



Charity Lezama, Chairperson
Benjamin Shallop, Vice Chair
John A. Boris, Treasurer
Kimberley Driscoll, Assistant
Treasurer
Veronica Faustino, Tenant
Representative

Cathy Hoog, Executive Director

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2022
6:00 p.m.**

I. Called Meeting to Order at 6:00

This meeting was held via Zoom Webinar.

II. Roll Call

Present

Kimberley Driscoll
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Absent

Benjamin Shallop

Also Present: Cathy Hoog, Executive Director, Debra Tucker, Assistant Executive Director. Gary Dean, Director of Maintenance, Anne Cameron, Executive Assistant, Jacqueline Guzman, Director of Leased Housing and Maureen Thomas, Director of Public Housing

III. Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

Kimberley Driscoll moved to accept the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on Wednesday, July 13, 2022. John A. Boris seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Ayes

Kimberley Driscoll
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Nays

IV. Tenant/Public Engagement



Shannon Bailey – I am a little bit behind on what we discussed this far because I had the wrong Webinar Link. Can you let me know what was talked about so that I don't ask the same questions over?

Cathy Hoog – You didn't miss much. We basically approved minutes from last meeting. We are going through some of the monthly reports and we have had discussions on vacancies and filling vacancies and using the CHAMP System.

Shannon Bailey – So, you have not gotten to the Community yet?

Cathy Hoog – We did. No one raised their hand until now.

Shannon Bailey – everyone had the wrong Webinar link.

Cathy Hoog – We realize there was an issue so the webinar information sent to the LTOs via email was incorrect and the webinar information sent to the Board via email was incorrect. We apologize for that. The Webinar information that is on our website is correct.

Shannon Bailey – 32 Leefort Terrace – I had spoken to you on Monday in regard to some of the situations that we have had over here at Leefort Terrace. I think it is prudent to bring to the Board at this time. I have spoken to Cathy and Gary about this. I do think we need more social work here at Leefort Terrace. We have some mentally disturbed tenants here. They seem to do well for a little bit and then they seem to go downhill. I do feel like there should be some sort of program at least until the redevelopment is completed to help these certain individuals. One is a blind woman who has developed some issues. She cannot clean as well as other people and she can't get around as well as others. In order to make it safe for her we really need some support for her. We also have some other people here who are in desperate need of continued support and not just checking in on them once in a blue moon. I do feel strongly that we should make more of a commitment and not just at Leefort Terrace but at all of our developments. We need more social workers out their boots on the ground offering help without judgment. That is a big fear of people that live here. We have been marginalized for so long and we have been told that we are the problem and we are the reason why we have rodents and we are the reason why our apartments are messy. When in fact, it isn't our fault. A lot of us have mental problems, physical problems. I think it is time we start addressing that for the future moving forward. That is my main concern and as the LTO President I would be doing an injustice if I didn't speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves or are afraid to speak up for themselves.

Cathy Hoog – Thank you Shannon for your feedback. We are definitely committed to services for folks. The Housing Authority. We have 2 part time resident service

coordinators. We would love to add more. We were just talking with Salem State University and we are looking to form a relationship with the Social Work Program so that we can get social work interns who need to get hours for graduation.

Shannon Bailey – Is there anyway that the LTOs and Board Members could be a part of that conversation because we are the people you would be representing and it may be more beneficial if we were a part of that conversation.

Cathy Hoog – I think the initial conversation had to come from the Housing Authority just in terms of what we were looking to partner around and whether or not it was possible and what would the requirements be and could we fulfil their requirements to have a relationship like this. The initial conversation we need to have with the University. It looks like they are interested and there are a few questions that are being asked and we are going back and forth on this. That is a big possibility that I am excited about. It is a larger number of social work interns that could help us for little to no cost which is great. We could certainly use more hands-on deck. As far as the person you mentioned, we really appreciate you advocating for her. Gary and I did have a chance to hear that from you. We have followed through with her needs. The other thing that has come up is that I have been talking with the Beacon Team and we would like to consider an arrangement where we have a service coordinator start well before the project comes to fruition. It will require some special agreements and we have been talking this through with the team around how that would be laid out. It would make a lot of sense so whoever would be working there in the future could get a head start on meeting folks and working together with people through the process. That is another thing we are exploring along the same theme.

Shannon Bailey – I would prefer if it was done sooner rather than later like 1 to 3 months prior to us moving because the people here are already super, super stressed about the redevelopment. They come to us crying for answers and when we tell them the answers, they don't believe us or they are still scared regardless of how much we try to reassure them that they will not be homeless. As an LTO President there is only so much control that I can do so to speak. I don't mind reaching out to Beacon myself. Maybe it will help or maybe it won't.

Cathy Hoog – Your advocacy has been incredibly helpful all along. Your representation has been incredibly helpful. I think that we have to keep doing what we are doing getting the message out and updating people and reassuring folks. As you know, we have another resident meeting on August 30, 2022 in person where we will be with the development team to review where we are at, where things stand and answer any

questions and to assure people of any concerns that they may have. We will keep going and supporting people through the process. Shannon, you have been amazing in everything that you have been doing for the community there and you have bridged the gap as far as the communication and having a seat at the table. It has been really, really helpful Shannon. Thank you.

Shannon Bailey – You're welcome. I don't see it as anything but doing what I am here to do and advocate for my people. I also wanted to make sure that I advocated for the other people inside the Salem Housing Authority because a lot of the developments do not have LTOs.

Discussion ensued between Cathy Hoog and Shannon Bailey and the Board.

Kimberley Driscoll – Thanks for logging on and for all of the work you are doing to support and make sure accurate information is out with regard to the Beacon Project. Also, advocating for tenants who might need more supportive services. Is it a money challenge relative to getting some additional support services personnel? If so, maybe there is an opportunity to work with the Senior Center, COA, AgeSpan and the City to try and figure that out. We are trying to make sure that we are an age friendly community. We know that these supportive services can be so critical. If that is the challenge, I would be happy to talk offline about ways we may be able to combine resources to provide some additional support.

Cathy Hoog – I would be happy to talk with you. Our relationship with the Council on Aging is paramount. We support one another every day, every week and they are just wonderful to work with. They do a lot with us together.

Discussion ensued.

Don Rivard - 27 Charter Street, Apartment # - I wanted to echo my friend and colleague Shannon Bailey about the need for more social workers in this building multi-lingual social workers for the population that we have here. Thank you for getting the 2nd elevator back in operation. It has been 4 weeks and it has been difficult for people here. I would like to bring up the continued barrier of the door in the community room that remains locked and inaccessible for the people who live here. Meanwhile your employees continue to walk through. I would like to think that there is some way to negotiate some openness to that door especially removing that haunting sign or picture that is in the window that makes us feel bad. Congratulation for getting the towing going again. It has really been helpful in removing illegally parked cars. My friend and neighbor, Paul Carridio would like to say some things about the parking situation.

Paul Carridio – 27 Charter Street – Are we able to call the towing company after 4:00 during the week and after 12 noon on Friday if there is a car that doesn't belong?

Cathy Hoog – yes

Paul Corridio – The bushes where the four spots are across the street, you can barely see the signs.

Cathy Hoog - There is a lot of bamboo that grows over there. We had to get permission to trim those. I think we trimmed them last year didn't we Gary?

Gary Dean – Yes, we did and we got into trouble with the Peabody Essex Museum. They have special plants growing there. We have had a conversation with them and it is on their docket to cut them. You can only cut those specific plants at a certain time of year. They know that the plants are blocking the signs over there. As a matter of fact, the tow company had some issues over there with the signage over there which spots were whose and where they were. I did talk to the landscapers about the signs in our parking lot and they should have opened that up a little bit. We are also talking to our sign company about a different sign. That was all stuff that we talked about at the tenant association meeting not this past meeting but the meeting prior to that. All of the tenants should have received a hand out with all of the information on the Tow Company. The way that tenants can use that.

Don Rivard – We did receive that notice. Thank you for that. We received a number of laptop computers for residents here and we are trying to provide them some training on. Building wide internet would be a nice bonus to have. It will be difficult if we provide the equipment and do the training and if people can't afford the opportunity to get on line. We request again as we have in our Capital Improvement Plan to consider some type of arrangement for building wide internet services.

Cathy Hoog – The training is going to take place in the community room, correct?

Don Rivard – The training will probably be conducted there in the coming months.

Cathy Hoog – We do have internet there that is free for folks at this moment. I am sure you are aware of that now.

Don Rivard – Yes.

Cathy Hoog – I am very excited about that program. I am really eager to hear about how that goes. Will you keep me posted?

Don Rivard – Yes.

Cathy Hoog – Awesome, thank you. Thank you, guys, for the feedback on the towing. It helps us a lot.

Don Rivard – thanks for doing it.

V. **Communications**

- Updated Waitlist
- SHA Department Reports (Move In, Move Out, State and Federal, Modernization Report, Voucher Report, Resident Service Coordinators Reports and Completed Work Orders for Month of August 2022)

Kimberley Driscoll – Wondering how we are doing with respect to turnover of units. I know there were some struggles earlier in the year due to the CHAMP System really not internally for us. I wanted to get a perspective from you if it is moving a little bit smoother. I know there is a CHAMP Committee working with DHCD to try and address challenges that Housing Authorities are facing and the insights on that would be welcome too.

Cathy Hoog - Sure, absolutely. I feel like the Housing Authority has reached this golden era with CHAMP. We have nailed down what it takes to stay on top of it. We really figured out how to work with this system. What it comes down to is how many lists you pull and how often you pull them and having a full-time person constantly working on this and honing in on the organization of the data. I feel like we are in a place where we have really got this down. I was just talking with Lilly Rojas today our housing specialist and she is in a good place and we are in a good place. We are making a tremendous amount of offer. We are at an all time low for our vacancies. The past six weeks we have had 12 offers go out. You can see in your package all of the move-ins that have taken place. We are moving right along with this list. We are feeling really good about it. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of applications have been pulled over the last six months. Since March around 1,000 applications pulled.

Kimberley Driscoll – That CHAMP Systems feels like a lot of work in terms of management. In terms of the turn over of units, is that a 1,2, 3-month process or how able are we able to turn a unit over as we are working with a system that is unwieldy?

Cathy Hoog – It depends on the condition of the Unit. Some units from a maintenance standpoint are turned over relatively quickly. Getting an actual qualified, verified applicant that is the part that is a little bit dicey. We are at a point now that we have shortened that gap. It was significant. It was taking us anywhere from 4 to 6 months getting people into a unit. We have decreased that timeframe to 3 to 4 months. Still too

long. It used to take us about 30 days to 60 days. It is getting better and I think since we honed in on how many applications we need to pull. It is more than we can handle but we are handling it the best that we can. We are seeing progress. I do not if you have anything else you want to say about it Gary. Maureen is not with us tonight. She over see the Public Housing Department and Lilly Rojas but I know from a maintenance standpoint we are still full steam ahead and working diligently on these vacancies. We got slammed and it is hard to catch up when you're dealing with over housed moves and transfers together with regular vacancies. I know Gary is feeling better than he has felt in 2 years.

Gary Dean – When we started here the vacancies were high here and then when we took over that over housed list and started transferring people – it all happened at a great time because it allowed us to spend more time in those units when COVID hit. Luis and I were talking this morning about where we are with vacancies. We are getting back to the place we were pre-covid. We are starting to move those things down. I think you will see this year that we are back to a place where we are back functioning less than 30 days to turn over a unit maintenance wise and then you will see Lilly and Maureen who are doing a great job filling the units. It has been a process but I feel like we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

Cathy Hoog – The other thing to keep in mind is that we are pulling standard applicants consistently and that hasn't happened in a very long time. That is a true testament to how many applications we are pulling to stay on top of it to weed out all of the people that claim higher priorities but don't qualify for it. There are a certain percentage that do qualify for it but there is a very large percentage that don't. In order to stay on top of that and pull local, standard applicants we have to pull 150 to 200 applications every two weeks. It is a tremendous amount of work.

Kimberley Driscoll – It feels like there is an administrative component what you were just talking about the pulling of the application in the CHAMP System and then there is an operational component. I appreciate it. I also know what crisis level we are at with respect to people who need housing. For me as a Board Member, I just want to make sure we are doing everything we can to decrease that timeframe. The best way for us to understand that is to track it. If there is a way to track it. I would love to see that data. Not to create work but to put us in a position to make sure we are doing everything we can. If we have to have conversations with DHCD about the clunkiness of CHAMP to help them better understand what their role could be in helping us. On the operational side, is this about the short-term help or other assets we should be putting in to get people housed sooner. It feels like that would be a worthwhile endeavor if that is the issue. I know it is a little bit complex but I just want to keep pushing. The number of calls we get

from people who just need housing and that are on the list, the faster we can turn over these units the more we are able to serve people who are in need right now.

Discussion ensued amongst the Board and Cathy Hoog about a way to track the information to help the Board better understand the process and/or is there a pattern.

Veronica Faustino – I am wondering if there is a way to by-pass some of the requirements on emergency priority. I am wondering if that would be helpful to house people faster.

Cathy Hoog – We cannot. It is a requirement. When the housing bill came out in 2014 , it laid out the requirements for CHAMP. One of the requirements was for people to self-claim priority. People can claim emergency status but whether they qualify or not is one of the biggest barriers that we are looking to change the language on but would require us to have a legislative change. The State wants to be very prepared before we go and make that argument with a lot of data to justify that change. It is not as easy as you would think it would be. All housing authorities across the state feel very frustrated by that language. The biggest barrier is the self-claim. The way it used to be was that you had to provide proof before you got that priority. Now people can claim it without proof. Then they get their place on the waiting list until they get their package and have to prove emergency status and about 70% can't prove it.

Veronica Faustino – Thank you. That clarifies a lot.

VI. Reports of the Committees

There were no reports of the committees.

VII. Report of the Executive Director

- See attached report of the Executive Director – August 2022

VIII. Unfinished Business

- There was no unfinished business.

IX. Recommendations of the Chairman

X. Report of the Treasurer

Bills and Transfers

Cathy Hoog presented the Bills and Transfers to the Board of Directors.

Kimberley Driscoll moved to approve the bills and transfers for the period July 1, 2022 through July 31, 2022 as presented. John A. Boris seconded the motion and the **roll call** vote was as follows:

Ayes

Kimberley Driscoll
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Nays

Balance Sheet and Statements of Revenues and Expenses

Cathy Hoog presented the Balance Sheet and Statements of Revenues and Expenses to the Board of Directors.

Kimberley Driscoll moved to accept the Balance Sheet and Statements of Revenues and Expenses prepared by Rick Fenton of Fenton, Ewald & Associates, P.C. for nine (9) months ending June 30, 2022. John A. Boris seconded the motion and the **roll call** vote is as follows:

Ayes

Kimberley Driscoll
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Nays

XI. New Business

Board Consideration of Biannual Rent Re-Certifications for State Public Housing

Cathy Hoog discussed and explained to the Board of Directors the Biannual Rent Re-certification for State Public Housing.

Cathy Hoog – Board Members we have had a conversation for a little while internally and we got some feedback from quite a few residents who are on fixed incomes asking why they have to go through the recertification process every single year. It is a bit of a pain and they have to generate some documentation and have a meeting and sign paper work and nothing really changes much because they are on fixed income. There is a process for consideration to adopt a Bi-Annual Rent Recertification for folks that are on a fixed income such as social security or SSDI. It is basically a waiver process. The

housing authority would have to submit a waiver request to DHCD to go through with this. There are a few steps that need to be taken prior to submitting a waiver request to DHCD. This first one would be a vote from the Board to consider this step. If there is approval to consider a Bi-Annual Rent Recertification, we would then go about a process where we would provide the residents about information on this, what it means and how it would be helpful and give folks an opportunity to send in feedback and ask questions for at least a period of 30 days and after that we would bring the feedback to the Board from the residents and bring a board vote leaning toward this policy and a waiver request and then we would submit to DHCD. Then if DHCD approves it based on all of the steps we took then we can implement a bi-annual rent recertification process for folks. It is convenient for residents. It does save some staff time. We are always doing rent recertification because a lot of residents are not on fixed income so there isn't a whole lot of difference for staff.

John A. Boris moved to consider the Biannual Rent Re-certifications for State Public Housing. Veronica Faustino seconded the motion and the **roll call** vote was as follows:

Ayes

Nays

Kimberley Driscoll

Charity Lezama

John A. Boris

Veronica Faustino

Salem Housing Authority's Fair Housing Marketing Plan

Cathy Hoog discussed with the Board of Directors and explain to them the Fair Housing Marketing Plan.

Cathy Hoog – This is a policy that DHCD is requiring all housing authorities across the state to adopt in an effort to ensure that we are making efforts to market housing options available to all ethnicities. The plan is laid out in such a way that the housing authority would compare existing census data to that of the area census data and anything that is seen as significantly lower in terms of a particular category of ethnicity we have to ensure that we are going to make efforts to market to that particular ethnicity to encourage folks to apply for housing so that there is a fair and equitable opportunity across the board that we are making efforts to market and recruit folks to come apply for housing in our area. This is a policy that is very well written and it is pretty clear. We got a template from DHCD to utilize. We when through this and vetted it through our attorneys. It is a solid policy and it makes total sense. We need to have it in order to be in compliance. When we go through our Performance Management Review there are quite a few policies that are required. This is a newer one that is expected to be adopted.

John A. Boris moved to approve Salem Housing Authority's Fair Housing Marketing Plan as presented. Veronica Faustino seconded the motion and the **roll call** vote was as follows:

Ayes

Kimberley Driscoll
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Nays

Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART)- Alternative On-Bill Credit Sales Agreement

Cathy Hoog discussed with the Board of Directors the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) Alternative On-Bill Credit Sales Agreement.

Cathy Hoog – This is an exciting opportunity. I have been looking for a program like this for a couple of years now. They are not readily available as they used to be. This is basically an opportunity for the Housing Authority to sign a deal with AMP for a SMART Solar Credit Program. Essentially the way this works is that there is a solar garden off in Western Massachusetts. The name of the town is Wilbraham. It is out near Springfield, MA. We have an opportunity to buy solar energy at .90 on the dollar. It is a 10% saving and those saving get applied to our electricity bills for our state programs so that is 22 accounts. In going through this process, we look at all of our accounts and our monthly expenses across the board for electricity and with a 10% savings we are looking at around \$62,000.00 a year in savings with a deal like this. If you multiply this by 20 years, that is upwards of 1.2 million dollars in savings. It is a deal that makes sense. A lot of housing authorities are doing this. I actually participated in a Solar Garden Program when I was, the Director of North Andover Housing Authority and I can attest to how lucrative a program it is. When DHCD puts out their budget guidelines When the State puts out their budget guidelines, they determine whether or not the housing authority can keep all of those savings. For the last few years, they determined that we can. They can at some point can say we can keep half or a different percentage but as of lately they have been allowing housing authorities to keep all of the savings for reserves. The reason the contract is 20 years is because they are all 20 years because when these programs design their solar gardens, they get financing for them and they require people signing up for the credits to have a 20 year sign on in order to get the financing. You can't find a solar credit deal for less than a 20-year commitment. It takes a little while for something like this to come in to construction so they often do present a bonus often to

encourage and be an incentive for housing authorities to sign on. They initially presented us with one and I negotiated a little bit back and forth and I was able to settle with them on a \$30,000.00 sign on bonus for the Housing Authority. We will get \$15,000.00 up front if we sign his contract and the remaining \$15,000.00 upon completion of the construction and the opening of the solar garden. \$30,000.00 in free money plus \$62,000.00 per year in savings for 20 years. It is a pretty sweet deal and it is exciting because we are using solar power to our advantage so it is environmentally smart and it makes sense. Just as a reminder you may recall that Salem Housing Authority volunteered to issue an RFP for an attorney so that we could have a standard solar contract for all housing authorities to use across the state. We volunteered to issue the RFP so that we could receive the responses and select an attorney to develop a standardized contract for deals like this so there is a standardized contract that is available to all housing authorities. We were able to participate and help that process along. The contract that is being used has been vetted through attorneys. We also have a specialized attorney in our group who helps us deal with energy contracts and our cell phone towers and that firm has also triple checked to make sure that everything is in order for us so it is solid and we are confident that it is a great deal and that we should move forward with this.

Veronica Faustino -- What percentage of the savings will go back to the residents in order for them to pay or put towards their electric bills.

Cathy Hoog -- It depends on what the Budget Guidelines are annually. So DHCD lays out how we are able to use those savings and whether or not we can keep them all or they have to be reabsorbed into the state budget. It depends on an annual basis. DHCD determines how that will work.

Veronica Faustino -- So there is no way for us to solidify this ahead of time before we vote on this?

Cathy Hoog -- That piece would be a separate process. This contract would entail the commitment to purchase solar credit from a solar garden. In terms of how we could benefit residents that pay their own utilities that would be a separate discussion that we would have to have with DHCD about the budget and budget guidelines and whether or not we could use some of the savings toward that end.

Veronica Faustino -- okay.

Kimberley Driscoll -- I am grateful that we are looking at these innovative ways to save money and also bring clean energy into the housing authority. A few years ago, we were

trying to look into solar panel on the roof and it never really came together. I think this gives us an opportunity to support clean energy. If there is a win win wherein, we are able to assist tenants too, that would be great. I look at this as every dollar the housing authority is saving, when we are budgeting it is an opportunity for us to look at how we can put those resources to use to benefit the residents. I do think it was a valid question and I am glad it was raised and definitely want to hear back from DHCD if any of that is a possibility.

Kimberley Driscoll moved to approve Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART)-Alternative On-Bill Credit Sales Agreement between Salem Housing Authority and AMP Community Solar US, Inc. with a 20 year term (after Commercial Operations Date as per Schedule 2: Commercial Term) as presented and authorize Cathy Hoog to execute said Agreement. John A. Boris seconded the motion and the **roll call** vote was as follows:

Ayes

Nays

Kimberley Driscoll
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

XII. Other Business/Late Communications

Cathy Hoog – We have a tenant association office at Leefort Terrace that we have offered to the LTO. It is a unit that we took offline so that they could have space. The housing authority has an obligation to provide some space and we are happy to do that. We had a unit at Leefort that made sense. They have been using this unit for quite awhile now. I want to say maybe 6 or 8 months. The waiver has expired. We need to take a board vote approve keeping this unit off line for the purposes of a tenant association office. We didn't realize that the waiver was expiring until yesterday so we didn't get it on the agenda. I am hoping that the Board Members wouldn't mind taking a vote on extending the use of this unit for the Leefort Terrace Tenant Organization.

Charity Lezama – do you a term in mind?

Cathy Hoog – We typically ask for a year. I don't think we need to specify that in the vote. We just need to approve taking it offline for purpose of using it for the Leefort Terrace Tenants Organization. I don't think we are going to have to keep coming back for a vote. It is just that we never took a formal vote on this so we need to do that.

John A. Boris moves to approve taking one unit off line at Leefort Terrace for use by the Leefort Terrace Tenants Organization for its office. Kimberley Driscoll seconds the motion and the **roll call** vote is as follows:

Ayes

Kimberley Driscoll
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Nays

XIII. Adjournment

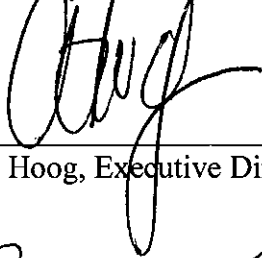
Kimberley Driscoll moved that the Board adjourn the Regular Meeting of August 10, 2022 at 7:01 p.m. John A. Boris seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Ayes

Kimberley Driscoll
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Nays

Respectfully Submitted,



Cathy Hoog, Executive Director



Anne M. Cameron, Executive Assistant