

The Board of Commissioners of the Niagara Falls Housing Authority (NFHA) met in a Monthly Board Meeting session on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 3001 Ninth Street at 4:00 pm. Chair Soda called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

**Present:**

Mr. Frank Soda  
Mr. Dwayne Sledge  
Mr. Lawrence Cook  
Mr. Brian Archie, Sr.  
Ms. Colleen Todd  
Ms. Maralynn Giancola

**Also Present:**

Mr. Clifford Scott  
Ms. Angela Smith  
Ms. Tomorrow Allen-Collins  
Mr. Jason Cafarella

**Absent:**

Mr. Earl Bass

**At the Request of the Executive Director** Jerome Nagy, Melissa Matsulavage, Nancy Haley, George delValle and Maria Vitello

**PRESENTATION/INTRODUCTION – MR. JEROME NAGY, CEO – NEIGHBORWORKS**

Chairman Soda welcomed everyone to the meeting and appreciated the fact that this is an in-person meeting. He introduced Mr. Nagy who spoke about NeighborWorks proposal of new construction and homeownership in the City of Niagara Falls and gave an overview as well as a handout of the proposal. A question and answer session followed and Mr. Nagy left the meeting.

**I. MOMENT OF REFLECTION**

Moment of reflection was held and Chairman Soda introduced Ms. Maralynn Giancola who is a new member of this board.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Sledge, seconded by Commissioner Archie and carried, the June 9, 2020 monthly meeting minutes of the Board of Commissioners' meeting were approved.

**III. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

Chair Soda reviewed the consent agenda and explained the procedure for Commissioner Giancola's benefit. Motion was duly made by Commissioner Sledge, seconded by Vice Chair Cook to approve the consent agenda for the meeting held September 8, 2020.

Vice Chair Cook suggested having the amount of financial information scaled down. Members agreed to have the summary pages and bar graph provided to them henceforth.

Commissioner Archie asked why there was more than one entry for the HR Consultant for the month of July in the expenditure report. Ms. Smith stated if the consultant went over the allotted ten hours per month, a separate payment would need to be made.

Chair Soda reviewed the rest of the agenda items and there being no further questions, the motion was unanimously carried.

**IV. CHAIR'S REPORT**

Chair Soda welcomes Maralynn Giancola to the board. She will fulfill the unexpired term of Ms. Massaro until May 2, 2022.

The shared services agreement with the City will be voted upon at today's meeting. This agreement has been approved by the City Council. During the term of this agreement (42 months), the Housing Authority will receive \$210,000.00 in fees as well as in-kind services. Chair Soda brought to the

attention of the members that Schedule A of the agreement, number 7 should read “8-10 hours per week” and not “4 days per week.” He also noted that the employees who work in Community Development report to the City Administrator, not Mr. Scott. The City received a grant for \$200,000 for blight removal. Once all documents are signed, City Council and HUD will receive copies.

Chair Soda thanked Ms. Smith and Ms. Vitello for their work on the annual board retreat.

The resident meeting for the Jordan Gardens rehabilitation project will take place on September 16 at 5:30 pm. Ms. Smith stated the event will be held in the parking lot between buildings 17 and 18 and at the Family Resource Building if it rains. A contest is being held for the most buildings to have its head of household attend this event and surveys will be distributed as well.

A People and Possibilities meeting will take place September 14 for the consideration funding for cosmetic improvements at Highland Avenue.

The NYS Office of the Attorney General will be acquisitioning properties from an owner in the city and the Authority is interested in acquiring these properties for a program of potential homeownership.

Chair Soda stated he would like the board and senior management to have a work session before the October board meeting to discuss the phases of the Jordan Gardens rehab and the Highland/Beech 2023 plan.

## **V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Mr. Scott reported he and Chair Soda participated in a ZOOM lecture for students at University at Buffalo last week.

Mr. Scott asked Ms. Smith to give a report on security services. Ms. Smith stated a few weeks ago, armed guards were hired at Spallino Towers from 7 pm – 5 am every day. This occurred due to incidents where an employee’s car was damaged and threats were made. The armed guards can handle detaining individuals until police arrive. The residents have expressed they feel safer and armed guards will be assigned to Wrobel Towers soon. Vice Chair Cook asked if the armed guards are an additional cost. Ms. Smith said yes since the unarmed guard sits at the desk and the armed guard walks the floors and grounds. Vice Chair Cook asked if the additional cost is comparable to the cost of an off duty police officer. Ms. Smith stated the cost is less. Mr. Scott stated there are armed guards at Beloved Community as well and some of the additional costs may be reimbursed through COVID and FEMA. Commissioner Archie stated he has only seen one guard who is an off duty Buffalo police officer and is not aware if there are more that are on a rotation. Mr. Scott stated he and Ms. Matsulavage will follow up with Norstar on this. Commissioner Sledge asked when Wrobel Towers will get an armed guard. Ms. Smith stated within the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Scott spoke about recent incidents and activity occurring on Highland Avenue and in particular, at a certain residence, 3108 Highland Avenue. As a community, all must come together collectively to stop the violence that is occurring. Comments and discussion were heard from members and staff.

Mr. Scott asked Ms. Allen-Collins to speak about GritSeed. Ms. Allen-Collins reported COVID has generated a great deal of paperwork that must be kept. This program will be a more efficient process. Employees will text a contact number to Niagara Falls Housing Authority and answer all appropriate COVID-19 questions. This allows the Housing Authority to store the information in an application for a better process. Mr. Scott stated the cost for this is a reimbursable expense and the information received is in a real time format.

Mr. Scott asked Ms. Smith to speak on in-house collections. Ms. Smith stated in the past, an employee assisted the manager in collecting past due rents by placing a notice on a resident's door which was quite effective and is looking to reinstitute the program. There is an increase of non-payment by the residents of the hi-rises and there is still a moratorium on evictions. Vice Chair Cook asked when the moratorium ends, will residents realize that they aren't starting at zero and is there communication with residents that clearly state their accounts? Ms. Smith stated yes and that HUD has sent out notices, managers have sent letters and residents are aware of their situation. Mr. Cafarella gave an update on the governor's orders on this issue as well as an update on the courts with regards to evictions. Ms. Smith stated ideas of a payment plan and rent forgiveness are being looked into.

Mr. Scott asked for approval of the shared services agreement between the City of Niagara Falls and the Niagara Falls Housing Authority. Vice Chair Cook made a motion to approve the shared services agreement between the City of Niagara Falls and the Niagara Falls Housing Authority. Commissioner Sledge seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

## **VI. NFHA ATTORNEY REPORT**

Deferred.

## **VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Chair Soda stated the bylaw amendment to add the office of Secretary to the Executive Committee will be voted on at the September board meeting and asked for a motion to place this item on the agenda.

Commissioner Sledge motioned and Commissioner Giancola seconded to place this bylaw amendment item on the agenda. The motion was unanimously carried.

Vice Chair Cook made a motion to approve the bylaw amendment to add the office of Secretary to the Executive Committee. Commissioner Todd seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

Chair Soda stated members received an updated board directory for their use as well as a flyer for the upcoming resident event at Jordan Gardens on September 16.

The next board meeting will be held on October 13 at 4 pm.

The police club union will be at the Family Resource Building on September 14 at 6 pm to meet with residents in the area.

Chair Soda asked that members supply dates/times between September 16 and October 13 to have a work session with regards to Highland/Beech and Jordan Gardens.

Chair Soda asked for a motion to go into Executive Session at the attorney's request to discuss potential litigation, potential contract issues and personnel matters.

Vice Chair Cook made a motion to enter into Executive Session. Commissioner Sledge seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

Executive Session began at 5:28 pm

Executive Session ended at 6:29 pm

Commissioner Sledge made a motion to return to Regular Session. Commissioner Todd seconded and the motion was unanimously carried. Regular Session resumed.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn was made by Chair Soda, seconded by Vice Chair Cook. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting adjourned at 6:31 pm.

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**Secretary**