

Cathy Hoog, Executive Director

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**MINUTES OF THE
SPECIAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2023
6:00 p.m.**

I. Called Meeting to Order at 6:20 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Present

Benjamin Shallop
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Absent

(Vacant Seat)

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)

Benjamin Shallop moved to accept the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on Wednesday, February 8, 2023. John A. Boris seconded the motion and the roll call vote was as follows:

Ayes

Benjamin Shallop
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Nays

IV. Tenant/Public Engagement

Charity Lezama – This is a reminder that anyone speaking will speak in a kind and professional manner and please try and keep it to 3 minutes so that we can stay on an accurate timeline. We will open it up to people who are joining the meeting virtually.



Sue Kirby – 205 Bridge Street, Morency Manor

I would like to speak under Section 8 where it says “Tenant Engagement – Monthly Follow-Up

Charity Lezama – We have a shorter agenda this evening and I am happy to hear your comments at either option. I think in the future we should clarify what each option will be used for.

Gene Collins – 4 Pioneer Terrace commented on how the Tenant/Public Engagement Section IV. was supposed to be used for as opposed to how the “Tenant Engagement – Monthly Follow-Up, Section VIII was to be used for.

Charity Lezama – I think we have a set Section on our agenda in which anyone can come in and comment, give feedback or ask questions about items that are on the agenda. I think the flow of the meeting works best if we keep those comments, questions and feedback under Section IV Tenant/Public Engagement. Tonight, we will follow that process. I am open to feedback from our tenant representatives and tenants about how we can engage differently. The structure of the meeting is set so that we have tenant and any community engagement and any items on the agenda under this block.

Gene Collins – 4 Pioneer Terrace -I agree with what you said.

Charity Lezama – Maybe I misunderstood something but I was not under the impression that it was not another opportunity for communication. For me, it was an opportunity for us as a Board to follow upon the tenant engagement work that we are all doing together not another tenant engagement moment.

Sue Kirby -- You said the tenant engagement that we are all working on together so I assume that that means we can engage at that time.

Charity Lezama – there is an opportunity for us to clarify that and set some guidelines as to what will be discussed under Section VIII Tenant Engagement – Monthly Follow-Up.

Sue Kirby – I think we should be able to weigh in on certain things that will be discussed under Section VIII.

Charity Lezama – As a Board we can discuss what is the best structure for our Board Meetings. We are going to do that now.

Sue Kirby – You do not have any specific things that you are raising under Section VIII.

Charity Lezama – I do not.

Gene Collins – I would like to follow up on what Sue Kirby said and I thought that under Section VIII it would allow us to follow up on some of the things that were said during the course of the meeting in addition to commenting under Tenant/Public Engagement, Section IV of the agenda.

Charity Lezama - What I am hearing from both of you is that there is an interest in having more dialogue throughout the meeting whether they are follow-up questions or based off of things the Board has said.

Gene Collins – Yes.

Sue Kirby – 205 Bridge Street, Morency Manor

What I was going to bring up is to follow-up on the last meeting on Tenant Engagement and we met, me you and Veronica and came up with some bullet points. I would like to take this opportunity and let the Board know what those things were. Sue read the list to the Board.

Charity Lezama – So those are all the things we discussed when we met Sue? I wonder if there is an opportunity for me to share with the Board an Executive Chair Report ahead of time so that the Board can have it in their Board Packets that this is the work we have done and any updates and give them an opportunity to discuss it during this time. I am happy to circle back with you on that and if there is a better way we can communicate that too. That was a great discussion. Thank you, Veronica, that was a great discussion.

Don Rivard – 27 Charter Street, Unit 601, President of the Tenant Association – We were not aware of this that you had moved to Canal Street for your meetings but we applaud your effort to do that. This shows the value of having the dual capacity of being with you tonight by Zoom. Thank you for that. You look terrific but all I can see is my own name but the picture we had on the screen prior to that looks terrific. I want to say that I support what the other tenant leaders have stated to you about participation in meetings both during the tenant engagement period and throughout the meetings. Thank you very much.

Veronica Faustino – In terms of the surveys, I am so happy to hear that that is happening. Is that being done alongside the LTOs? So, the LTOs will be working with the housing authority.

Cathy Hoog – Yes, we mentioned that at our meeting this week we have a draft that is almost ready to present to the LTO so that we can work together and get some feedback to figure out if it has everything we need and take additional suggestions. I want to get something that we can work with and pull together and go from there.

Sue Kirby – We are doing a survey as well.

Cathy Hoog – It is very helpful when you do that. Thank you.

Gene Collins -- As we are talking about surveys, we also do surveys. We would like to provide feedback on the survey created. How will that work?

Charity Lezama – Cathy explained how that will work. Cathy and the RSCs are in the process of creating a survey now and will then share the draft with the LTOs for feedback and collaboration. As President, your LTO will receive a copy of that and have the opportunity to give feedback.

Cathy Hoog – The thought was that we would distribute them to the tenant/residents at time of recertification.

V. Report of the Executive Director

Cathy Hoog reviewed in detail her Executive Director's Report and summarized the month for the Board of Directors.

Veronica Faustino – Are the Leefort Terrace meetings still via Zoom?

Cathy Hoog – It is all in person this time. We were looking to try to have at least some meeting feel more private for the residents and there will be opportunities for public participation but I think given the sensitive nature of all of this and the fact that people have a lot of concerns and questions we felt like something in person would feel a little bit better for folks. Throughout this process it has been a combination of in person and Zoom and onsite, outside on the grass. We are now utilizing the space that the property managers had their office in. The property managers have been moved. That was all part of the master plan and creating more space and having Section 8 come here. The Leefort Terrace LTO is utilizing that space for meetings. HOU will be using the space as well.

Veronica Faustino – There is a lot of misinformation out there.

Cathy Hoog – There has been from the start. It is unfortunately part of the process of a big redevelopment project. There is a lot of different groups in the City that are in favor and in support and there a lot of groups that are opposed and they have the right to have opinions either way. As a result, there is a lot of information that gets shared and crosses paths and gets misconstrued. We have tried our very best to have meetings along the way consistently to make sure that we expel rumors and give people facts and make sure everyone is aware of what is actually happening but nonetheless it is a very stressful

process for people. I am fully committed and the team is fully committed to make sure each and every person is supported through this process.

Charity Lezama – I appreciate the summary of all the work that is being done and I want to recognize the staff behind the summary and all of the work and some of these numbers are outstanding. Kudos to Gary and his team for all of their work.

Benjamin Shallop – On the voucher report regarding the number of days people are out looking with Section 8 Vouchers looking to fill a space there – I see there are 3 people that have been looking for 120 days. Is there a point where these people just drop off and give up and do we track that?

Jacqueline Guzman, Director of Leased Housing – after 4 months of looking, they can ask for an extension if they can prove they have been actively looking. Eventually we will have to rescind the voucher if they do not utilize it within 6 months.

Benjamin Shallop – okay.

Cathy Hoog – How often does that happen Jacqui?

Jacqui Guzman – out of the three of them, two have been rescinded because they didn't ask for an information review so those vouchers have been rescinded.

Cathy Hoog – there is a process in place if they really want to make this happen they can file a request for an informal review and it can be extended beyond that. It is a balancing act between assisting folks and if they can show that they are actively looking that is understandable but the balancing act comes in when we have to answer to the regulations.

Benjamin Shallop – what I want to know more about is how the lack of rental properties in Salem is impacting people. If people are giving up because they cannot find an apartment after 3 months, 4 months that is something that I would like to track over time. If it is taking people longer to find an apartment over time because there is less rental housing available in Salem or a more demand for it but I don't know if that is necessarily true. Is that something we can track every month going forward?

Cathy Hoog – How many have been rescinded?

Benjamin Shallop – How many are out there, how many have been rescinded and how long it is taking? If we could get a report like this every month. This is a long term conversation but I think I would like to start to point to things and say. This is what is going on with folks in Salem.

Cathy Hoog – yes, we can do that. There is definitely a lot of value in the data because it speaks to the real state of affairs in our city and what the reality is for folks that have

subsidies and can't apply for it because they can't find a place. People do have the opportunity to go outside of Salem. With a mobile voucher they can go anywhere they want.

Benjamin Shallop – Is there any way we can look at this on a regional level?

Jacqui Guzman – We know where all our vouchers are. We have a lot of vouchers in Lynn and Peabody. If you want that information in the report, we can include that.

Benjamin Shallop – Yes, that would be helpful too. Moving forward, I want to keep looking at this. We need to see this data and make some stronger arguments and how difficult it is to find housing here in Salem.

Veronica Faustino – Are the Resident Service Coordinators used to help find housing?

Cathy Hoog – Unfortunately, they are not federally funded.

Veronica Faustino – Are there opportunities to connect with Salem State Students in the Social Work Program to help with that search?

Cathy Hoog – I actually had a conversation yesterday with the Dean of the School of Nursing asking if she could connect me with the School of Social Work in an effort to figure out whether we could have some sort of cycling intern program because I think it could be a win win depending on what their requirements are. We could place them in different programs. It is really difficult right now to make connections with service providers. There is long wait times and so if there is a way we can supplement that through a masters intern program, I am all for it. I just made that connection yesterday. We are in talks. Depending on what the requirements are it is a possibility.

Veronica Faustino – What are the state regulations in terms of rescinding that voucher after six months?

Cathy Hoog – The voucher regulations lie with HUD. It is federally funded.

Jacqui Guzman – It is 60 days plus 2 thirty-day extensions. We have been going beyond that if you can prove that you have been actively looking we have been very flexible. Some of the vouchers have been out for 7 or 8 months but they have not provided a history that they have been out looking. One did not even ask for an extension 3 months ago.

Veronica Faustino -so if someone was searching for a year and could prove that they have been actively searching is that something that the SHA would be flexible on.

Jacqui Guzman -- I don't know about a year. We refer them to AffordableHousing.com which is a website where a lot of Section 8 Landlords who are looking for Section 8 tenants post their rental units. We refer them to all of the websites that would be helpful to them.

Discussion occurred between SHA Staff and the Board of Directors.

VI. Communications

- MASS NAHRO Newsletter – January and February 2023
- Waitlist
- SHA Department Reports (Move In, Move Out, State and Federal, CHAMP Report, Modernization Report, Voucher Report, Resident Service Coordinator Reports and Completed Work Orders for Month of February 2023)
- Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) Score Report dated 02/16/2023

VII. Reports of the Committees

There were no reports of the Committees.

VIII. Unfinished Business

Tenant Engagement – Monthly Follow-Up

Charity Lezama –I heard very clearly what the understanding of this being on the agenda was and that it was another opportunity for folks to speak. I will open this up to you Sue and Gene tonight but going forward I want to figure out what is the best way for us to communicate to the Board and to the Community regarding the work that we are doing with the LTOs about tenant engagement between board meetings. I will take the first meeting we had Sue and put it out there and then I will work with Cathy and Anne relative to the best place to put it on our agenda.

Discussion ensued between the LTO Presidents and the Board on this matter.

Charity Lezama – We do need to proceed with Board Business. However, I do what to respect Tenant/Public Engagement Comment and the work that we are doing outside of the Board Meeting surrounding tenant engagement. It will be just finding the right place for that and the right avenue for communicating that out. To be determined but I did hear everything that was said tonight.

Gene Collins – I appreciate you taking the time to try and separate the two issues and understand the two concepts. I really appreciate that thought process.

Charity Lezama – I hear what you are saying and we all want to find the appropriate way to and the appropriate place to be able to have that conversation. I will reach out to you. There is an opportunity to maintain our current format and flow and then provided the tenants and community to provide feedback surrounding items that are on the agenda and then also have the opportunity to have larger conversations or dialogue on things that are happening, there are other ways to accomplish that other than at the open meeting. I will circle back to you.

Benjamin Shallop – My vision for this is that we would have a portion of the meeting where we specifically dedicate to tenant engagement, for example: reviewing the survey that is being put out or reviewing the results of a survey that gets put out. Something very specific to that. I do think there is value in opening it up to the LTOs for that specific topic during each portion of the meeting. I would like to keep focused as best as possible with just outreach and engagement with tenants otherwise my fear is that it will just get drowned out by other concerns rather than be prioritized.

Veronica Faustino – When it comes to the Board voting on items that would impact tenants’ lives and their space it is important that we hear what their needs are before making a vote. I know that there is a Massachusetts Regulation 760. . . . I do not know what the details are. I can get that for you. I believe that that falls under that. That all Salem Housing Authority tenants/residents should be able to weigh in on things that affect their lives. I think if the Board of Commissioners don’t have the time to go to meetings to hear them out, then I think they are doing a disservice by serving on the Board of Commissioners.

IX. Recommendations of the Chair

There were no recommendations of the Chair.

X. Report of the Treasurer

Bills and Transfers

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

Veronica Faustino moved to approve the bills and transfers for the period February 1, 2023 through February 28, 2023 as presented. Benjamin Shallop seconded the motion and the **roll call** vote was as follows:

Ayes

Benjamin Shallop
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Nays

Balance Sheet and Statements of Revenues and Expenses

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

Veronica Faustino moved to accept the Balance Sheet and Statements of Revenues and Expenses prepared by Fenton, Ewald & Associates, P.C. for three (3) months ending January 31, 2023. John A. Boris seconded the motion and the **roll call** vote was as follows:

Ayes

Benjamin Shallop
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Nays

XI. New Business

There was no new business.

XII. Other Business/Late Communications

Sue Kirby – On March 31, 2023 there is a Legislative Meeting in Boston and the head of the housing committee for that area will be speaking. I can provide some more information on this.

Cathy Hoog – There will be a career fair at 136 Canal Street from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on March 30, 2023. This is being held by Career Center on the Go.

Veronica Faustino – I have been doing -digging and appreciate your team's effort in creating the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. I have some information here that I would like to pass along to the Board Members. It is centered around Individual Development Accounts that helps tenants in State Public Housing to accumulate enough money so that they can own a home and get out of the poverty trap. There are certain programs that work for State Public Housing and certain ones that don't. The Family Self-Sufficiency Program does not apply to tenants in state public housing. So I just wanted to share that and ask if that could be put on an agenda at some point so that we could discuss it further or Cathy could look into it and see if this is something we could do here in Salem.

Cathy Hoog – Yes, I can do that. Do you have an extra copy with you?
Veronica Faustino – Yes.

Charity Lezama – Thank you Veronica.

XIII. Adjournment

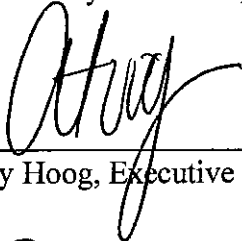
John A. Boris moved that the Board adjourn the Special Meeting of Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at 7:12 p.m. Benjamin Shallop seconded the motion and the vote was as follows:

Ayes

Nays

Benjamin Shallop
Charity Lezama
John A. Boris
Veronica Faustino

Respectfully Submitted,



Cathy Hoog, Executive Director



Anne M. Cameron, Executive Assistant