



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

Board Meeting
McCown Towers Board Room
May 22, 2024
4:30 P.M.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Jack Meredith called the regular meeting of the Sarasota Housing Authority Board of Commissioners to order at 4:33 pm.
- II. **INVOCATION**
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- IV. **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Chair Jack Meredith, Vice Chair Ernestine Taylor, Commissioner John Colón (in at 4:43 pm), Commissioner Duane Finger, Commissioner Turquoise Dillard, Commissioner Carolyn Mason and Commissioner David Morgan
Commissioners Not Present: All Present
General Attendees: Vice Mayor Jen Ahearn-Koch and Attorney Ric Gilmore
SHA Personnel: William Russell and Andrea Keddell
- V. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - A. SHA Regular Board Meeting – March 27, 2024
 - Chair Meredith put up the minutes from the March 27, 2024, Regular Board Meeting for approval.
 - Commissioner Mason made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Finger seconded the motion.
 - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously. Commissioners Morgan voted Present.
- VI. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
 - A. SHA Regular Board Agenda – May 22, 2024
 - Chair Meredith put up the agenda from the May 22, 2024, Regular Board Meeting for approval.
 - Commissioner Finger made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Mason seconded the motion.
 - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.
- VII. **SPECIAL PRESENTATION**
 - A. None
- VIII. **PUBLIC PRESENTATION**
 - A. Ms. Agnes Kirkland, from McCown Tower shared that they do not have a working laundry washing machine in this building and that the snack and soda machines are not working either. She also reported that trash is not being thrown out in the proper locations and that there was bulk trash thrown out in the lobby container.

- B. Ms. Doris Mays, from the Bertha Mitchell development, readdressed the challenges she's faced with relocation to a new unit (during Christmas) that is not accessible. Ms. Mays provided a physician's note for reasonable accommodation. She is requesting a proper (3-bedroom), handicapped unit that has a kitchen with enough room for her to move around in. She states her current unit's kitchen is so small she can barely turn around in it and she also cannot fit into the bathroom area(s). She further reported there is currently a tub in the unit and she needs a walk in shower.
- C. Ms. Valerie Buchand, from Janie's Garden shared she does not believe SHA has included the SHAARC report in the last two board packets. She also pointed out that the financials are not in the board packet and that the board is voting on items that are not in the packet. Ms. Buchand repeated her request for the relocation plan submitted and approved by HUD. Ms. Buchand reiterated that the residents are not receiving written responses to their public comments at the board meeting(s). Ms. Buchand states the council would like the zoom link reinstated so residents and council members, and their advocate, can be at the meeting if they can't be there in person. Ms. Buchand further stated that in some cases the minutes from the committee meetings do not have the important information that their advocate says at the meetings.
- It was stated that, although the board packet did have the responses from the last board meeting's Public Presentations, the residents themselves had only been responded to verbally and did not receive their responses in writing.
- D. Ms. Tremisha Goodman, from the Courts shared that the communication about the relocation has not been good. Ms. Goodman questioned why the property manager, Helen Blanc, was let go and that Ms. Blanc was her "go to" person and a big help to the tenants. Ms. Goodman went on to say that it's a hassle to get things done with the Section 8 staff where they can only meet if they have an appointment and where they're told that email is the preferred method of communication but that this is not the case because no one ever responds to their email or phone messages to get an appointment.
- Attorney Gilmore re-explained how the Public Presentation portion of the meeting works and that all the speakers should expect to receive a written response and that that response(s) will also be part of the next board packet. This allows the agency an opportunity to research what has been presented to them and provide a proper response.
- E. Ms. Judith Campbell, from the Annex shared that her neighbor above her, in 308, let his kitchen sink overflow into her unit. She said it took a week for maintenance to come to her unit to check out the condition. She also has paint chipping on her ceiling – but it is not related to the water intrusion. Ms. Campbell also claims this same neighbor is harassing her and has even entered her unit without her permission.

- F. Ms. Latasha Graves, moved from the Courts development to the Bertha Mitchell development due to a mold issue that was not her fault and states that she was told by the previous Property Manager (Helen) that most of the furniture wasn't salvageable due to the mold and that she should leave it behind. She is requesting reimbursement for the loss of her belongings during the move. This is her 2nd attempt to get this taken care of.
- G. Ms. Dominique Brown, a former SHFC resident stated she was forced to move because her voucher was expiring so she ended up porting to Manatee and now lives in Parish. She's upset that she had to move out of Sarasota. Ms. Brown also stated that during the move she was scammed (by Imitation Homes) out of her \$2,500 security deposit through a scam on the GoSection8.com website that SHA referred her to use. She said SHA's Landlord Liaison never called her back and that she has spoken to Ken who said they'd reimburse her the funds. She believes SHA is in the process of reimbursing her but that it hasn't gotten proper sign off yet and it's been 90 days now.
- H. Mr. Stacy Smith, a prospective Port-In candidate from the Houston Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, ported to DC but couldn't find a place so he decided to try to port back to Sarasota. He was formerly a VASH voucher holder, but Houston converted it to a normal HCV. He reports having difficulty navigating the system and that he is running out of time on his voucher to find a place to live. He is asking SHA to help him get the Houston Housing Authority to make the administrative correction to switch it back to a VASH voucher. He is suggesting that there be a designated contact at HUD to assist with porting issues, as he is finding it very difficult to get assistance regarding issues with the port-in/port-out process. He is also suggesting the creation of a metrics system on the website to indicate housing difficulties in specific areas for locating housing.

IX. RESOLUTIONS – ACCEPTED BY CONSENT

A. Res 24-12: HCV Admin Plan Amendment

- Commissioner Morgan made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda Resolution 24-12. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion.
 - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

X. OLD BUSINESS

A. Giving Challenge Outcome

- Mr. Russell reported that the giving challenge was a great success this year and raised a little over \$12,000 (with the Patterson Foundation match) and that funds will go to assisting underprivileged children to shop with Sarasota Police officers at this annual event.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Preference for victims of Domestic Violence

- Mr. Russell put up for discussion the idea of creating a preference for housing victims of domestic violence.

- There was discussion on the possibility of the proposed preference, with referrals being facilitated through established agencies like Spark. There could also be considerations for distinguishing between current residents and new referrals when applying this preference. The potential role of the police department and/or victims' advocates in this matter was discussed.
- Commissioner Morgan brought up the implications of inadvertently creating a local preference. Commissioner Meredith suggested that Mr. Russell draft a proposal to bring back to the board. Attorney Gilmore added that it may be a good idea to consult with Commissioner Morgan regarding the local preference issue with regards to the domestic violence preference and then bring it back to the board.

XII. PROGRAM UPDATES – ACCEPTED BY CONSENT

- A. Monthly Financial Statements (Janie's Garden)
 - 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
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- Commissioner Colón made a motion to accept the Program Updates Consent Agenda. Commissioner Finger seconded the motion.
 - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

XIII. COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS / COMMENTS

- A. Commissioner Colón brought up the topic of in-person committee meetings to discuss topics like voucher preferences and such, stating that zoom meetings are not as productive. Attorney Gilmore reported on the recent change in the state law that resumed in-person business meetings after a suspension during the Covid-19 pandemic. He emphasized the advantages of in-person meetings for open dialogue and public access, and the importance of controlling disruptions, especially during virtual meetings. The challenges of balancing openness with control during meetings was discussed. Attorney Gilmore added that committee meetings should be run the same as board meetings in that they're open to the public and guests are allowed the opportunity to speak during public comment portion of the meeting. Commissioner Finger reported that he has participated in zoom meetings where members of the public attended and made significant contributions to the meeting. So the past meetings have been open to the public but supports the idea of going back to in-person meetings.
 - Commissioner Colón made a motion that all future meetings should be conducted in person. Commissioner Morgan seconded the motion.
 - The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

- B. Commissioner Finger shared his attendance and experiences from a recent Nelrod conference, highlighting the valuable certifications he obtained and recommended the conference to the board. He discussed the new NSPIRE and HOTMA Programs, the implementation of new regulations, and the suggestion for additional training for the housing maintenance staff.
- C. Commissioner Colón welcomed Commissioner Morgan back to the board, along with his wealth of knowledge, and thanked the city for appointing him.
- D. Commissioner Meredith also welcomed Commissioner Morgan back to the board.
- E. Commissioner Taylor recently attended the NAHRO conference in DC and reported enjoying her visit to Capitol Hill to meet with representatives and that it was a good conference. She also reported that she had the opportunity to meet U.S. Senator Rick Scott at the airport and was told to reach out if she needed anything.
- F. Commissioner Mason requested an update on Resilient SRQ. Mr. Russell responded that the next Board Meeting is taking place the day after funding is awarded so he hopes to have a report for the board at that time. It was also brought up that it may be a good idea for SHA Commissioners and representatives to attend this meeting on 7/9/24 at the South County Office in Venice. Commissioner Meredith suggested that Mr. Russell put together some talking points for the Commissioners in case any of them would want to discuss the topic with county officials.
 - Commissioner Mason requested an update on the selection process for Cypress Square, expressed concerns and states that the process needs to be transparent and respectful. Mr. Russell responded that he's aware that there are issues and that he's working with the top executives at NDC and are working to fix the problems. They are holding weekly calls on this topic. Mr. Russell further stated that these are real concerns and he's taking them seriously. Commissioner Morgan suggested sending an online link to Mr. Russell to provide to the entry level NDC staff to inform them of managing low-income properties.
 - Commissioner Mason also brought up a fire code issue that was brought to her attention by a Section 8 participant where there are burglar bars on all the windows of an apartment building they live in. There was discussion regarding public housing and the need for means of egress in apartment complexes. Mr. Russell will look into this further.
- G. Commissioner Morgan ended the conversation by thanking the team and encouraging them to continue their hard work.
- H. Commissioner Dillard requested a tour of Cypress Square and Lofts on Lemon. Mr. Russell will look into having this set up.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The Sarasota Housing Authority Board of Commissioners meeting was adjourned at 6:08 pm.