



# Claremont Housing Authority

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES Monday January 24, 2022, 1:30 p.m. Zoom & Ball Room, 243 Broad St., Claremont, NH

### Commissioners in Attendance:

Doreen Needham, Chairperson

Mark Chamberlain

Michelle Aiken, Executive Director/Secretary

James Mentillo, Vice Chairperson

Charlene Lovett

- 1. Roll Call, Quorum.** Ms. Needham called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. Roll call was taken; 4 commissioners were present. A quorum was established, and the meeting convened.
- 2. Public Comment** – Eight members of the public/tenants were present. Mr. Corbin Kane started the conversation expressing his anger about allowing drug dealers into the building and why they are still here. Several other tenants spoke out asking what they can do to change this problem. Ms. Aiken advised that they are working with the police to make something happen. Ms. Aiken also advised that there has been no hard proof, but they will eventually get caught and we are hoping in some way we can help. Ms. Lovett asked about a neighborhood watch. Ms. Aiken advised that some tenants have come to her and asked if they could do that and she has given her blessing, this is their home and if someone is doing something that is harmful, it is their right to tell them so. Ms. Lovett asked about having someone from the Police department come and talk to the tenants about what they can do to help. Ms. Aiken will contact the police department and set up a time for a meeting.
- 3. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting November 29, 2021.** Ms. Lovett made a motion to approve the meeting minutes; seconded by Mr. Mentillo. **Motion carried, 4 Ayes.**
- 4. Treasurer's Report:** Ms. Aiken went over the treasurer's report and advised that we seem to be in a good place. We have spent the money we needed to and now we are working off of the operating funds. So, things will be tight for the next couple months prior to the conversion but Ms. Aiken advised we are in a good place to finish. Ms. Lovett asked why the legal fees were so high and Ms. Aiken advised it was from the revisions to the by-laws and also the lawyer is still working on the Bedell case. Ms. Lovett asked if there is any chance for us to recoup some of those fees. Ms. Aiken advised that was the lawyers plan, but she has not heard anything new for a while. Mr. Mentillo made a motion to approve the treasurers report as presented; seconded by Ms. Lovett. **Motion carried, 4Ayes.**
- 5. Executive Director's Report:** Ms. Aiken advised that she has hired a new site manager who will be starting on February 7<sup>th</sup>. Her name is Misty Gratacos and she has a good administrative background and Ms. Aiken believes that she will fit in nicely with staff and be good with the tenants. Everyone is looking forward to meeting her on January 31<sup>st</sup> for the coffee and donuts.

Ms. Aiken advised she been working with our other lawyer for the SVC Kara Sweeney, and she is going to help us with our new lease and all the HUD requirements. Ms. Aiken will have to meet with each tenant again to sign new leases. Ms. Aiken believes at this time there is a possibility of 3 tenants who will be choosing to move. Ms. Aiken will do sign ups in the month of February with all the tenants. The which she would like to have completed for March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Lovett asked about listing in legal if there are any current cases and also advising of any pending evictions.

Ms. Aiken discussed some issues they are having with Cable. The Housing Authority pays almost \$4,000 a month for cable with a bulk account for all 96 apartments. We have divided the cost of the cable with the apartments and it comes to a little less than \$45 per tenant. The main issue we are having is that now people have smart tv's and do not need cable. The issue, then becomes the fact that the Housing Authority still must pay this bill and some tenants don't feel its fair because all they want is wifi access. If the Housing Authority fails to pay the bill then no one gets access whether you have cable or wifi. Comcast has recently started offering internet essentials for people in the building for \$9.99. Ms. Aiken advised that other Housing Authorities have completely got out of the Bulk account and tenants were on there own with getting cable. Then also some Housing Authorities have incorporated the cable into the rent, this is what Ms. Aiken would like to do, add it as an amenity for the building, then it is affordable for everyone.

Ms. Aiken also advised that we are looking into a new IT firm. The current IT firm is not giving us the service that we need. With Covid, we need to have the ability to work from home and have our server cloud based. Ms. Aiken advised that she is suspecting it to be significantly more than the current \$150/month that is charged to us.

Ms. Lovett made a motion to accept the Executive Directors report; seconded by Mr. Chamberlain. **Motion carried 4 Ayes.**

6. **Housing Choice Voucher / Section 8 Program Report** – Ms. Aiken reviewed the HCV report and advised we are at 126 out of 140 vouchers. The Section 8 coordinator did want the Board to know that there are 6 new lease ups since the last meeting, although we have lost 7 to evictions, deaths, etc. Ms. Aiken advised that she has been working with staff on how to get more vouchers but finding apartments is so difficult. Sometimes a little extra help with the applications or giving that extra call is all you need to do and Ms. Aiken has been training staff to try to do these things, even when we are short on time. Ms. Lovett wanted to know how the change in the FMR's is helping. Ms. Aiken advised that it is too soon to tell but it does help especially in the one bedrooms but it would take at least 6 months to tell. Ms. Lovett asked to make sure we add it to the agenda in 6 months. A motion was made to approve the Section 8 report as presented by Ms. Lovett; seconded by Mr. Chamberlain. **Motion carried 4 Ayes.**
7. **Marion L. Phillips Report** – Ms. Aiken reviewed the Marion Phillips report. There was an increase in the past few months in applications and we are at 247. Ms. Aiken advised she even removed a bunch when we had all the vacancies in October, but they have since increased again. Ms. Aiken advised we had one person pass away and have someone else who we believed abandoned their apartment, so we may have some efficiencies becoming available and also a one bedroom and possibly a two bedroom. Ms. Aiken talked about a tenant who has been found to need more assistance than we can give which brought up the Choices for Independence program that we had started to look into. Ms. Lovett suggested looking into it more starting in May. The CFI program could be very beneficial to some of the tenants. Ms. Needham advised that a lot of people could use where she lives also but we need to make sure it is not relied on as assisted living. Ms. Aiken agreed that she would like to be a part of the program and looks forward to working on this as her next project. A motion was made to approve the Marion L. Phillips Report as presented by Mr. Mentillo; seconded by Mr. Chamberlain. **Motion carried 4 Ayes.**
8. **New Business** – HB 1291 and 217. Ms. Lovett advised that the HB 1291 would make it against the law for a landlord to discriminate against renting to someone because they have a voucher. The HB 217 would make it so landlords would have some restrictions on time frames for evictions, such as renovations would be 120 days instead of the normal 30 days. All Board members agreed that these new Bills would be

beneficial to our voucher holders and agreed to have a letter written and signed by the Board Chairperson and the Executive Director. A motion was made to have a letter written up advising of the Boards favor of this new bill by Mr. Mentillo; seconded by Mr. Chamberlain. **Motion carried 4 Ayes.**

- 9. Unfinished Business** – Ms. Lovett asked about the solar monitor in the lobby. Ms. Aiken advised that she has spoken with the solar people on a different subject because she has been receiving bills from a Skyview company charges us for kw used through the solar. Ms. Aiken questioned them, and they advised it was part of the contract and that Eversource’s rates have gone up but provided us a spreadsheet showing our savings of around \$500. After she spoke with them regarding this she did ask them to check into monitor and again today he said he would. Ms. Lovett and Mr. Chamberlain advised they would like to review the contract again as they also don’t remember that.

Ms. Lovett asked about the refrigerators and Ms. Aiken advised that she was told it was a one for one deal and that they were taking 45 refrigerators and giving 45 new efficient refrigerators.

Ms. Lovett asked about the boiler system and Ms. Aiken advised that there is a lawsuit again the PUC which is stopping all the NH SAVES programs from moving forward. Her NH Housing Authorities Board has joined in with supporting the lawsuit and she is guessing no work will be done until that is finished.

Ms. Lovett and Mr. Chamberlain agreed to be a sub-committee working on the Executive Directors contract and review. A motion was made to approve sub-committee by Ms. Needham; seconded by Mr. Mentillo. **Motion carried 4 Ayes.**

Ms. Lovett asked about upcoming trainings and publications for Commissioners and Ms. Aiken advised that at this time we are short of funds for trainings but hopefully after April we can start back up again. Ms. Aiken advised that the Nan McKay trainings are usually a little towards summer and the Commissioners training in Martha’s Vineyard is a great one. Ms. Aiken has a meeting with other directors, and she will ask about resources for Commissioners.

- 10. Adjournment** – A motion was made by Ms. Lovett to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Mr. Mentillo. The meeting was adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Michelle Aiken, Secretary