boulevard, and all the kids that attend Southside Little League, they go in for free. They have professional former baseball players from the Chicago White Sox and the Dodgers organizations who will be teaching the kids to be better ball players if they pursue to be major leaguers.

Second, the Lynfield Community Center has finally got a 501C3 with the help of Donna Taggit and Linda Renschler from the Humanitarian Social Innovations. She's the Executive Director and they paid for everything. They're going to have a food bank there within the next week. In addition the summer program has started for the next eight weeks. It's all free. Please spread the word, they also put it out there on the Lynfield Scoop. Mrs. Susan Acevedo give a shout out to Mr. Ortiz on the Southside field, she said it looks great. They're doing a great job.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2532 - APPROVING OF THE CONTRACT TO INSTALL THE MODULAR FURNITURE – SECTION 8 & TSO. NOTE: (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)**

Mrs. McLendon made a motion to approve the contract to install the modular furniture at the Section 8 and TSO Offices. Mr. Solderitch seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Acevedo/McLendon/Ortiz/Solderitch/Linares; Nays – None

6/14/2020

(4)

Under New Business, Mr. Jay Schuster had one item. Mr. Ortiz requested two part-time workers for the Lynfield Community Center eight week summer program. The pay rate for the two part timers is \$9 hour.

Mr. Solderitch made a motion. Mrs. McLendon seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Acevedo/McLendon/Ortiz/Solderitch/Linares; Nays – None

Under Miscellaneous Reports, Other Business – Board Members, Solicitors, and Staff, Mr. Ortiz asked if we can replace the BHA dump truck. Mr. John Ritter replied that we have it in the budget this year for a new dump truck, and we're in the process of getting the specs together for that right now. This will be going in the next couple months. Mr. Ortiz thanked Mr. Ritter. Mr. Ortiz asked Attorney Matz, the status on Indio. Attorney Matz responded that he has written a draft, but needs to get the letter to the office for translation.

Mr. Linares asked if we can resume having meetings at the Monocacy Community Room. Mr. Solderitch suggest it would be nice, so we can see each other again. Mrs. McLendon agreed. Mr. Schuster said we can try for July. We have to work on our technology, he would like to make it possible for those who can't be there due to their circumstances, or there are some who may not feel comfortable on the staff to meet in a public setting, but we'll make it possible for everyone.

Attorney Matz stated that Mr. Schuster is going to have to make a decision on how we want to proceed. In the short run, some sort of hybrid situation probably makes sense as we transition to a full opening. He said it's not required by law, but it's something that seems to be happening with a lot of public hearings. The City of Bethlehem is doing that, moving to in-person but with virtual connections. Mr. Jay Schuster commented that we will work on accomplishing hybrid meeting. We would have to set up some cameras at our Board meeting and be able to broadcast that in the fashion we are doing now for those who cannot be there physically. There are some staff that have some comorbidity issues, even though they are vaccinated, and they are still not feeling comfortable in a public setting. We will make it work, it's just going to take some doing on our IT side.

Chairperson Linares noted that the next regular board meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 12, 2021 at 4:30 P.M.

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

*J.D. Schuster*

---

Jay D. Schuster  
Executive Director