

The Board of Commissioners of the Niagara Falls Housing Authority (NFHA) met in a Special Board Meeting session on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 via ZOOM at 4:00 pm. Chair Cook called the meeting to order at 4:06 pm.

Present:

Mr. Lawrence Cook
Mr. James Swift
Mr. Earl Bass
Mr. Brian Archie, Sr.
Mrs. Colleen Todd
Mrs. Maralynn Giancola
Mr. Andrew Turton

Also Present:

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

Absent:

At the Request of the Executive Director: Nancy Haley, George Dreer, Roger Lis, Samika Sullivan, Melissa Matsulavage, Eric Fields, Maria Vitello

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Proper Notice of Meeting

All members acknowledged receipt.

Signing of Waiver

Each member will sign the waiver and send it to the administrative office.

I. MOMENT OF REFLECTION

Chair Cook noted today's reflection shall focus on the new fiscal year, the newly elected officers and to take this opportunity to recommit.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Turton, seconded by Commissioner Bass and carried, the April 13, 2021 monthly meeting minutes of the Board of Commissioners' meeting were approved.

III. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

After review, motion was duly made by Commissioner Archie seconded by Vice Chair Giancola to approve the consent agenda for the meeting held May 4, 2021. The motion was unanimously carried.

IV. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Cook formally welcomed back Mr. Andrew Turton to the board. Chair Cook announced that Commissioner Swift will sit on the Highland Beech working group.

Chair Cook stated board members received the annual statements in their board packets to complete and return to the administrative office.

The budget review subcommittee consisting of Chair Cook, Vice Chair Giancola and Commissioner Todd will need to set up a meeting with Executive Director Scott and Mr. Lis.

Chair Cook stated he would like to have discussion at the June board meeting on the reconstitution of committees and asked that the Bylaws be sent to all members. He also asked members to think about which committee they would like to serve on as well as to chair.

Chair Cook stated the board will need to complete two sets of evaluations; one is the board's self-assessment and the second one is the evaluation of the executive director.

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Scott recommended approval of the election of tenant representative to the board. Mr. Andrew Turton was the only candidate to run.

Vice Chair Giancola made a motion to approve the election of tenant representative to the board. Commissioner Swift seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

Mr. Scott gave background information on the New York State Preservation grant awarded to the housing authority. The consultant, MM Development Advisors have stated not all of the monies awarded will be used. The New York State Preservation Opportunity Program and MM Development Advisors have approved the use of excess funds for the pre-development of the Nick George Portfolio. Mr. Scott then read the resolution to this effect to the board.

Commissioner Archie asked about the budget. Mr. Scott stated the excess funds are in the area of \$150,000 to \$200,000 and is also looking at using the funds for environmental studies and capital needs assessments at Packard Court and Spallino Towers. Commissioner Archie asked if the funds can be used for programming at the community centers. Mr. Scott said no; only for pre-development needs.

Commissioner Todd asked if this would add monies to the purchase price. Mr. Scott stated Mr. George will not receive any of these monies. The funds will be used for due diligence, environmental studies, title insurance, attorney fees, etc. and costs that the housing authority would incur.

Mr. Cafarella stated the purchase price is still in negotiation and these grant funds would be used to offset closing costs. Mr. Scott stated the authority would incur these expenses regardless of the purchase price.

Commissioner Bass made a motion to approve that the Executive Director is authorized to utilize the NYS-POP grant for any and all Pre-Development Services for the possible acquisition of the Portfolio as permitted by said grant. Commissioner Archie seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

Mr. Scott thanked the board and Mr. Cafarella for getting this done and if the authority is able to purchase the properties; this will be a significant savings to the authority.

Mr. Scott reported that a press conference with New York Power Authority was held on April 21 and thanked the board for its attendance as well as the staff for their work on this project. The properties look good (exterior lighting) and he has received much positive feedback.

Mr. Scott welcomed Mr. Turton back to the board.

Mr. Scott reported that a resident at Spallino Towers was accosted last week and an investigation was conducted. There will be a resident meeting on May 18th and Mayor Restaino and Police Chief Faso will be in attendance.

Mr. Scott stated he is applying for a safety grant for cameras in the hallways and common areas at the hi-rises through Housing Authority Insurance Group. At the Beloved Community, in addition to the cameras, surveillance with private security will return from mid-May through October.

Mr. Scott stated the city is slated to receive \$59.4 million dollars over the next 3-6 months and much discussion is being held on the utilization of these funds. Mr. Scott mentioned blight removal, community engagement, working with block clubs, community activities, post COVID planning, the

increase of security through lighting and cameras and police patrols were some of the items for these funds.

The vaccine outreach coordinator will begin at the end of May and is very important to the black and brown communities.

Mr. Scott announced the “Pay your Rent” campaign to assist residents in getting back into the habit of paying their rent. Managers, landlords, Section 8, etc. are heavily burdened with non-payments due to the moratorium. Fliers will go out and announcements on social media will be made.

Mr. Archie asked Mr. Scott to share the information with regards to the rental relief funds. Mr. Scott stated through the stimulus and OFDTA, \$6.2 million dollars will be used for rental relief. Of that amount, the City of Niagara Falls will receive 63%. The Department of Social Services is rolling out a Request for Proposal for eligible residents to apply. The authority hopes to recoup over \$100,000 in back rents.

Chair Cook asked what time is the resident chat meeting on the 18th. The time of the meeting will be 3 pm and will be held at Spallino Towers. Mr. Scott stated there is new management at Niagara Towers and he will be setting up a meeting to include the police chief and fire chief to speak to the ongoing issues at that facility.

VI. NFHA ATTORNEY REPORT

Mr. Cafarella reported that an assault occurred last week at Spallino Towers and commenced eviction proceedings on the resident who had his girlfriend allow a person into the building.

Mr. Cafarella reported the current moratorium for New York State expired on May 1st and was extended to May 31st. The CDC extension expires June 30 for previous non-payment only. However, the state extended the moratorium to August 31st and may extend that again to the end of the year.

Mr. Cafarella reported he has revised/streamlined the application process for new residents.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

The next board meeting will be held on June 8, 2021 at 4 pm. Mr. Scott hopes to have this meeting held in person.

Mr. Scott asked Mr. Lis to speak about the upcoming audit. Mr. Lis stated the audit is usually conducted in July but in discussions with staff and the auditors, the audit will hopefully take place in June. Mr. Lis stated members received a letter from HUD stated their review of the audit has been completed and there are no findings to report. Mr. Lis stated March 31st was the close out for year end and will discuss this at the next finance committee meeting.

Chair Cook noted that May 18th is the school board election.

Mr. Scott announced that Independent Health’s Good for the Neighborhood program will be held on May 5th from 4-6 pm at Packard Court Community Center. Ms. Sullivan stated the African Heritage Food Co-Op will be giving out fresh produce. Planned Parenthood is also participating. The Magdalene Project will distribute gift bags. The sheriff’s department will also hold a bike rodeo. If it

should rain, the gym and all rooms will be utilized. There will also be 8 community vendors. Ms. Sullivan stated the kids in the after school program will be having a bake sale. The proceeds from the sale will be used to make blessing bags for the homeless and distributed through the Magdalene Project.

Mr. Scott stated the Labor Expo will be held on June 17th from 11 am – 2 pm at the Family Resource Building.

Mr. Scott announced there is an open call for block grants through Community Development.

Mr. Scott stated Ms. Smith is organizing an authority-wide spring clean-up day for staff and residents on May 21st from 8 am – 12:00 Noon.

Mr. Scott said a community day is being planned for June and this event will honor Mr. Sledge. Commissioner Archie asked if these are 2 different events. Mr. Scott said yes. Chair Cook asked if Mr. Sledge's family will be invited. Mr. Scott said yes.

Commissioner Bass asked if the block grant can be used for the community centers. Mr. Scott said yes and the authority will submit an application.

Chair Cook reiterated to members to send their annual statements to Ms. Vitello.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Archie, seconded by Commissioner Turton. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting adjourned at 4:51 pm.

Secretary