

AMHERST HOUSING AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday July 31, 2023 @ 1:00 PM

**PRESENT:** Michael Burkart, Chair, David Williams via Zoom, Treasurer, Nancy Schroeder, Marc Barrette, James Linfield.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Pamela Rogers, Executive Director; Erin Cassidy, Director of Leased Housing; Pam Creek, Office Administrator.

**OTHER PRESENT:** Kevin Collins, who was filming the meeting, and Rise Smythe-Freed.

The Meeting was called to order at 1:22 PM.

- **AGENDA ADOPTION/CHANGES:**

Upon a motion by M. Burkart, seconded by N. Schroeder to accept the agenda as presented. Vote 5-0

- **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No Public Comments

- **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Upon a motion by M. Burkart, seconded by N. Schroeder to approve the June 2023 Minutes. Brief discussion on wording between commissioners. After discussion, the minutes were accepted as written. Vote 5-0.

- **FINANCIALS**

**WARRANT REPORT – June 1, 2023, to June 30, 2023**

Upon motion by M. Burkart, seconded by M. Barrette, the warrant report for \$538,322.25 was approved. Page One, under Eversource for \$107.78, was explained that maintenance is doing unit repairs. Equipment using up more electricity. Page Two under Fletcher Sewer & Drains, Inc. clogged sink, that after our maintenance tried everything, a much bigger snake was needed, and the contractor was called. Page Four, water rates seemed high on a few of the properties. Pamela Rogers was going to investigate to make sure they are being checked out. Page Five was a lost invoice that was paid from October. Page Seven, Hackworth Systems for Horn Strobes, this was an RA (Reasonable Accommodations) changing out the fire alarm system in the apartment for visual Fire alarm system. Vote 5-0.

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

Upon a motion by M. Burkart, seconded by N. Schroeder, the treasurer's report for June 30, 2023, for \$ 1,473,624.22 be accepted as presented. A brief discussion on maintenance costs being up. Many repairs as well as a large turnover in apartments. Through our Section 8 program there was a large mass mailing to people. We are hoping to recoup some of our postage. Vote 5-0.

- **QUARTERLY REPORTS**

The Quarterly Operating Statement for Program 400-1 for Fiscal Year ending 06/30/2023. Upon a motion by M. Burkart, seconded by N. Schroeder was accepted. Discussion followed. Vote 5-0.

The Quarterly Operating Statement for Program 689-1 for Fiscal Year ending 06/30/2023. Upon a motion by M. Burkart, seconded by N. Schroeder was accepted as presented. Vote 5-0.

The Quarterly Operating Statement for Program MRVP for Fiscal Year ending 06/30/2023. Upon a motion by M. Burkart, seconded by N. Schroeder was accepted as presented. Vote 5-0.

The Quarterly Operating Statement for Program 400-9 for Fiscal Year ending 06/30/2023. Upon a motion by M. Burkart, seconded by N. Schroeder was accepted as presented. Vote 5-0.

The Quarterly Consolidated Modernization Cost Report for period ending 06/30/2023. Upon a motion by M. Burkart, seconded by N. Schroeder was accepted as presented. Vote 5-0.

- **PROPERTY MANAGEMENT REPORTS**

There are 14 vacancies; we are trying to lease people up. We have had a couple of our tenants move to our section 8 program from our 667 programs. Their names have made it to the top. The CHAMP process is being revisited for improvements to help the vetting process. EOHLC is trying to have an outside company work and verify the priority on applications to help speed up the process.

The TAR (Tenants Accounts Receivable) Report is up from last month. We are working with tenants to get them caught up. Through applying for raft, as well as setting up payment plans to stop any fees and to spread out the back rent over several months. The last resort is getting a court agreement to pay the rent back.

- **LEASED MANAGEMENT REPORTS**

The Pic Report for June 30, 2023, and the Voucher Management System reports were presented as information to the board. Shows that the department is holding its own. Lease ups would like to be higher but the market and what HUD (Housing and Urban Development) allows have a wide gap making it harder to lease up tenants. Reasonable rents are extremely hard to find in the market. Sometimes after all the demanding work to get a person approved and the apartment approved, clients will decide at the last minute that the apartment is not what they want and back out.

- **FACILITIES**

Pamela Rogers updated the board on two projects. The JN siding will start soon. The AW elevator repair project has been delayed again. The parts ordered have been delayed, and we are waiting for a new delivery date. We have been assured by the contractor that the elevator is okay to use. Also, for the AW ceiling project, we have more money to get more hallways completed.

The work order report shows maintenance is quite busy working on repairs and the vacancies. They completed 135 work orders from 6/1/2023 to 7/24/2023 when the report was published.

- **BOARD CORRESPONDENCE**

Discussion of the Management Agreement (s)- Up first was the agreement between AHA and BHA. Pamela Rogers let the commissioners know that Belchertown Commissioners would like to pursue a 5-year management contract with Amherst. The Belchertown Commissioners are happy with the relationship they have with management and the direction that the BHA is going in. The Amherst Commissioners are all in favor with continuing with a management agreement and instructed the Executive Director to draw up the management agreement for five years for the board to review and approve. The discussion for a management agreement between AHA and HHA was more involved. Commissioner Nancy Schroeder currently does not want to continue with an agreement. She cited as one reason the tenant satisfaction survey and does not feel that staff have enough time for our Amherst tenants that need help. She feels that Hadley takes up too much time with the problems that they are having. Commissioner Marc Barrette, main concern is the treatment of the staff when they are working in the Hadley Office. Marc Barrette as a pro to continuing the agreement did point out from a business standpoint that it does make sense financially to continue to manage Hadley under the agreement. Commissioner David Williams feels that if the Executive Director is willing to continue with another management agreement with Hadley that he respects her opinion and will support her recommendations. After further discussion, many of the commissioners felt that moving forward with a management agreement is the path to follow and instructed the Executive Director to draw up a standard management agreement between AHA and HHA for the commissioners to review and vote on.

- **COMMISSIONERS DISCUSSION**

Schiffer Fund Discussion- Nancy Schroeder would like to see if perhaps there is a way to use some of the money in this fund to open more housing for low-income tenants. Currently Amherst has nowhere near enough affordable housing. Pamela Rogers would love to buy a piece of land for Amherst Housing to create and manage low-income affordable apartments. Nancy Schroeder spoke about perhaps investing with contractors that are already developing low income building and becoming partners with them. This fund is currently waiting to be used for the proper project. The subject of regionalization came up during this discussion and the fact the perhaps the State is pushing to have this within the next 10 years.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey Discussion- Discussion between commissioners on the surveys from 2016 to 2022. Are tenants happy with the services that Amherst Housing supplies compared to the state and other small housing authorities? Part of the discussion was that Tenants in general are not as happy as they were pre covid. Also, how much is driven by not the staff towards the tenants but, the tenants themselves being unhappy with their current situation living in public housing because they are not happy in general it is reflected in the answers, they give to survey questions. Another point made is that the way questions are presented can influence the answer given. The

business aspect of running the housing authority is more in the fore front today than years back. Some issues are out of the control of the housing authority. Amherst has a large homeless population, and they gain access to our secure building. here have been more cameras, locked bathrooms, and trying to educate our tenants not to let people into the building you do not know.

Discussion if the Commissioners want to meet with the Hadley Commissioners to discuss the management agreement. It was agreed that Michael Burkart, Chair, would contact the Hadley Chair, David Moskin, to set up a meeting.

**ADJOURN**

Upon a motion by M. Burkart, seconded by M. Barrette to adjourn the Regular meeting at 3:00 PM.

**NEXT MONTHLY REGULAR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING: Monday August 28, 2023, at 1:00 PM.**

