

The Board of Commissioners of the Niagara Falls Housing Authority (NFHA) met in a Monthly Board Meeting session on Tuesday, September 10, 2019 at 744 Tenth Street at 4:00 pm. Chair Soda called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

**Present:**

Mr. Frank Soda  
Mr. Lawrence Cook  
Ms. Marcia Massaro  
Mr. Earl Bass  
Mr. Andrew Turton

**Also Present:**

Mr. Clifford Scott  
Mr. Jason Cafarella

**Absent:**

Mr. Brian Archie, Sr.  
Ms. Kristen Grandinetti

**At the Request of the Executive Director:** Melissa Matsulavage, Nancy Haley, Mary Jean Buddenhagen, Tomorrow Allen-Collins, Angela Smith, Roger Lis and Maria Vitello

**I. MOMENT OF REFLECTION /MOMENT OF SILENCE**

Moment of reflection was held as well as a moment of silence in remembrance of Carmelette Rotella, who was a long time board member and past Chairman.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Cook, seconded by Commissioner Turton and carried, the June 11, 2019 meeting minutes of the Board of Commissioners' meeting were approved.

**III. CHAIR'S REPORT**

- Chair Soda welcomed Mr. Scott, the new Executive Director who has been on the job for 60 days. In that time, a great deal of networking and outreach has been conducted.
- Mr. Scott thanked the board for their confidence in him and stated his pleasure to be here and working with staff and forming partnerships.
- Vice Chair Cook stated he was pleased to read about the positive press with regards to Mr. Scott.
- Chair Soda reported that an updated board directory has been given to members for their use.
- Chair Soda stated that an updated committee listing has been given to members.
- Chair Soda reported on the meetings he attended with Mr. Scott and the feedback received. The editorial board meeting at the Niagara Gazette was very open, positive and encouraging. A day was spent in Buffalo meeting with HUD representatives, New York State Homes and Community Renewal representatives and developers to explore a new perspective, vision and role of the Housing Authority not only in Niagara Falls but Niagara County. A meeting was held with Mr. Tom DeSantis, Planning Department of the City with regards to parcels of land on Highland Avenue to explore potential uses. A letter was sent to Mayor Dyster about the land but no formal discussion has taken place. Belmont Housing is interested in homeownership with regards to Phase III of HOPE VI.
- Mr. Scott stated this phase would need to be re-introduced to HUD. The first step is the approval of the final close out which should occur soon then an amendment to the application needs to be submitted and approved by HUD which will be a long process.

**Approval of moving expenses for Executive Director**

- Chair Soda stated as part of Mr. Scott's employment agreement, he is to be reimbursed for moving expenses incurred. Expenses incurred totaled \$1,884.17. Commissioner Massaro made a motion to approve reimbursement expenses in the amount of \$1,884.17. Vice Chair Cook seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

#### IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Mr. Scott reported that he sent members his report prior to the meeting and members should expect to receive his reports in this manner. As always, please feel free to call or email him with any questions prior to the board meeting.

Mr. Scott stated he is working to create hope and optimism in the city. The staff at the Authority is great and employees understand their tasks. He is working to have a family atmosphere and to work with the resident population.

A census partnership has been formed. Ms. Smith reported a meeting was recently held with Mr. Walker from the census bureau and service coordinator staff to create resident involvement. Census parties at all the sites will be conducted and educational workshops will be held. Discussion ensued. Vice Chair Cook asked if there are employment opportunities for residents. Ms. Smith said yes and residents can apply online. An informational session was held at the ATTAIN Lab.

Mr. Scott stated 2 brochures have been created; one for the Family Resource Building and one for Packard Court Community Center. Ms. Allen-Collins spoke about the social impact the brochures will create to increase funding for programs through People and Possibilities. Future ideas include testimonials and videos. Ms. Smith stated sponsorships will be sought in order to have “free” summer camp by sponsoring a family. Ms. Allen-Collins noted that the mural on Main Street depicts Miss Doris Jones.

Mr. Scott reported he met with Ms. Matsulavage with regards to barriers in housing. Ms. Matsulavage presented the board with a synopsis of the barriers in the placing of individuals in all sectors. Security deposits and utilities are issues and included demographics in her report. The payment of first month’s rent, last month’s rent and security deposit are a great hardship. The general condition of homes that are inspected are in poor condition. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Scott stated he is working with Mr. Mark Laurrie at the school district to initiate a truancy pilot program.

Mr. Scott stated his focus over the next 6 months include working with the census bureau, the acquiring of land, securing funds through People & Possibilities and to develop a security deposit fund for the city, increase the collaboration with the city and to increase resident participation at all sites.

Chair Soda asked if any replacement of the programming from the Advantage After School program can be done. Mr. Scott stated any replacement would be self-funded and the Authority will apply for the next round of funding. Ms. Smith stated some aspects of the programming may be conducted on a smaller scale at the community center sites.

Chair Soda noted the Executive Director sent a survey to board members and results were sent to members. Mr. Scott stated he will use this method in making large decisions impacting the Authority and future surveys will have a comment section.

##### **Occupancy.**

- The occupancy rate for June was 97.50%; July 97.39% and August 96.92%

### **Staff Reports.**

- Board members received the following reports:
  - Aged Balance, Cumulative Rent Receivable Summary
  - Community and Supportive Services (HOPE VI CSS)
  - Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Service Coordinator
  - Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking (ATTAIN)
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## **V. Committee Reports:**

### **A. Finance – Mr. Cook, Chairman**

Financial statements were received and filed.

Finance committee met September 5.

There are no audit findings; formal report to be given at October board meeting.

Income statement year to end was reviewed and format restricted.

### **Request approval of write-off accounts.**

After review of the write-of accounts, Vice Chair Cook made a motion to approve the accounts for write-off. Commissioner Massaro seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

### **B. Family Housing Representative- Mr. Archie.**

- No report.

### **C. Elderly Housing Representative- Mr. Turton.**

- New laundry machines coming soon.
- Residents concerned about losing money on the old swipe cards. Ms. Haley explained residents will not lose any monies since there is a way to transfer funds from the old card to the new one. Residents are encouraged to spend down the old cards as much as possible.

### **D. Facilities/Operations/IT – Mr. Cook, Chairman.**

- Committee met on September 5.
- Topics discussed included: Wrobel Towers relocation, New York Power Authority assessment, utilities and funding renovations at Packard Court. A survey will be conducted for the residents at Packard Court for renovations but windows will be a priority. Vacant unit turnaround and staffing was also discussed.
- A security guard update was given by Ms. Smith. Securemedy began August 1 and kinks are still being worked out. A plan “B” was discussed in having a separate company just for the midnight shift.
- Further discussion was held on the renovations at Packard Court. Mr. Cafarella noted the settlement with AllState has been received by the Authority and there is confidentiality clause applicable to the staff and board members with regards to this litigation.

### **E. Planning – Mr. Soda – Chairman.**

- Minutes from the last meeting were given to all board members.

### **F. Governance – Mr. Soda – Chairman.**

- Minutes from the last meeting were given to all members.
- Committees must meet to create their evaluative instruments.

### **Approval of By-Law Amendments**

- Board members received the amendments in June to review and to formally adopt at this

meeting. Board members need to be aware that forthcoming, the agenda will be in a consent agenda format and there is an attendance requirement for members.

Vice Chair Cook made a motion to approve and adopt the By-Law Amendments. Commissioner Massaro seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

**Approval of Uncollectible Accounts/Collection Write-Off Policy**

- The policy changes the amount of an outstanding account in excess of \$150 from \$25 to be prepared for board approval as a write-off. Ms. Smith stated this change will also be reflected in the Statement of Policy as well.

Commissioner Massaro made a motion to approve the Uncollectible Accounts/Collection Write-Off Policy. Vice Chair Cook seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

**G. Human Resources– Ms. Grandinetti – Chairman (given by Chair Soda)**

- Personnel Action Chart was received and filed.

Request approval of extension of leave, leave of absence requests

Chair Soda reported three employees have requested leaves.

Commissioner Turton made a motion to approve the leave requests of three employees. Vice Chair Cook seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

**H. Counsel – Mr. Cafarella.**

1. Belmont: Norstar is not interested in the homeownership phase of HOPE VI. A release will be prepared for Norstar’s signature.
2. Political Activity: Conducted research and provided board with a memorandum. The law is not clear and referenced the memorandum. Discussion was held with regards to having a rental charge at the towers since at the community center sites there is a charge for rental. Counsel and staff will meet to create a policy. Vice Chair Cook stated criteria such as speaking on key issues and providing literature be included in the policy as well as being fair and unbiased. Ms. Smith stated family sites are not allowed to have political signs up and that will be looked into for policy criteria as well.
3. Dental Insurance: The former Executive Director has reached out to board members with regards to her dental insurance. A letter has been sent to her attorney informing her that in January of 2018, the board approved dental insurance for a period of 18 months commencing on March 17, 2017 at no cost to the former Executive Director.
4. Research conducted with regards to civil service. The State Civil Service Commission can overturn or modify a local commission’s bylaws or rules. Counsel will draft a letter for board members to review requesting consideration to overturn or modify the city’s residency policy as it applies to the Housing Authority; specifically having individuals be residents of the city one year prior to taking and exam. The Housing Authority residency policy will stand that an individual upon being hired must move into the city within 6 months. Further discussion ensued. Members agreed that letter of request be drafted and after review, that Chair Soda sign the letter.
5. Sexual Harassment Training: Required for staff and board. Ms. Smith stated Jeannine Brown Miller conducts the staff training in January so board members can attend that or there is an online training that Jeannine does as well. Information will be sent to board members to select the training method.

- Mr. Cafarella requested to enter into Executive Session with regards to potential litigation matters.

Commissioner Massaro made a motion to enter into Executive Session. Commissioner Bass seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

Executive Session began at 5:30 pm

Executive Session ended at 5:50 pm

Vice Chair Cook made a motion to return to Regular Session. Commissioner Turton seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

#### **VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Chair Soda stated members received a training binder with regards to housing commissioners. The Authority received a plaque for appreciation in participating in Unity Day 2019.

#### **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

- Next meeting: October 8, 2019 4:00 pm.

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chair Cook, seconded by Commissioner Bass. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting adjourned at 5:52 pm.

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**Chairman**