

MINUTES . . . REGULAR MEETING . . . FEBRUARY 10, 2020

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in regular session Monday, February 10, 2020 at 4:30 P.M., at the Monocacy Tower, Community Room, 645 Main Street, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Those present and absent were as follows:

PRESENT

Mr. Joseph E. Long, Chairperson
Mrs. Valerie McLendon
Mr. Rogelio Ortiz
Mr. Greg Solderitch

ABSENT

Mrs. Iris Linares, Vice Chairman

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

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 13, 2020 were presented. Mr. Ortiz made a motion to accept the minutes of January 13, 2020. Mr. Solderitch seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes - Ortiz/Solderitch/Long; Nays - None.

Mr. Ortiz made a motion to approve the monthly bills for January 2020.
Mr. Solderitch seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes - Ortiz/Solderitch/Long; Nays - None.

Under Old Business, Chairman Long requested that Attorney Matz bring us up to date on our agreement with the City of Bethlehem and our Police Department.

Attorney Matz reported that all of the agreements have been signed by the Housing Authority, the Police Department, as well as the Mayor. At this point, we're just waiting to see how it works out. From a contractual perspective everything is in place and consistent with what we voted on late last year.

Chairman Long asked are we just waiting to see how it evolves. Attorney Matz responded yes. Chairman Long said ok. If we get adverse on it, he would like to know about it as soon as possible. Because they've been dragging their feet for so long and he'd like to see the issue resolved if possible.

Mr. Schuster reported that back in December 2019, we said that we would gather some data regarding the Northeast community Center's desire to expand their program in the Pembroke area. In speaking to the director there, she stated that the board for the NECC would like to stay at their current location and will be sending us a letter expressing their desire to do so. Secondly, Mr. Kichline did some investigation with the City of Bethlehem, and they have no issue with the proposed expansion, although we don't have a plan yet, which they would have to review of course. They're developing a proposal and they'll bring that to us when they have it ready.

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Mr. Ortiz made a motion, seconded by Mr. Solderitch to approve the extension for Refuse Collection term for one additional year from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.

Roll Call: Ayes - McLendon/Ortiz/Solderitch/Long; Nays - None.

RESOLUTION NO. 2504 OF 2020 - APPROVING THE OPERATING BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING 3/31/2021. NOTE: Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

The Operating Budget for the fiscal year 4/1/2020 to 3/31/2021 was presented to the Board.

Mr. Solderitch made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ortiz, to approve the 2020/21 Operating Budget.

Roll Call: Ayes - McLendon/Ortiz/Solderitch/Long; Nays - None.

RESOLUTION NO. 2505 OF 2020 - APPROVING THE CONTRACT FOR GRASS CUTTING FOR ALL DEVELOPMENTS. NOTE: Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

The board was presented with a tabulation of bids for cutting the grassy areas in all housing developments.

Bid Specifications were requested by three (4) interested contractors. Bid proposals were submitted by Mason Landscaping, Northampton (\$3750 per cut); Blue Mountain, LLC, Lewisberry (\$3828.96 per cut); Zachary BITTER Lawn Care, Northampton (\$3875.00) and Land Tech Enterprises, Warrington (\$7900.00 per cut).

Mrs. McLendon made a motion to accept the bid of \$3750 per cut from Mason Landscaping. Mr. Solderitch seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes - McLendon/Ortiz/Solderitch/Long; Nays - None.

Under New Business, Mr. Schuster had two items. The first one is a request from the Bethlehem Area School District. The district some time ago asked the Authority to partner with them in a mission to try to provide internet access for all of the residents of the Northeast properties. So Mr. Kichline did quite an investigation to be able to come up with the pricing of such a task. My recommendation is that in view of the cost factor, that would really encumber the Housing Authority for an indefinite future. I did want to mention that when they first approached us, what we did to try to get internet for the children who might need it, if they go in to the three community buildings, and of course that's difficult at Parkridge, but if they go in to Lynfield or to the Northeast Community Center, as soon as they walk in they automatically have access at those locations. Although we might not be able to provide it to every home, we are doing our best to provide it to those who need it at those locations.

Chairman Long asked if we have a projected cost for what it might be for three years.

Mr. Schuster stated that the total for the first three years is \$81,360, after that, it could be a substantial amount each year after that. Mr. Kichline said if you divide that by the three, the first year it's a little higher and the other years are close to \$30,000. That's for a certain number of students. If the number of students go up and they expand it to different grades, the cost goes up.

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Chairman Long replied so they're not interested in moving. Mr. Schuster responded no they'd like to stay where they're at.

Chairman Long had nothing to report for the meeting. He just commended the staff for the job that they do. He stated that he appreciates everything that we do. It's amazing.

Mr. Schuster had one item. The monthly meeting with the BHA community police officers will be held on Wednesday, February 12th. At that time there will be a review of any drug or criminal activity occurring in BHA properties.

For the Scholarship Committee, Ms. Moreno stated that she received a list of graduating seniors, and she will be sending out Scholarship applications at the end of the month.

Chairman Long asked if we send the application out individually. Ms. Moreno replied we send one to each student from the list received from the BASD. She is still waiting on the list for the 8th grade students.

There was nothing to report on the Finance and Personnel Committees.

On the Resident Advisory Committee, Roy reported that they'll be doing a fundraiser for Freemansburg Elementary, it's going to be a bingo. They'll be donating all the food and hopefully they'll be selling it through tickets to raise money for their Boys and Girls Scouts. He got a call from the Mayor's office that they want him to join the Latino Committee. He would attend five meetings a year and they want to know what they can do for our community at Lynfield and the Southside of Bethlehem. Roy agreed to be on the committee. Hopefully, this is a way we can get funding for the Community Center and to empower our kids. He said we are the only community center open right now. We would like to extend our horizons and help Parkridge out and other local communities within the Lynfield community.

Roy also reported that our next Resident Advisory Board Committee meeting will be scheduled for Thursday March 12th, 2020 at 12:30 pm. The meeting will take place at the Monocacy Tower Community Room, 645 Main Street Bethlehem. At the time we will review the goals and objectives of the new Annual Plan.

Chairman Long asked if Roy knew the name of the Chairperson of the Latino Committee. Roy said he did not know but there are several people on the committee. He will be attending his first meeting in March. The Mayor's office will be notifying him. Chairman Long stated that they used to meet over on the Southside. He used to attend the meetings about ten years ago. He is not familiar with who runs it now. Mr. Ortiz said the meetings are going to be held at the Mayor's office. Joe asked is he's running that through the City now. Mr. Ortiz said yes.

Under Resolutions, APPROVING OF THE EXTENSION FOR REFUSE COLLECTION TO EXTEND THE TERM FOR ONE (1) ADDITIONAL YEAR BASED ON THE QUALITY OF SERVICE.

The board was presented with a proposal from Republic Services Inc., for the one year contract extension with a 4% increase in cost.

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Chairman Long had a discussion with Mr. Schuster and he realizes that we have low-income living in our developments. But most kids probably have a cellphones or have a computer in their house and up to date with the latest stuff. So therefore he thinks they have access to Wi-Fi within their homes. He suggested that we conduct a survey to see how many families don't have internet access in their homes.

Jay stated that shortly after his discussion with Mr. Long, he spoke to Mrs. Bachman at BASD, she offered to perform such a survey as you he suggested. She said it would be a perfect fit for a Lehigh University intern to conduct that survey for us. They would be willing to do that. Their focus is on digital equity, so it's a project that they are already working on and are happy to conduct any survey we'd like. Chairman Long said and that student would get credit also. Mr. Schuster agreed. Mr. Chairman suggested that we wait until the survey is done, then we can determine what to do next.

Mr. Ortiz commented that after fifth grade kids pretty much have phones. Elementary kids have phones, and they have to get on the website for school. Because once they're in middle school the parents want them to have a phone in case anything happens. Mrs. Bachman came up to visit the Center sometime last year, and she said the kids would be receiving their own tablets and gadgets. She hooked up everything in the Center. But I don't think we need to pay for it because a lot of the kids have phone with Wi-Fi and you don't want to give out free Wi-Fi to people who already have it.

Chairman Long commented that the concern is when you start putting free Wi-Fi in places, other people can access it just driving down the street. Mr. Kichline commented that this system would be designed so it would be just for the kids who have Chromebooks. It would be a closed system. The system would have to be managed so all the serial numbers of the Chromebooks get entered into the system. Even if you didn't have Wi-Fi at home for example and you now have it because one of the children have a Chromebook, you couldn't use the Wi-Fi with any other device. It would only be for that Chromebook. Chairman Long said that it's even more interesting, if you're putting Wi-Fi for that particular device not for anything else. Mr. Schuster said he'll update the board at the next meeting where we're at with that.

Mr. Schuster had another item. There was a request that he received from the Mayor's office in conjunction with the Census. They ask if BHA can assist as a Census hub, a place for citizens to receive support or help in registering for the Census, or serve as a location with an available computer. So they would like us to be able to have computer access for someone who would need it or have one of their staff here, or someone from the Census department during the process so they could answer any questions for the residents. Chairman Long asked if they need a small office or something like that, and if this was for people to report to them. Mr. Schuster said that he wasn't exactly sure of the details, but they did ask if it would be possible for us to have computer access for someone regards to the Census. Jay will be getting more information from the Mayor's office. Jay added that in our waiting area, we would be able to easily accommodate a need of that nature.

Mr. Ortiz said he spoke to Patricia, who gave a presentation at the Lynfield Community Center. Roy asked if there is an income waiver for tenants if they work for the Census. He said Patricia said income is waived but he wants the approval from BHA. Jay said he would get an answer on that. Mr. Schuster asked Ms. Rodriguez if the income is counted. Ms. Rodriguez' stated that the income is not counted. It has always been that way because it's temporary income. The reason being they encourage residents to apply for those positions.

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Mr. Ortiz stated that Patricia asked him to be an instructor, to train people for the Census. He asked if the Lynfield Community Center can be a place for people who are interested in working for the Census in our community. It starts in mid-march.

Mr. Schuster commented that he has no problem with that, but it would be up to the Board members. Chairman Long wants to know exactly what they will be doing there and the set up before they can make a decision.

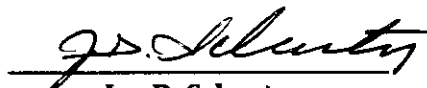
Mr. Ortiz agreed. Chairman Long asked Roy to contact him once he gets all the details.

Under Miscellaneous Reports, Mr. Ortiz asked if we had an update on the BHA-TV for Lynfield.

Mr. Kichline reported that we pretty much have the Northeast properties going. He is still working with Service Electric and waiting for the proposal for Lynfield and Parkridge.

Chairperson Long noted that the next regular board meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 9, 2020 at 4:30 P.M. in the community room of the Monocacy Tower.

There being no further business to transact, Mr. Long declared the meeting adjourned.


Jay D. Schuster
Acting Executive Director