



Sarasota Housing Authority (SHA)  
269 South Osprey Avenue  
Sarasota, Florida 34236

Regular Board Meeting  
McCown Towers Board Room  
January 28, 2026  
4:30 P.M.

I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Vice Chair Colón called the Regular Meeting of the Sarasota Housing Authority Board of Commissioners to order at 4:40 pm.

II. **INVOCATION**

III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

IV. **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Chair Ernestine Taylor (Zoom), Vice Chair John Colón, Commissioner Jack Meredith, Commissioner Philip DiMaria Jr. and Commissioner Carolyn Mason

Commissioners Not Present: Commissioner Nicole Roman (Excused) and Commissioner David Morgan (Excused)

Invited Attendees: Attorney Rhonda Stringer/Attorney Ric Gilmore, Joe Chambers, Jake Zunamon, Melissa Ehrhardt (Community Adaptation Program Coordinator, Red Cross) and Bianca Selket (Owner, Art On Fire, LLC)

SHA Personnel: William Russell, Ken Waters, Rachel Rios, Silvia Jones, Marie Smith, Tiffany Bambeneck, Brian Croke, Annette Gentile, Viktoriya Coblentz, Slavica Uzunic, Michelle Stears and Andrea Keddell

V. **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

A. SHA Regular Board Meeting – December 10, 2025

- Vice Chair Colón put up the minutes from the December 10, 2025, Regular Board Meeting for acceptance.
- Commissioner DiMaria made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Meredith seconded the motion.
  - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

VI. **ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA**

A. SHA Board Agenda – January 28, 2026

- Vice Chair Colón put up the agenda for the January 28, 2026, Board Meeting for acceptance.
- Commissioner DiMaria made a motion to accept the agenda. Commissioner Mason seconded the motion.
  - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

VII. **SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

A. Red Cross / Community Fridge (Michelle Stears, SHA's Director of Resident Services, Melissa Ehrhardt, Red Cross Community Adaptation Program & Bianca Selket, Art On Fire, LLC)

- Mr. Russell introduced Michelle Stears, SHA's Director of Resident Services, to provide the background on SHA's work and programs with the Red Cross as part of the continued schedule of presentation series on SHA's community partnerships.

- Ms. Stears provided information about how fortunate SHA is to have so many valuable partners that provide such worthwhile programs for SHA residents. Ms. Stears then introduced Melissa Ehrhardt (Community Adaptation Program Coordinator, Red Cross) and Bianca Selket (Owner, Art On Fire, LLC) who provided the background of the most recent Community Fridge collaboration and presented a video on the project. The fridge will be open 24/7 for the local community to give and receive free food/groceries. Discussion took place on how to get the word out to the community to stock the fridge. Commissioner Mason suggested writing up a notice and advertising in the local Tempo News and Commissioner Colón suggested the local online Observer.
- B. SHA Team Member(s) of the Quarter (Reception/Front Line Team)
- Mr. Russell recognized the SHA Reception/Front Line Team: Rachel Rios – Receptionist, HCV/Section 8, Silvia Jones – Administrative Clerk, Public Housing/SHFC Housing, Marie Smith – Receptionist, Orange Ave Public Housing/SHFC Housing and Tiffany Bambeneck – Property Clerk, Public Housing/McCown Tower-Annex for their outstanding service to our residents.
  - All were given a certificate and gift card in appreciation of their efforts, and a commemorative photo was taken with their direct supervisors.
- C. SHA FSS Report (Ken Waters, COO/Deputy Director)
- Mr. Russell explained that FSS reports had been discussed at the board’s most recent Board Retreat. Mr. Waters went through an online presentation providing a full overview of SHA’s Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program. It was explained that the program assists SHA families, who choose to participate, to move towards economic independence, in goal setting/career planning and to gain access to community-based supportive services. Homeownership is a main goal of many of the participants. Currently there are 33 families participating in the program. The goal is to increase participation by SHA families and is open to Public Housing and Section 8 participants. The program has been active since 1998.
  - Commissioner Taylor addressed the board and shared her experience in completing this program and that it was a positive experience to assist her in becoming financially independent/stable.
- D. General Counsel Updates (Attorney Ric Gilmore)
- Attorney Gilmore asked to amend the agenda to allow for several General Counsel updates:
    1. Attorney Gilmore’s partner in the law firm, Bernice Saxon, has been seriously ill and will most likely not be returning to work. In conjunction with this, he reported that Saxon Gilmore has been acquired by a larger firm, DarrowEverett LLP. The merger will allow for increased capabilities and the staff previously/currently serving the Sarasota Housing Authority will be remaining in that capacity and Attorney Gilmore will take over as managing partner of the Tampa office. Sarasota Housing Authority has the option to continue under the new merger/acquisition or exit out of the contract under the 30-day cancellation clause.

2. Attorney Gilmore also reported that one of his other housing authority contracts have changed their meeting frequency and that Attorney Gilmore will not have more availability to attend SHA Board meetings in-person if SHA desires this.
  3. Attorney Gilmore reported that Commissioner DiMaria has completed and submitted the Voting Conflict Form and it is on record.
- Commissioner Mason made a motion to continue with Attorney Gilmore and former Saxon Gilmore staff, now DarrowEverett LLP, as SHA's General Counsel. Commissioner DiMaria seconded the motion.
    - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.
- E. City Commission Liaison Update
- None.
- F. County Commission Liaison Update
- None.

### **VIII. PUBLIC PRESENTATION**

- A. Ms. Valerie Buchand, Resident Council Member from Janie's Garden, reported that:
- She's received concerns from Bertha Mitchell residents and inquired if this property is just being brought to code or if there are plans to demolish in the future?
    - Mr. Russell responded during the meeting that he believes the confusion stems from the fact that the Bertha Mitchell property will eventually be converted to a Section 8/Voucher property, but that it's not being redeveloped. It's just moving to a different subsidy funding source. Current residents will have the choice of whether they would like to remain at the property or move.
  - Ms. Buchand also reported that she's discovered, and reported to Mr. Russell, new information on the Joanie O'Haver eviction and she'd like to see her re-housed, pending this new information being investigated.
  - Ms. Buchand reported that she'd also gone through the FSS program discussed earlier in the meeting and at one time had her own landscaping business.

### **IX. RESOLUTIONS – ACCEPTED BY CONSENT**

- A. Res 26-01: Approval of Corrective Action Plan FY 2025 Audit
- Commissioner Mason made a motion to approve Resolution A. 26-01. Commissioner Meredith seconded the motion.
    - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

### **X. OLD BUSINESS**

- A. Development Updates / Redevelopment Report
- McCown New Tower Parking Garage / Public Parking Option
- Mr. Zunamon reported they had a productive meeting with the City, Bond Council and Attorneys on whether public parking is a feasible option for this project. The County Board, however, did not award any of the \$7 million in CDBG-DR funds to fund this project, even though SHA's project had the highest score from county staff. So, there is still the question of feasibility for any additional parking, given that there is a large funding gap.

- Mr. Zunamon reported on options of either do 4 parking decks with the possibility of adding another deck at a later date or ask the City to bond \$12 million instead of \$8 million. Getting the City funding would be the only way to get housing piece of the project completed. All the Commissioner concurred that these options sounded like good solutions.
- Mr. Zunamon also expressed that the development team is taking into consideration all of the residents' concerns that have been expressed and will keep them in mind when working on the next steps of the project. More meetings will be held to keep the concerns about accessibility, walkability and security...etc. at the forefront of the discussion.

B. President/CEO Evaluation Results-Compensation Determination

- Attorney Gilmore confirmed that all the Commissioners received a copy of the Evaluation Compilation from their evaluations. He pointed out that Mr. Russell received a score of 4.28 out of 5.00, which is an excellent score. So, the Board now must determine what this score translates to with respect to compensation.
- Commissioner Meredith made a motion to award Mr. Russell a 2.5% salary increase, retroactive to the beginning of the last fiscal year as well as a project-based performance incentive equal to 2% of the Developers Fee only upon receipt of the Sarasota Housing Authority's receipt of the Developers Fee payment, not before. This incentive will apply solely to applicable development projects and will be contingent upon actual payments received by SHA. Commissioner Mason seconded the motion.
- Discussion took place on the incentive payments and Commissioner Colón received some clarification on how much the incentives may actually run utilizing real figures based on the last development deals, Lofts II and Cypress II. For Cypress II, SHA received \$421,395 and for Lofts II, SHA received \$414,000 in developer fees at closing and each development took approximately 2 to 3 years from inception to lease up to complete. So, with the new incentive, Mr. Russell would receive 2% of these figures.
  - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

**XI. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Jefferson Center Apartments

- Mr. Russell reported Smith & Henzy have approached SHA on a partnership deal where an application would be submitted with Florida Housing Finance Corp to complete major renovations to the Jefferson Center plus an additional 53 units and SHA would administer 147 project-based vouchers and receive the administrative fees plus the additional 53 new voucher from SHA's portfolio. In exchange for that, SHA would receive 20% of the developer fee, 20% of the cash flow and 20% of the ownership. Mr. Russell may not want to have the housing authority be part of the ownership, because it could present liabilities down the road, but he wanted to bring this before the board to see if there was any interest from the board for him to pursue this and bring something more finalized back to the board.
- A site visit is being set up in February to walk the property.
- The Board was in favor of exploring the options of this project.

**XII. PROGRAM UPDATES – ACCEPTED BY CONSENT**

- A. Monthly Financial Statements
  - B. Board Committee Meeting Minutes
  - C. Housing Choice Voucher Report
  - D. Housing Management Reports
  - E. Capital Improvement Report
  - F. Resident Services Monthly Report
  - G. Resident Advisory Board/Sarasota Housing Authority Agency-Wide Resident Council (SHAARC) Board Report (*if Submitted*)
- 

- Commissioner Meredith made a motion to accept the Program Updates Consent Agenda. Commissioner Mason seconded the motion.
  - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

**XIII. COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS / COMMENTS**

- A. Commissioner Mason announced that she's having a surgery in February and will be unable to attend meetings that month. All wished her well.
- B. Commissioner Taylor thanked Commissioner Colón for chairing the meeting.

**XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

The Sarasota Housing Authority Board of Commissioners meeting was adjourned at 6:20 pm.