



Charity Lezama, Chairman  
Benjamin Shallop, Vice Chair  
John A. Boris, Treasurer  
Kimberly Driscoll, Assistant Treasurer  
Veronica Faustino, Tenant Representative  
Cathy Hoog, Executive Director

**MINUTES OF THE  
SPECIAL MEETING  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2023  
6:00 p.m.**

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**I. Called Meeting to Order at 6:00 p.m.**

**II. Roll Call**

Present

Benjamin Shallop  
Charity Lezama  
John A. Boris  
Veronica Faustino

Absent

Also Present: Cathy Hoog, Executive Director, Gary Dean, Director of Maintenance, Anne Cameron, Executive Assistant, and Maureen Thomas, Director of Public Housing

**III. Tenant/Public Engagement**

**IV. Recommendations of the Chairperson**

Discussions on tenant engagement, existing data, and methods for enhancing further engagement and data collection.

Charity Lezama – Thanks everyone for making the time for an extra meeting this month to talk about tenant engagement. This topic is always coming up in our Board Meetings. I think it is great that we finally came to together to discuss the following:

- How we engage the community to create a positive, outlined plan to move forward
- Purpose of the meeting is to engage with the not only the Board but the LTOs, Resident Service Coordinators and any additional residents that will be joining the meeting on the topic of tenant engagement within the housing authority
- The meeting is intended to create open and positive discussion regarding tenant engagement
- Cathy and her team have done a great job expanding services, building relationships and prioritizing this. There is always room for improvement.



- Expectations – building a bridge to where everyone feels heard and laying out the foundation for an ongoing process moving forward
- Format will be a little different in that we are going to invite everyone in to have an open conversation about when tenant engagement looks like moving forward
- Please remain on topic – we are here tonight to talk about tenant engagement and that we stay forward focused sharing ideas for us as a community as we move forward
- Hope to achieve 3 goals tonight: 1) appoint tenant engagement committee, 2) give LTOs and participants from the community an opportunity to comment on what they believe tenant engagement is and 3) set up our next meeting – whether it be just the tenant engagement committee or just the Board as a whole

Benjamin Shallop – Thought on procedure – Shall we let first time participants speak first before people that have already spoken?

Veronica Faustino – I think that is a great idea.

Gene Collins – Pioneer Terrace- We already have state regulations that outlines participation. Are you circumventing the state regulation?

Charity Lezama – No, we are not.

Gene Collins – Why are we not using the State Regulation for tenant engagement?

Charity Lezama – We are trying to create a board committee that will enhance or supplement anything that is already in place.

Shannon Bailey – 32 Leefort Terrace – Commented as follows:

- What public engagement means to me:
- A connection between the housing authority and the tenants
- From beginning there has been a huge disconnect between tenants and management
- I credit Cathy with how much more engagement there has been since she was hired
- I do see changes and would like to recommend a few changes
- Quarterly meetings with Property Managers and the tenants at the properties they management get to know each other and talk about problems and come up with solutions as a team and will bridge gap and make tenants feel less anxious and less scared of the housing authority
- At quarterly meetings have the appropriate translators there and note taker, LTO need not be present for that
- Conduct a survey when the recertification process begins.

- What does the Board think of the above ideas?
- Will stress having interpreters be present.

Charity Lezama – thank you Shannon. To keep on schedule, I will ask that each person take 3 minutes. Great ideas Shannon. Appreciate your time. Thank you.

Sue Kirby – 45 St. Peter Street – Commented as follows:

- State has a format or regulations about tenant participation.
- Tenant Engagement and Tenant Participation can be quite different.
- We can engage between tenants and staff in a million different ways
- Tenant Participation is asking for specific ways for tenants to have a voice in decision making

Sue proceeded to read the regulations about local tenant organizations (760 CMR. 6.00)

- Almost half of the tenants in the Salem Housing Authority are represented by an LTO - It is a way of contact, it is a way to reach people and have them speak and not be afraid
- Having and LTO is hard work to pull of this together.
- If there is going to be a group, I think they should help build more tenant organizations.
- I would like to see Rainbow Terrace given some resources -- Rainbow Terrace is the biggest development, its family and their different

Charity Lezama – Thank you Sue. I appreciate you bringing up that there is a difference between tenant engagement and tenant participation. What you read from the regulations, I am hearing that it is tied to us forming any type of committee and they are aligned in that there is a way for the Board to be involved through the LTOs and not forming this committee. Am I understanding that correctly? The Board doesn't necessarily have to form a committee with residents, etc. but just work more closely with the LTOs.

Sue Kirby – yes, they could be.

Charity Lezama – thanks for your time, Sue.

Benjamin Shallop – I want to be clear that there is no intention to undermine the legitimacy or participation of the LTOs. We want to encourage more LTOs to organize. I want to be certain that the purpose of why we wanted to start having these conversations was to improve our engagement with the LTOs. If there is a byproduct out of that tenants start organize then I think that is a positive. I want to make sure that we are clear about the intentions that we have coming into this, which is to improve relations with the LTOs.

Sue Kirby – this committee or this look at tenant engagement came out of the November 2022 Board Meeting. It has to do with taking the I.TOs seriously through the leaders who put a lot of time, energy work and training into that. Our opinions need to be taken more seriously.

Charity Lezama – Thank you Sue. From my perspective, the reasoning we called this meeting and starting this work is more tied to the feedback that we heard on the Management Agreement with Marblehead. I appreciate what you are saying in that you want to recognize and honor the LTOs.

Don Rivard – 27 Charter Street – President of the Charter Street Tenants Association – I had a statement prepared but the others have covered what I had planned to say.

- The regulations are obligated to solicit engagement from the association leaders as representative of the tenants from the respective organizations
- Includes planning events like this and we should have been involved in the conversation.
- This should cover every format not just online seminar formats.
- Would like the housing authority to return to the open meetings as soon as possible and recognize tenants leaders in these meetings following questions and answer throughout the entire meeting not just at the designated tenant public engagement section of meeting

Thank you.

Charity Lezama – thanks Don.

Gene Collins – Pioneer Terrace – Commented as follows:

- Tonight's conversation is encouraging to a positive side of tenant engagement
- Encouraging to hear that the board is going to take a look at the state regulations and please use as a guideline
- Participants who spoke tonight all spoke round the guidelines that we already have
- Guidelines specify quarterly meetings; we have monthly meetings organized by the Executive Director and are lucky to have monthly meetings and not quarterly meetings
- It is encouraging that the Chair recognizes that there are regulations.
- Be respectful of each other.
- All are eager to put forth positive programs to help our tenants.

Charity Lezama – thank you Gene. I appreciate that.

Gene Collins – thank you for the opportunity.

Benjamin Shallop – We are having conversations that go beyond soliciting tenants' input. We want more substantive feedback. I liked Shannon's idea of regularly putting out surveys. It is a good starting point to work with the LTOs and came up with some basic measurements and got that out jointly with the LTOs and then reviewed that at a quarterly meeting with property managers and then later at a board meeting. Good start to formalizing that and then taking the next step beyond that.

- Periodically do a survey and have some standard questions. Each time we put a survey out tweak it a bit.

I am open to any thoughts but this is what I would like to get out of this meeting. Some type of plan like that.

Gene Collins – Ben, we put out a survey on a regular basis for the tenants at Pioneer Terrace. We have a mechanism and would be happy to share that with you. It has worked in terms of getting opinion from the residents.

Charity Lezama – thank you Gene, Ben. I agree. I have had conversations with the LTOs around data. It is important to know that there is a lot of data that we already collect around tenant engagement. We have a lot of tenant engagement data that is tracked by all of our staff at the housing authority that is part of annual reporting. I know that the one for 2022 has not been completed yet but they are in the process of completing it. I looked at 2021 prior to this meeting and it puts forth a lot of information about what the service coordinator have been able to do and through their work but also other things. I believe there needs to be a better way of getting tenant feedback. The past surveys that we have used haven't always been successful. It is very difficult to get people to respond to surveys. I like Shannon's idea about including it with the recertification process.

Cathy Hoog – I think Shannon's idea is a great idea. Sometime the amount of paperwork can be overwhelming. It is a great opportunity for us to see if we can encourage tenants to give us some feedback anonymously.

Veronica Faustino -- I think it is a great idea what several people have suggested in terms of the surveys. I am wondering if there is a google form or some type of online option for people to submit. Could that be an additional option? Might be a good idea.

Cathy Hoog – Agreed. It could be an option on the paper survey – “ if you would like to submit on line go to.....” I think it is a great idea for those folks who can do that.

Lovita Johnson – What are the mechanisms to do something about the surveys? What is done in regards to the surveys in terms of when you have the ideas back from folks? When is your mechanism to address the data from the surveys? What do you do to make the data come to fruition?

Charity Lezama – that is a great point, thank you.

Benjamin Shallop – it would depend on what exactly we are asking in the survey to make it come to fruition. I think the point is to use these more as a guide.

Lovita Johnson – Once you get your answer as to what the majority of people might want -- what is your mechanism that you do....do you make a change or do you just want to know what they think? If you just want to know what people think, that is fine but what is the purpose of the survey? What do you do to make these things happen?

Charity Lezama – I appreciate that and I think it is something we should consider as we move forward. We haven't hit the benchmark for the surveys to be valid. I think it is always important to send feedback to the community when we take surveys. Being able to communicate back out and then if they are any action steps applied.

Lovita Johnson – From the tenants' point of view, if nothing gets done we are going to get to a point why bother responding.

Cathy Hoog – it is a great point, Lovita. I think once we develop a survey and begin issuing it with the recertifications, we need to make a commitment to track the data on a monthly basis and explore the data and see what kind of trends there are and see what kind of responses we are getting, what people are thinking and what people are sharing with us and as Charity mentioned forming action steps as a result. I do think we need to track the data on a monthly basis. We will have an opportunity to evaluate on a monthly basis and stay on top of that and share that information.

Shannon Bailey – I want to clarify something about my ideas. I don't believe that my suggestions are about minimizing what the LTOs do. I do agree with Sue that we need a lot more LTOs. I have discussed with Veronica about me going to other housing developments. I have the will to go out to some other housing development and talk to the residents about organizing and if you need help, there are resources. I volunteered myself to both Veronica and Gene both with their support to help me when they can. I believe that LTOs are very, very important.

Don Rivard – I am a member of the Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Tenants Association. Our mission is to go out and organize.

Kathlyn Valianti – I am a Resident Service Coordinator for both Salem Housing Authority and Beverly Housing Authority. My position is limited as I am part-time. I did a family survey at the Beverly Housing Authority and I sent out over 150 surveys. 21 surveys were returned to me and I followed up on every single response. I either emailed or called by telephone each one. I would be happy to do surveys and follow up. I have not had any success in getting out there and doing follow up because tenants have asked me not to. I have asked quite a few tenants to look into LTOs. That is not my role as Resident Service Coordinator but I think it would be extremely impactful and important for those residents.

Charity Lezama -- Thank you so much.

Sue Kirby – I wanted to follow up on Don’s comment about Massachusetts Union of Public Housing Tenants Association and their role to help tenants start organizing LTOs. There are some very good resources in Salem to do that. We call a meeting twice a year and get a really good turnout. We ask what their concerns are and what they would like us to work on to improve and then they vote. We focus on the concerns that get the most votes. It is hard work but it is qualitatively different, hearing and focusing on. The Resident Service Coordinators will get to know people but getting to know people at the depth of the other people who are living in the same developments that they are is qualitative.

Charity Lezama -- thanks Sue. I appreciate that perspective.

Gene Collins – I would like to echo what Sue said in terms of organization. I would also like to commend the Chair for opening it up and letting us speak. A lot of the things that are being said are things that we have all been trying to do over the last couple of years and quite frankly the state regulations outlined everything we talked about this evening. If people were to invest some time in reading the regulation it would go a long way. I want to thank the Chair again for being open enough to appreciate the communication and we are here willing to work with the Board to make some changes that tenants are looking forward to. If we could make an effort this year to get involved with the Annual Plan so that we can have some concrete involvements and improvements in the conditions that we have. Thank you.

Charity Lezama – I want to recognize that it is not just me that wants to have this conversation. It is all of the Board Members who are here tonight. This forum is different than our regular monthly board meeting which allows us to have a more robust conversation. I think it was needed and I am certainly valuing and appreciating all of the feedback that we are hearing. Thanks to all of you.

Ami Stockellburg – I am on the tenant’s association with Sue. Ami commented as follows:

- In person meetings are very important
- Recognize one another face to face as we speak
- All the tenant’s organization are working hard to get organizations together and be there for the tenants that are in our buildings
- Getting to know the people in your building is important and what their concerns are and what they think is important

Charity Lezama – thank you Ami. I don’t think that we under value and put more importance on that relationship building not only on the work that we do as a housing authority but as a community.. Thank you for that Ami.

Veronica Faustino – Someone along the way mentioned in-person meetings. In-person meetings is preferable, especially for the tenants. In my opinion, it would be helpful to have the meetings as close to the developments as possible. We should be utilizing the community spaces that some of the developments have and having the Board Meetings there as well as. We need to be embedded in the Community as much as possible so that people feel like they are included and so that they are included. The Canal Street office space is great and I know that we need it. I would not want to see us get hung up at having the board meetings there every month were getting there every month may be difficult for many residents.

Are we going to have something more formal like this type of meeting tonight?

Charity Lezama – I think there is an opportunity for us to continue the conversation. This has been really helpful and I have enjoyed hearing from everyone. There is a lot that I will have to think back and process in terms of how I walked in here and what I heard is different than what I was expecting. I would like to freshen up on the roles that everyone has brought up and make sure that I am fully understanding them. I think there might be an opportunity for us to do this more often at the top of our normal Board Meetings.

Veronica Faustino – I think that would be great so that we can set up a detailed plan going forward where we can tackle tenant participation. I never thought of the 2 as being different so thank you Sue for raising that.

Benjamin Shallop – Two things –



- Meeting in person – we should think about following the Covid Act Now and if the hospitalization rate in the area goes above 14 per 100,000 then we go into more restrictive modes. If the hospitalization rate drops below that then we loosen our restrictions. In Massachusetts we are over 14 per 100,000 hospitalizations last I checked at the beginning of the week, we may want to develop a mechanism for that again. We monitor that and then determine if we can do in-person meeting based on the area hospitalization rate. It has been successful using that metric.

Charity Lezama- I would like some actionable steps from this meeting Charity Lezama- I think there is lots to consider about the in-person meetings, not just Covid but the opportunity we are providing by moving our meetings. I also want to try and continue to have virtual options. That is conversation that we would continue and start building on. I know it has been on Cathy's mind to have hybrid meetings if everything gets set up which it looks like it will.

- In terms of wrapping up this meeting, I want to thank everyone for keeping it positive and forward focused. I learned a lot and appreciated all of the perspectives that we heard from all the tenants and the LTOs. I will make sure that I read the regulations that everyone was talking about and make sure that I am familiar with them. I was able to join the December meetings with the LTOs and I will also join the February LTO meetings which is the second Monday of each month. If any other Board Members want to sit at the LTO monthly meetings there is an opportunity for that as well. Shannon Bailey – 32 Leefort Terrace – Is it possible for the property managers to start joining the LTOs' monthly meetings?

Cathy Hoog – It is possible. Just as a reminder, the property managers are at various different sites every week. We tried to pick sites that were more heavily populated and closer to other developments. If the LTOs can encourage folks to go down and see their property managers when they are at their satellite hour times during the week. That would be great. We are always looking for tenants to come down to and engage with their property managers, which is an important goal of ours.

Shannon Bailey – We have a new property manager and it would be great if we could meet Joshua. Thank you.

Gene Collins -- commented as follows:

- Actions steps that you mentioned are quite appropriate.
- Actions steps would come from primarily from the contacts with the LTOs in

terms of developing action steps based upon activities that are generated by the tenants

- As you read through the regulations you will develop an understanding of the process and concepts that have already been articulated

Benjamin Shallop – Can we make tenant engagement an agenda item to review?

Charity Lezama – yes.

## V. Adjournment

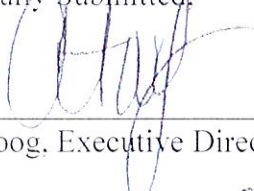
Charity Lezama moved that the Board adjourn the special meeting of Thursday, January 19, 2023 at 7:02 p.m. Benjamin Shallop seconded the motion and the roll call vote was as follows:

Ayes

Benjamin Shallop  
Charity Lezama  
John A. Boris  
Veronica Faustino

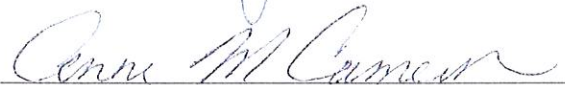
Nays

Respectfully Submitted,



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Cathy Hoog, Executive Director



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Anne M. Cameron, Executive Assistant