

The Board of Commissioners of the Niagara Falls Housing Authority (NFHA) met in a Monthly Board Meeting session on Tuesday, October 12, 2021 at 3001 Ninth Street at 4:00 pm. Chair Cook called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm.

**Present:**

Mr. Lawrence Cook  
Mr. James Swift  
Ms. Colleen Todd  
Mrs. Maralynn Giancola  
Mr. Andrew Turton

**Also Present:**

Mr. Clifford Scott  
Mr. Jason Cafarella

**Absent:**

Mr. Brian Archie, Sr.  
Mr. Earl Bass  
Ms. Angela Smith  
Ms. Tomorrow Allen-Collins

**At the Request of the Executive Director:** George Dreer, Eric Fields, Roger Lis, Keenan Gibbons, Maria Vitello

**I. MOMENT OF REFLECTION**

Chair Cook noted today's reflection shall focus on the leadership from Mr. Scott and his staff and the continued cooperation from everyone.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Turton, seconded by Commissioner Swift and carried, the September 14, 2021 monthly meeting minutes of the Board of Commissioners were approved.

**III. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

After review, Chair Cook asked Mr. Lis to give an update from the finance committee meeting. Mr. Lis stated budgets were discussed and that the central office cost center (general fund) is doing well. Chair Cook asked Mr. Lis to speak on the materials from the board retreat. Mr. Lis stated he will present an overview at the November board meeting. The auditors will also present the audit next month. A motion was duly made by Vice Chair Giancola, seconded by Commissioner Turton to approve the consent agenda for the meeting held October 12, 2021. The motion was unanimously carried.

**IV. CHAIR'S REPORT**

Chair Cook reminded board members who chair subcommittees to conduct their meetings on a quarterly basis.

**Approval of the Executive Director Employment Agreement**

Chair Cook asked for a motion to approve the Executive Director Employment Agreement effective October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2024. Commissioner Swift made a motion to approve the Executive Director Employment Agreement. Vice Chair Giancola seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

**V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Scott thanked the board for allowing him to continue on as the Executive Director. A lot has been done over two years, and there is a lot more work to be done. He spoke about the upcoming projects and the importance of trust between the board and staff, the agency and the community as a whole.

Mr. Scott stated he and Mr. Fields are meeting with Mr. Pratt from SUNY. Mr. Fields stated the meeting will focus on a re-opening the lab and how to more effectively utilize the lab to service the community and is looking forward to this. He also stated he has spoken with the lab staff to get ideas. Chair Cook asked if students will need to be vaccinated in order to attend classes in the lab. Mr. Fields stated the lab is aware of the authority's procedure and this will also be discussed at the meeting. Chair Cook asked that the board members be updated.

Mr. Scott stated he and Commissioner Swift met with Mr. Colpoys from the Mental Health Association. Commissioner Swift this agency has a peer-to-peer specialist who can assist residents in linking services and can provide one on one support. Mr. Scott stated he is looking into grant opportunities to have this service for the residents.

Mr. Scott spoke about Cascades and the odor by Packard Court. He will be meeting with the Packard Court residents to gather feedback about their health issues and relay this information to the health department and department of environmental conservation. He will also try to meet with representatives from Cascades. Chair Cook stated Cascades did send an informational brochure to the community. This issue has been an ongoing problem for a long time.

Mr. Scott announced that a COVID 19 booster clinic is being held on October 19<sup>th</sup> from 1-4 pm. Mr. Fields stated the authority partnered with Memorial Hospital to host a Pfizer vaccine booster clinic on the 14<sup>th</sup> at the Family Resource Building. Flyers were sent out to residents and to the community. The hospital is waiting to hear on the approval of a Moderna vaccine booster and when approved, will have another clinic day.

Chair Cook asked how well has outreach gone. Ms. Gibbons stated over the summer, outreach was conducted through education with community partners. A push for vaccinations and testing was held in conjunction with Community Day. Surveys showed a positive response rate received from the senior population and will push now for the booster vaccination. She stated she's working with Niagara University and Rite Aid to have a clinic at Spallino and Wrobel Towers within the next two weeks. There has been a low response rate at the family sites and outreach has been difficult. Chair Cook stated he appreciates the efforts made but noted that winter is coming up and wanted to know what more can be done at the family sites and who can reach out to them. Ms. Gibbons stated contacts with residents at family sites have been made by her as well as Mr. Glover and Mr. Starks, the task force and youth ambassadors but it continues to be a struggle and challenge. Commissioner Swift suggested the use of gift cards. Ms. Gibbons stated that was done and on Community Day, one resident at Spallino Towers won a gift card as well as one resident from Jordan Gardens. She stated there is a general mistrust over the vaccine since there is no guarantee nor a cure. She is also doing outreach with area pastors. Chair Cook Discussion ensued. Chair Cook asked Ms. Gibbons to provide updates to the board members. suggested to Ms. Gibbons that she reach out to the faith-based community to help spread the word to the family sites on the benefit of getting the vaccine.

Mr. Scott stated he is meeting with representatives from Niagara University who will be a partner in assisting to secure funding for the Jordan Gardens renovations for the common areas.

A People and Possibilities meeting is being held on November 8, 2021 and new board members will be added to this entity.

Mr. Scott stated the report from the auditors show a clean audit for 2020-2021 with no findings. Having these clean audits assists in grant funding increases.

Jordan Gardens resident meetings will be held on October 14 and 28 to discuss the renovation project. Both meetings will be held at 5:30 pm at the Family Resource Building.

Commissioner Todd asked about the status of the Nick George properties. Mr. Scott stated he has received the physical needs assessments on the properties. There are some properties that are too costly to renovate and will have a report in December. Commissioner Todd asked what happens to the properties that the authority does not take. Mr. Scott stated he wasn't sure; they may go to the city. Some of the properties are with Section 8 vouchers and some are project based with Section 8. The

authority will pick and choose which properties to take and is looking at 10-12 properties. Everything will be brought to the board for review and approval.

Mr. Scott stated he has met with staff and the resident advisory board on the upcoming annual agency plan submission. There are minor changes to the statement sheet that board members received. The public hearing is scheduled for November 19, 2021 at 4 pm at the Family Resource Building.

#### **VI. NFHA ATTORNEY REPORT**

Mr. Cafarella gave an update on the latest information with regards to evictions as well as the most recent regulations from HUD. Discussion was held on what may be anticipated when courts are fully opened. The state legislature may introduce a process to slow the process of evictions so that agencies such as Community Missions, etc. will not be inundated with the anticipated increases of homelessness. Discussion was also held regarding emergency rent application payments (ERAP) and their guidelines that are continuously changing with regards to public housing authorities and HUD regulations. ERAP will pay up to 15 months of back rent with the first 12 months beginning in March 2020. A current case with a resident was discussed and how ERAP is affecting the authority. Mr. Scott stated payment has been received for seven residents to date. Mr. Cafarella stated the Supreme Court will be issuing guidelines in the near future on evictions and procedures. Discussion was held whether to push for evictions. Mr. Scott stated managers are working diligently with their residents and would not recommend this. Commissioner Todd asked if there are standards and guidelines the authority uses and if residents are aware of this. Mr. Scott stated the authority has a Statement of Policy which residents are aware of. Mr. Cafarella stated a revision Statement of Policy will be given to the board in the next couple of months for review and approval. Chair Cook stated with post-COVID and the renovations and revitalization that is taking place, it is hopeful residents will become more involved, will participate in activities and take an active role in ownership. Mr. Scott concurred. Discussion ensued.

#### **VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

#### **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

The next board meeting will be held on November 9, 2021 at 4 pm at the Family Resource Building. The public hearing regarding agency plan will be held on November 19<sup>th</sup>. Chair Cook stated there is generally a low turn-out for this and he would like to have all commissioners present, if possible and to get the word out about this public hearing so residents can attend as well.

#### **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Turton, seconded by Commissioner Swift. The motion was unanimously carried. The meeting adjourned at 5:32 pm.

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**Chairman**