

The Board of Commissioners of the Niagara Falls Housing Authority (NFHA) met in a Monthly Board Meeting session on Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 3001 Ninth Street at 4:00 pm. Chair Cook called the meeting to order at 4:00 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. Angela Smith
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, Keenan Gibbons, Maria Vitello

I. MOMENT OF REFLECTION

Chair Cook noted today's reflection shall focus on the upcoming efforts of the Authority, board members to sign up to participate and/or chair on subcommittees and to not lose sight of the mission.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Turton, seconded by Commissioner Swift and carried, the May 4, 2021 annual and special meeting minutes of the Board of Commissioners' meeting were approved.

III. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

After review, motion was duly made by Vice Chair Giancola seconded by Commissioner Turton to approve the consent agenda for the meeting held June 8, 2021. The motion was unanimously carried.

IV. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Cook thanked members for submitting their self-evaluation and gave an overview of the evaluation scoring and comments and stated further feedback can be discussed at the board retreat.

Chair Cook encouraged members to think about which sub-committee they would like to participate in as well as chair and to let him know within the next week or so. He stated if he does not hear from the members, he will be assigning them to a particular sub-committee to participate in or chair.

Chair Cook reminded members the deadline is approaching to submit their performance evaluation on the Executive Director.

Chair Cook stated members received an updated board directory for their use in their board packets.

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Scott gave background information on the New York State Preservation grant awarded to the housing authority. The funds are contingent upon the acquisition of the Nick George portfolio properties. Mr. Scott then read the resolution seeking approval of the acceptance of this grant and to authorize the Executive Director to execute any documents relative to this grant. Mr. Scott stated in approving this resolution, negotiations can move forward relative to a purchase price.

Chair Cook made a motion to approve the acceptance of this grant and to authorize the Executive Director to execute any documents relative to this grant. Vice Chair Giancola seconded.

Commissioner Swift asked if the purchase of the properties has been completed and what the process was. Mr. Scott stated discussion on negotiations will be deferred until Executive Session takes place. The motion was unanimously carried.

Mr. Scott asked Ms. Smith to provide an update on the Highland/Beech initiative. Ms. Smith stated things are moving along and welcomed Mr. Swift to the working group. A resident meeting was held last month and Highland Planning conducted workshops with the residents and photos from this session were passed around. There were 18 in attendance. All the deliverables are on target. A Community Day is tentatively scheduled for August 27th from 11 am – 5 pm and Jordan Gardens will be blocked off. An informational sheet will be sent to the residents of the Highland Beech area detailing an update on the initiative and to invite their participation at the Community Day. Stakeholders have been selected and a meeting with them will be held on June 30th detailing their duties and responsibilities. Ms. Bernard, Manager of Jordan Gardens and Mr. Skavinsky, Foreman of Jordan Gardens have joined the working group as well.

Mr. Scott reported that an authority-wide clean up was held for all sites on May 21st. Ms. Smith passed around photos from this event. She stated 34 employees participated, lunch was served and early dismissal was granted and plans to do this again in the fall are being made.

Mr. Scott stated Mayor Restaino has released his social justice report and it can be obtained through the city's website. He stated Robyn Krueger and he chaired the housing piece for the report.

Mr. Scott introduced Ms. Keenan Gibbons who is the vaccine outreach coordinator. She gave her background and what her role will be to board members. Ms. Allen-Collins stated she is working closely with Ms. Gibbons in addressing the concerns of the community as it relates to getting vaccinated. Ms. Gibbons reported she has met with managers and Ms. Sullivan to gain a perspective on the issues.

Mr. Scott asked Mr. Lis for a financial update. Mr. Lis stated the authority is in good shape and is in the process of closing out the year end. Receivables are being worked on and there is the ongoing renovation work at Wrobel Towers. The 2021 Capital Funds Grant has been received as well as a ROSS grant for the next three years.

Mr. Scott asked Ms. Sullivan and Mr. Fields for an update on summer camp. Ms. Sullivan stated it's hopeful that camp will take place. They have been working with various community agencies to plan field trips and NYPA will conduct a STEM class.

Mr. Scott asked Ms. Smith to report on the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Ms. Smith stated the application process began June 1. This is an online application and she stated it took her about a half-hour to go through it. The biggest challenge will be for people to upload the documents required with the application. Ms. Smith reported she met with the managers who will plan to work with the residents. Ms. Smith spoke about the many stipulations with regards to eligibility as well as the authority's stipulations with regards to accepting the funds. A resident will be eligible for assistance for one year plus three months going forward if they qualify. If the authority should accept the funds, it cannot evict the resident, change the rent amount, etc. for one year. Since re-exams are conducted every year, research will be done to see if HUD will grant a waiver. Managers will work with residents who are currently past due on their rent. Applicants can also call the 1-800 number and complete this application over the phone but their documents will still need to be uploaded. There is no guarantee that an applicant will receive assistance. The housing authority will also be required to submit information as well. An applicant cannot accept payments from other programs in addition to this one.

Chair Cook asked if a resident is eligible to receive funding, does the funding go to them and then to the authority? Ms. Smith stated funds would come directly to the authority. Applicants are given an application number that can be referenced.

Members had several questions. Mr. Cafarella explained the state law process with regards to court appearances and default hearings. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Scott reported that Norstar has asked if the authority would have any interest in purchasing vacant land on Ninth Street. Commissioner Swift asked if Norstar would be interested in donating the land. The land in question is from Depot Street to Cornerstone. This land is zoned residential and there may be a way to rezone it for commercial use.

VI. NFHA ATTORNEY REPORT

Mr. Cafarella stated there are pending evictions in place due to nuisance.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Cook stated the board retreat is scheduled for July 13 and the timing will be discussed. Mr. Scott wished to postpone the retreat for a few months due to safety issues and would like to see the vaccinate rate increased. Discussion ensued.

The next board meeting will be held on September 14, 2021 at 4 pm.

Ms. Smith announced that September 2nd will be the 79th year of operations for the Authority and site celebrations are being planned. Plans are also underway for next year's 80th anniversary.

Chair Cook stated the finance sub-committee will be meeting on June 9, 2021 at 4 pm at the Central Office.

Chair Cook called for a motion to go into Executive Session for the purpose of contract negotiation discussions.

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

Executive Session began at 4:56 pm

Executive Session ended at 5:30 pm

Commissioner Bass made a motion to return to Regular Session. Vice Chair Giancola seconded and the motion was unanimously carried. Regular session resumed.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Turton, seconded by Commissioner Bass. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.

Secretary