

MINUTES . . . REGULAR MEETING . . . MARCH 14, 2022

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session Monday, March 14, 2022 at 4:00 P.M. Teleconference (Virtual Meeting). Those present and absent were as follows:

PRESENT

ABSENT

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

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

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 14, 2022 were presented. Mr. Ortiz made a motion to accept the minutes of February 14, 2022. Mrs. Acevedo seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Ortiz made a motion to approve the monthly bills for February 2022.
Mrs. McLendon seconded the motion.

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

Under the Executive Director's report, Mr. Schuster reported three items. First, BHA has continued a cautious approach to the pandemic as some staff members continue to wear masks. We are being guided by CDC guidelines. We did relax our masking policy for in the office. He mentioned that Northampton County is at medium risk. Second, Mr. Schuster met with our newly appointed liaison to the City Council, Hillary Swiatek, they've had some nice meetings together talking about BHA issues. Councilwoman Hillary thanked everybody for serving and she is looking forward to listening in and learning from the board, and hopefully being a good liaison. The board members welcomed Councilwoman Hillary and said they're sure she'll do a great job. Councilwoman Hillary thanked the board. Lastly, Mr. Schuster stated because of organizations being cyber-attack, we are looking into getting cyber insurance. We have received some cyber insurance quotes. We're considering some companies and will be making a decision soon. We think it's prudent that the Authority has cyber insurance.

Under Committee Reports, Scholarship Committee, Ms. Moreno reported two items. We receive one adult PAHRA Scholarship application and it was submitted to PAHRA. Last year, we did have a recipient who was awarded \$1,000, so we're hoping we get awarded again this year. They're awarding up to \$3000. In addition, we received the Bethlehem Area School District lists of seniors and eighth graders for year 2022, and the mailing will go out soon. Mr. Ortiz asked how much scholarship money we'll be awarding this year. Ms. Moreno replied, she'll be meeting with Richard to determine the total amount.

Under Finance Committee, Roy requested about the status on the trucks that were supposed to be purchased for the employees and maintenance workers. Mr. Ritter replied that we're waiting on delivery, but due to COVID everything is backlogged.

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Under Personnel Committee, Chairperson Linares recommended the request from Ms. Zulma Rodriguez, the high rise property manager. Based on Ms. Rodriguez's transfer to the high rise in May of 2021 and her added responsibilities, that we grant her request in the additional amount of \$2500 adjusting her annual salary as of April 1st, 2022 to \$87,616. This is within the budget provision that was also approved at our February board meeting.

Mrs. McLendon made a motion to grant Ms. Zulma Rodriguez salary increase.
Mrs. Acevedo seconded the motion.

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

Chairperson Linares congratulated Ms. Rodriguez for her hard work. Well deserved.

Under Resident Advisory Committee, Mr. Ortiz reported a few items. They have their Southside youth baseball, they left the little league so now they have an endorsement from ECTB, that's the third largest baseball organization in the nation. They're going to start opening up on April 2nd. He waived \$1600 per kid to pay in the tournament and he also waived \$700 per kid to join the academy for practice. They have two teams, 17 and under, and they're going to have their tryouts this Saturday at the Academy.

They're going to be putting lights up next month. The City decided to give them \$15,000 to buy a food trailer for the park. They're working on getting a food trailer now. They just started prepping the garden for their 4-H program, it took about four days. They'll be planting vegetables for this spring and summer. They also had a workshop with Tony Fernandez from Northampton Community College. They have kids doing community service now, there's a construction company that's willing to pay the kids while they're training, and when they finish their participation with this program, they'll be getting a job placement. They know that not every kid that graduates from high school is going to college. They also have a welding program, a nursing program, and a beauty school program. They signed up some kids for the construction and nursing programs.

In addition, they have 15 participants in the sunshine program for their seniors, 62 and older, it went up to 26. So the word is out there with their food bank. They're trying to take care of the seniors, youth, and community. Once they get the lights up next month, they're going to bring the Reading Rainers. They're going to have a new home, which is going to be the Southside baseball field, to be called the Southside Rainers. Those are a collegiate team that play organized baseball with scouts in the stands to recruit them. They're going to be playing baseball from 8:00 in the morning to about 6 or 7:00 in the evening. It starts April 2nd until the end of October.

They already have kids from Fountain Hill, Bethlehem, and South Bethlehem. They're even going as far as Allentown for kids who want to play. It's free of charge, so they'll be waiving around \$2300 for each kid.

Mrs. McLendon asked Roy if it's possible that he can get a flyer for the Parkridge youth. She will be meeting with Mr. Ortiz. Chairperson Linares and Mrs. McLendon thanked Mr. Ortiz.

Under the Deputy's Executive Director's report, Mr. John Ritter reported that the monthly meeting with the BHA Community Police officers will be held on Wednesday, March 16th. At that this time they'll review any drug or criminal activity occurring on our properties.

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RESOLUTION NO.2544 OF 2022 - APPROVING THE WRITE-OFF VACATED TENANTS ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE TO COLLECTION LOSS.C. NOTE: (Resolution is entered separately as a part of these minutes.)

Mrs. Acevedo made a motion to approve the write-off vacated tenant's accounts receivable to collection loss. Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

Under New Business Mr. Schuster reported one item. We've been discussing ideas on how to use our former recreation center at Marvine, formerly called First Tee. One of the suggestions that we mentioned to the Board was converting the building into Section 8 housing units, which are desperately needed. We wanted to report to the Board today, that we discussed this with HUD and we have a recommendation at this time for the Board's consideration from Mr. Curt Kichline, Director of Capital Improvements. Mr. Schuster read the recommendation. "As you're aware we have had conference calls with HUD about using this program in order to construct approximately ten apartments in the vacant Marvine recreation building. These apartments will be constructed using capital funds, and once done they will be turned over to and administered by our Housing Choice Voucher program. There are many aspects to a project like this."

In addition to an architectural firm, a consultant will be needed to navigate HUD regulations in order to get the project application approved and then get the completed units into our Housing Choice Voucher program. At some point in the approval process, there will be an official Board resolution required for the application approval process. We don't have that at this point, but I would like the Board's approval now to start the process, such as advertising for a consultant and architect."

Chairperson Linares commented on the facility being too small for 10 units, so will they be extending it out or building up. Mr. Kichline replied that the building is 7000 square feet, it's a huge amount of space. The recommendation for each apartment is 550 square feet, so if you multiply that by 10 that's only 5500 square feet, and we have 7,000 square feet. Mrs. McLendon asked if that's the land and ball field. Mr. Kichline replied said no, just the building. The building itself will remain, the inside will be converted to apartments.

Mr. Kichline replied that they're in the process of working with an architect on the feasibility study. The architect will work on the best suitable design for what we want. The boards' approval is needed so we can start the process, so this way we have an idea before we actually advertise to get an architect on board fully for a complete design.

Mrs. Linares asked are they for seniors, since they will be one bedroom apartments. Mr. Schuster replied that would depend on who is on the waiting list in the Housing Choice Voucher program. We can't change their numerical ranking, so when the project would be completed, it could be a senior or for someone else, but it would have to be a one bedroom voucher. But it wouldn't be designated as an elderly building.

Mr. Schuster said we do need the approval to just start the process. We haven't even applied with HUD yet, we're just gathering information to do an application. It's a very complex process even to apply, and that's why we need to find out the cost of converting the building and a consultant to help with the application process.

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Mrs. McLendon mentioned about Ukraine refugees. Mr. Schuster sent something to the HUD office about that. HUD has to designate a federal disaster, and then would have to send something out to all the Housing Authorities across the United States, but that hasn't even happened yet. But we would take them first before others on the waiting list. Attorney Matz stated that a federal declaration is required before you can trump out our existing waiting list folk. Mr. Schuster stated that without any glitches going forward, we're probably looking at two years from now.

Mrs. Kichline stated that they'll advertise for a consultant and an architect. Once we have their bids and have made a selection it will come at a future Board meeting for the board to vote on and approve for a specific firm for each thing.

Mr. Ortiz made a motion to approve to advertise for an architecture firm to do the design work and for a consultant to help start the HUD application process.

Mrs. Acevedo seconded the motion.

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

Chairperson Linares noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, April 11th, 2022 at 4:00 P.M. at the Monocacy Tower, community room.

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

J. D. Schuster

Jay D. Schuster
Executive Director