

**ROCHESTER HOUSING AUTHORITY
June 24, 2020
675 WEST MAIN STREET
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14611**



MEMBERS PRESENT

Tynise Edwards, Chairperson
Rosalie Remarais, Vice-Chairperson
Florine Cummings, Resident Commissioner
Joanne Larson, Commissioner
Hershel Patterson, Resident Commissioner
Hank Rubin, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT

Melissa Berrien
Shawn Burr
Sinclair Carrington
Diana Colon
Jacquetta Harris
Cynthia Herriott
Shawanna Lawrence
Mark Plantholt
Linda Stango
Amit Sud
Evhen Tupis

OTHERS PRESENT

H. Todd Bullard, RHA Legal Counsel
Joyce Ramirez, Tipping Point Communications

Commissioner Tynise Edwards called the June Rochester Housing Authority (RHA) Regular Board Meeting to order at 12:03 PM. It was noted for the record that notice of this meeting was posted as required by law and that there was a quorum present.

1. Open Forum – Public Comments

There were no Public Comments.

2. NYSPHADA 2020 Scholarship Recipient – **Melissa Berrien**

Raeona Hampton is a dedicated member of the Rochester Housing Authority community, who is an exemplary example to her peers, excelling academically while being employed part-time. As a student, Raeona has received various academic honors, including several Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, National Honor Society, Urban League Black Scholar, Top 25 Senior Scholars, and New England Young Writers Conference Award. Raeona supports the community by volunteering at Foodlink and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and supports her fellow classmates by participating in the Prom committee. Raeona's academic achievements and spirit of volunteerism are mirrored in her dedication to service in her employment. Working part-time at Footlocker and the Rochester Public Library, she offers a positive attitude while striving for excellence. Raeona is very grateful for her scholarship and thanked everyone. She will be attending Howard University this fall and the Board members congratulated her. The Board praised her for her accomplishments and asked that she stay in contact.

3. Approval of Minutes: May 2020 Regular Board Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Remarais moved, and Commissioner Rubin seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the May 2020 Regular Board Meeting. Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Cummings, Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Edwards, and Commissioner Rubin voted yes. The motion passed.

4. Director's Report and Board Approval Requests

a. Deputy Executive Director, Shawn Burr, presented his Director's report as follows:

Mr. Burr recognized the Staff across the Authority who continue to go above and beyond to ensure our high quality of services are maintained and that our residents and participants needs are taken care of during this pandemic emergency we are experiencing. They have been doing a remarkable job! The Directors are currently working on the "Re-Opening Plan" and have formed a committee. Phase 1 is under way and Phase 2 to begin in July.

Mr. Burr shared that we have had a few positive things happen; RHA has been awarded up to \$500K from the NYS Preservation Opportunity Program grant, Trillium is providing COVID-19 testing for our residents, one of RHA successful homeowners was interviewed by Channel 8 News resulting in a positive newsstory, along with the "reopening" of RHA and NYS. Other Great news!! The COVID-19 testing that Trillium conducted at Danforth, was a big success. Staff did a nice job of getting things ready and assisting with facilitating the process of residents getting registered and out to the Mobile Access Clinic (MAC), which has two treatment rooms with one being ADA accessible via a lift. On 6/18/20, they performed 36 COVID-19 tests, which is a record for them. Most residents had called ahead to schedule an appointment, and Trillium was

able to assist several walk-ins as well. Test results have been taking several days, but they are seeing quicker returns as of late. We will move to Glenwood and will be conducting a dry run there on Tuesday, 6/23. We will most likely move to Lake Tower next and will be working on a longer-range schedule. After the COVID testing initiative is complete, we may be able to partner with Trillium to have their MAC unit visit our sites on a regular basis to perform primary care services for residents, including flu shots.

Mr. Burr shared that a “Reopening Committee” has been formed, which has been very busy developing plans for RHA to “reopen.” The plan encompasses phasing employees back into the offices in three phases of 2-3 weeks each, beginning on 6/17. We have increased staff hours in the office, and some employees who were working from home are now back in the office. We’ve analyzed workspace layouts to ensure we can maintain proper social distancing, and adequate PPE supplies are in place. We implemented “shifts” to help keep face to face contact to a minimum. We will be evaluating the process on a weekly basis with the current phases. Kudos to Shawanna for taking the lead on this as she has put in countless hours, not only organizing the plans, but also attending webinars, meetings, and calls to gather best practices.

Mr. Burr reported last month that he was elected to the NYSPHADA Board of Directors. His first official board meeting will be on 6/26/20. With the Governor’s Executive Order declaring Juneteenth (June 19) as a NYS holiday for State workers, NYSPHADA sent a request out to members wanting to know how Housing Authorities may be planning to handle this and/or if they are also declaring it a paid holiday for staff. He would like to further discussion with Board in Executive Session if the Board is agreeable. The Governor stated that he will propose legislation to make Juneteenth a permanent State Holiday, and NYSPHADA will be supporting that with our advocacy efforts.

Mr. Burr included the most recent PIH Notices that HUD has issued, these are updated from last month HUD has agreed that the funding eligibility period is now 3/27/20 – 12/31/20. NYSPHADA and others are still trying to get pre-3/27 COVID related costs covered with these funds. The RHA team that will be meeting to discuss the eligible uses has a meeting scheduled for on or about 6/25/20. This will be a great opportunity to get creative with this funding in providing much needed resources for our residents and participants.

Mr. Burr reported that NAHRO Take Action: Support Housing in COVID-19 Legislation and help NAHRO send 2,000 letters to Congress and the White House by July 1 and support additional emergency resources for Public Housing Authorities-contact your lawmakers today to tell them to include housing and community development programs in the next COVID-19 emergency legislation. Since the CARES Act was signed into law in late March, Congress has debated the next COVID-19 emergency legislation. The House approved the HEROES Act in May, which contained over \$6 billion in funding for programs administered by Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), but the Senate has not yet taken action on a bill. Visit NAHRO’s Advocacy Action Center or use NAHRO’s Advocacy mobile app to send letters to your legislators and the White House now.

For those of you who were on the National Low Income Housing Coalition call with Senator Schumer, you may recall him urging folks to contact their elected officials about this.

Mr. Burr reported that the NLIHC has been hosting weekly National Calls with some very impressive speakers that we've been participating in as a group. I thank you for your interest and would like to continue this process of sending out the information, and whoever can join in, let us know, and we can facilitate a group session.

The latest HUD COVID related FAQ's can be found here:

https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/COVID19_Round3-FAQs_04-22-20.pdf

b. Board Action Requests

- i. R-16 Scattered Sites Roof Replacement – Authorized the Deputy Executive Director to increase the contingency amount from 10% to 25% for \$22,442.50 – Capital Projects

Commissioner Larson moved, and Commissioner Remarais seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

- ii. R-17 Scattered Sites Roof Replacement – Authorized the Deputy Executive Director to increase the contingency amount from 10% to 25% for \$48,225.00 – Capital Projects

Commissioner Remarais moved, and Commissioner Rubin seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

- iii. Lake Tower Façade Repair – Authorize the Deputy Executive Director to award contract to Montanosa Restoration, LLC for \$985,600.00 – Capital Projects

Commissioner Rubin moved, and Commissioner Remarais seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

- iv. Vacation Leave Policy – Authorize the Deputy Executive Director to implement Revised Policy #170 and notify employees for a two period – Human Recourses

Commissioner Larson moved, and Commissioner Cummings seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

- v. Telecommuting – Adopt Policy – Authorize the Deputy Executive Director to implement Policy #426 and notify employees – Human Recourses

Commissioner Remarais moved, and Commissioner Larson seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

- vi. Sick Leave Policy – Authorize the Deputy Executive Director to implement Revised Policy #160 and notify employees for a two period – Human Recourses

Commissioner Rubin moved, and Commissioner Cummings seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

- vii. Tuition Assistance Program Policy – Authorize the Deputy Executive Director to implement Revised Policy #165 and notify employees – Human Recourses

Commissioner Rubin moved, and Commissioner Larson seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

- viii. Fiscal Year Alignment of the MRI Software/Temast License Agreement – Authorize the Deputy Executive Director to purchase a 5-month extension of the Tenmast license for the \$43,062.50 – Information Technology

Commissioner Remarais moved, and Commissioner Rubin seconded the motion to approve this request. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

5. Executive Personnel Administrator's Report

Shawn Burr

The Human Resource Department continues to implement Strategic Plan Goal III of “Supporting RHA’s Employees to Enhance an Organizational Culture of Excellence” by continuing to provide training and continuing to create organizational culture excellence.

Upcoming Trainings June 2020:

Effective Leadership for Managers will be conducted by ENI.

Recruitment Update:

The position of the Director of Public Housing has been filled , the start date was June 22, 2020

Demographic Information:

The demographic information as of June 1, 2020 was present for the following categories: (1) the age of Associates, (2) Associates over 40, (3) Associates Self-Reported Ethnicity, and (4) Associates by gender, (5) in addition we provided some additional analysis of managers.

6. Compliance, Inclusion, and Diversity Officer's Report Cynthia Herriott

Inclusion

- Security Camera Project – This project is on hold while another vendor is selected. With the New York Pandemic Pause, it will be a little while before businesses are in full operation.
- Annual Report- The Compliance Department has completed an Annual Report. It has been posted on the RHA website.
- Senior Strategy – I am working with Lifespan and a medical provider to monitor older residents during the pandemic to check on their well-being. Commissioners Rubin and Cummings are assisting with this Initiative. Melissa Berrien is the staff to assist on this.
- Student Homework Academy – This committee has met several times. The Pandemic impact on schools makes our work even more critical. Simeon Banniooster from the Rochester Area Community Foundation have kept in touch. He has asked to join the committee and work with us on this. It's his belief that Rochester Housing Authority is a key partner in addressing this need.
- COVID Strategy – I am working with the Monroe County Community Strategy Officer to facilitate addressing resident needs around testing and education.
- Resident Needs – Working with the Board of Commissioners to address food shortages and academic support.

Compliance

- **Fraud Investigations**
 - Leasing Operations Repayment agreement payment totals YTD as of May 2020, \$31,337.32 collected. (\$360,219.00 has been collected to-date)
 - Public Housing Repayment agreement totals YTD for Vacated Arrears and Collection Loss as of May 2020: \$7,489.22 collected. A total of \$34,671.89 collected to-date (since 2017)
- **Termination Hearings**
 - Hearings are on hold due to the Pandemic at the direction of state and federal officials. They have directed that no evictions take place.

Operations

- **Case Management -**
 - Program Violation Referrals Outstanding – 1,036 – We have recently filled this position and have a staff member working on addressing violations and getting them up to date.
- **Rochester Housing Charities** – Commissioner Cummings and I serve as RHA's ex-officio representative on the RHC Board of Directors

- I am currently working with RHC to confirm what current debts RHC owes to RHA and ensure they are recorded in the RHC budget.
- **Audit and Review** – CDI continues to work closely with Legal to address areas in need of assessment within RHA. (Executive Session for any requested reporting)
 - Compliance is planning the 2020 Audit Schedule

Public Safety – Please see the Activity Chart for Public Safety. Targeted problem strategy appears to be having an impact.

Current Actions:

Building Security – RHA properties have adopted a protocol of restricted visitation to minimize virus impact. CDC and other signs have been posted. There is to be no loitering in any building lobby. Where possible, chairs have been removed to discourage this. Security has been advised and asked to enforce this directive. There has been no decrease in our security coverage.

We have increased security coverage in towers buildings during peak hours to discourage resident loitering in lobby areas.

Violation letters have been mailed to tenants that didn't comply with the restricted visitation protocol. I sign letters personally as a special Covid-19 strategy response. This appears to be having an impact as I have not had to send repeat letters and this week, I have not received violations.

7. Finance

Sinclair Carrington

Mr. Carrington reported that the actual vs. budget figures and variances for year-to-date through April 2020 for the COCC, Public Housing, and Section 8 income and expenses. The COCC and Public Housing recorded a surplus, while Section 8 recorded a deficit. The Finance Reports show that RHA is in a better financial position than they were last year at this time. This report was discussed at the Finance Committee Meeting, and the Board was satisfied with the report.

Mr. Carrington reported on the COVID-19 CARES Funding income and expenses balances.

8. Public Housing Report

Cynthia Herriott

Interim Public Housing Structure:

It is my pleasure to announce that Amit Sud will be joining our team as the Public Housing Director. He will start at RHA on June 8th.

ACOP revision recommendations:

HUD recently enacted new rules on pets. Our proposed policy is currently being revised for compliance.

Public Housing Matters:

COVID Matters:

- Building Security – RHA properties have adopted a protocol of restricted visitation to minimize the COVID virus impact. Center for Disease Control (CDC) and other notices have been posted. Additionally, all tenants were individually notified. There is to be no loitering in any building lobby until this is rescinded by Governor Cuomo. Where possible, chairs have been removed to discourage this. Security has been advised and asked to enforce this. There has been no decrease in our security coverage. Tenants receive a warning for violating this protocol.
 - Kennedy Tower – Capital Projects have been placed on hold.
 - Residents – Family Self Sufficiency in partnership with Lifespan, Foodlink, United Way and our Resident Council members are delivering food to those seniors in need.
 - Disinfection of the main lobby areas, elevators, door handles is being done daily.
 - Community rooms have been secured.
- Some staff have reported an increase in income loss notices due to the Pandemic. They are trying to reassure our residents
- Grievance hearings have been temporarily placed on hold.
- I am working closely with management to develop a temporary process for serving 14-Day Notices when the court reopens.
- Maintenance and building management have submitted their work plan to me to address vacancies.
- I am working with Public Housing managers to develop a virtual process for showing vacancies.
- Evictions are on hold and it will be at least 120 days until we will be able to bring residents to court for non-payment. In the meantime, I have staff working with tenants to attempt to get them back on track and establish payment agreements where possible.
- The Agency Plan has been presented for Public Comment. After public comment, it will be presented to the board and the JWRC for final review.

Security Matters:

A parking concern was raised for the Lena Gantt complex. Security has been advised and will monitor the situation.

Online Applications:

- APC continues to accept online applications with no reported concerns.

In April, RHA had 11 households move-out, and 43 households move-in. There are 20 RHA units ready to be rented. The Public Housing Occupancy rate for March is 97.37%.

9. Maintenance Report

Mark Plantholt

Chief of Maintenance, Mark Plantholt, reported on Maintenance Special Projects for May 2020. He provided progress reports for the following projects:

- Laundry rooms across RHA
- Hudson Ridge Tower Exterior Community Space Upgrade – Gazebo installed
- Hudson Ridge Tower Main Entry Sidewalk Resurfacing
- Scattered Sites furnace replacements
- Lexington Court Mechanical Replacements
- Administrative Office at 675 W. Main St. upgrades
- Kennedy Tower Generator
- 255 Hamilton St. Rehab.

He reported on the status of regular and emergency work orders.

10. Leasing Operations Report (Section 8)

Jacquetta Harris

Director Harris, Leasing Operations Department, shared utilization and funding information with the Board of Commissioners.

Four thousand applications have been selected to be added to the Housing Choice Voucher Wait List. To date, RHA has reviewed 362 applications from the list to determine if the applicants are eligible for a voucher.

The Leasing Operations' utilization of the voucher's goal is between 95% to 98%; RHA is currently at 93.7%.

The monthly inspection average is 780 - 960. During May 2020, the total number of inspections was 209. In Mid-March RHA stopped performing annual inspections to reduce the person to person contact for the inspectors due to the COVID-19 virus.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) projects are being monitored monthly with financials and project participation. All projects that are projecting a deficit by the end of the grant period RHA has an action plan that will demonstrate correction within the next 60 days.

11. Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Report

Melissa Berrien

Ms. Dudley entered the FSS program on December 1, 2015, with goals of employment, credit restoration, and pre-homeownership. Ms. Dudley started a successful business, Forever Loving Medical Transportation Company. Ms. Dudley improved her credit score by 99 points and purchased a new home with her husband opting out of continued Section 8 assistance. Ms. Dudley is a successful graduate of the FSS program and entitled to receive an estimated \$3,000 in escrow savings.

Ms. Baker entered the FSS program on June 1, 2015, with employment, case (?)management, and credit restoration goals. Ms. Baker has maintained her employment, increasing her earnings by 401%. Ms. Baker improved her credit score by 108 points. Ms. Baker is a successful graduate of the FSS Program and entitled to receive \$15,356.68 in escrow savings

Ms. Harris entered the FSS program on December 1st, 2015, with goals of credit repair, homeownership, and debt management. Ms. Harris's income increased by 218% percent, and she is no longer receiving section 8 assistance. Ms. Harris is a successful graduate and entitled to receive \$3155.44 in escrow savings.

RHA currently has 19 businesses on the RHA Section 3 Registry.

RHA has seven families with anticipated closings and 12 families who have been approved for financing and searching for homes.

12. Planning Committee Report

Shawn Burr

The Planning Committee meeting was held on 6/10/2020. The meeting began with the follow-up items from the previous meeting, of which three have been completed, and one is pending.

Mr. Burr thanked the Board for Action Item approvals and their continued attendance and input at the Committee meetings.

The following projects' statuses were discussed, and pictures shared:

1. Seneca Manor Weatherization Project – we are getting ready to resume work
2. Harriet Tubman Window Replacement – restarted with a COVID-19 safety plan in place
3. Kennedy Tower Hallway and unit Rehab – we are getting ready to resume work

Mr. Burr reported that the current status of the CFP Budgets as of May 31st, 2020 are: 501.17 budget is 100% obligated and 98% expended, and the 501.18 budget is 100% obligated and 47% expended and 501.19 is 7% obligated and 0% expended. RHF Funds grants as of May 31st are: 502.13 is 13% obligated and 13% expended, and 502.14 is 0% obligated and 0% expended.

Mr. Burr reported that our seven Section 32 homeownership homes have had their PNA's completed. Work is being complete to each home to ensure they are ready for homeownership, which includes a new roof on one of the homes. Melissa Berrien's continues to work with other residents who have expressed interest to meet eligibility requirements.

Mr. Burr discussed upcoming projects in various stages of planning and design, along with some of our "pipeline" projects. We continue to meet with management and maintenance to prioritize projects.

Mr. Burr gave a status update for the two RAD projects at Federal St and Parkside. The closing for Parkside has been completed and thanked everyone that help facilitate the process. The Federal St. project is moving forward with the architect and developer partner; they are performing their assigned tasks. A draft developer agreement for this project has been revised and approved by Counsel and the Board. It was signed and executed. The physical needs assessments for the scattered sites that are to be included in the Federal St. conversion and are being completed safely following NYS COVID-19 Safety Guidelines.

13. Commissioner Comments

Board Chair Edwards requested a motion to go into Executive Session for a legal and personnel matter. Commissioner Rubin moved, and Commissioner Remarais seconded, a motion to go into Executive Session at 2:08 PM. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

Board Chair Edwards requested a motion to end Executive Session; Commissioner Larson moved, and Commissioner Remarais seconded, the motion to end the Executive Session at 3:38 PM. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

14. July Regular Board Meeting-

The July Regular Board Meeting of the Rochester Housing Authority Board is scheduled for **Wednesday, July 22, 2020**, at 12:00 PM via Skype and the RHA tv on YouTube.

There being no further Regular Meeting Business to come before the Board, Commissioner Remarais moved, and Commissioner Larson seconded, a motion to end the Board Meeting at 3:39 PM. Commissioner Remarais, Commissioner Rubin, Commissioner Patterson, Commissioner Larson, Commissioner Cummings, and Commissioner Edwards voted yes. The motion was passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Burr,
Secretary to the RHA Board
Deputy Executive Director