

# Scranton Housing Authority

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## **AMENDED MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SCRANTON HOUSING AUTHORITY**

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025**

The Board of Directors of the Scranton Housing Authority met in a regular session at the office of the Scranton Housing Authority in the City of Scranton, Pennsylvania, at 5:00 P.M. on February 3, 2025.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.**

Ms. Cruz called the meeting to order.

### **1. ROLL CALL:**

#### **Present**

Megan Alpert  
Michael Hanley  
Julie Schumacher Cohen  
Sarah Cruz

#### **Absent**

Devendrabhai Dave

In addition to the Board Members, those in attendance were Karl P. Lynott, Executive Director; John Cappelloni, Deputy Executive Director, Scott Lombardi, Comptroller, James P. Doherty, Esq. and Paula McLane, Executive Assistant.

## **2. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Atty. Doherty stated that litigation was discussed.

## **3. APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 6, 2025 AND THE SPECIAL MEETING OF JANUARY 13, 2025.**

Mr. Hanley made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 6, 2025, and the Special Meeting of January 13, 2025. The motion was seconded by Ms. Cruz. A roll call vote was taken.

### **AYES**

Mrs. Alpert  
Mr. Hanley  
Mrs. Schumacher Cohen  
Ms. Cruz

### **NAYS**

None

## **4. TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2025 TO JANUARY 29, 2025.**

Mr. Hanley read the Treasurer's Report.

This report is as of January 29, 2025. The balances in our Checking Accounts and Money Market Accounts are \$833,117.92.

Investments made in Certificates of Deposits amounted to \$8,376,689.15. Petty Cash & Magistrate Funds totaled \$11,400.00 for a grand total of \$9,221,207.07.

Paid bills from January 1, 2025, to January 29, 2025, were forwarded to all members.

I would just like to follow this up, we just had a discussion that going forward we will have a budget for each one of the Amps as well as Park Gardens with the actual expenses to

date, so we will have more of a holistic view of the finances of the Housing Authority moving forward.

If there are no questions, may I have a motion for approval of the Treasurer's Report.

A motion was made for the approval of the Treasurer's Report by Mrs. Alpert and seconded by Ms. Cruz. A roll call vote was taken.

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert

None

Mr. Hanley

Mrs. Schumacher Cohen

Ms. Cruz

**5. SECRETARY'S REPORT – COMMUNICATIONS**

A letter was received from the Hub Real Estate Group, and read by Mrs. Schumacher Cohen:

Mrs. Schumacher Cohen: We have a letter of intent to purchase Park Gardens that was sent to us and Mr. Lynott, we will have a response after I read this letter into the record? Mr. Lynott indicated that there would be a response to the letter.

*Honorable Housing Authority Members:*

*It has come to the attention of a client of mine that, based on recent reports, the SHA is running nearly a \$400,000 annual deficit and may consider selling Park Gardens. Below is an outline of a formal offer they have instructed me to submit on their behalf:*

***Price:*** \$10,500,000.00

***Closing:*** On or before 90 days from signing of official agreement of sale.

***Contingency:*** 15 days due diligence period.

*The sale would not only solve the SHA's budgetary shortfalls but would add this complex to the tax rolls growing the taxbase in the county. Additionally, I have copied all taxing bodies as well to this letter. Proof of funds available upon request.*

*I look forward to hearing from you.*

*Pat Rogan, the HUB Real Estate Group*

*Aaron Jacobs Partner*

Mr. Lynott: Thank you, as indicated at previous meetings, Park Gardens is not for sale.

## 6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Cruz stated that as per Housing Authority policy, each person is allocated 5 Minutes and we ask that you speak with decorum.

Erlene Braithwaite and Rick Little spoke. Scranton City Councilman Gerald

Smurl was also present and did not want to speak.

**Erlene Braithwaite:** I'm a resident of Hilltop Manor. On December 6<sup>th</sup> I reported to the Hilltop office that there were bed bugs in my apartment. Up till today, no one came. A week later the maintenance manager and exterminator came to my apartment and verified that there were bed bugs. On November 3, 2024, when I came here with my concerns about roaches and bed bugs Karl would rebuttal that, it's just one dead roach. Today I have my video with bed bugs, roaches on my wall and in my food while I'm cooking. I have the video here today. Why was my speech denied by the manager, Carita, when I asked to make an appointment with the Executive Director three times, not knowing there was a public meeting. I have my video here. I want to know why I am being treated this way. Is it because I am poor, black, have an accent and because I have relatives in New York? Why? I would like to be treated like the people at Park Gardens. Ms. Chairman you never said anything to me about my concerns. I just need help; I came here for help.

She then showed her videos to the Board Members.

Ms. Cruz asked Mr. Lynott if there is a process that is follows when it shows clearly ....

Mr. Lynott asked Ms. Braithwaite if that video was since the last meeting? Again, just so it's clear, after the last meeting we sent up the Maintenance Superintendent and the representative from Orkin. They went through your cupboards, your bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen. And they saw no evidence of any infestation whatsoever. So, is that new since that time? I will send them again tomorrow morning first thing. Orkin will treat it if it exists, but they didn't treat it the last time because they didn't find anything.

**Ms. Cruz:** Thank you, Mr. Lynott. Is there anyone else who would like to speak?

**Mr. Little:** My name is Rick Little, and I lived for 14 ½ years at the Adams High-Rise. First, I'd like to get the meeting minutes. (Mr. Little was given copies of the approved meeting minutes from the regular meeting on December 6, 2024, and the special meeting on December 13, 2024.) I'd just like to comment on the woman spoke because in my lease you shall comply

with all pest control and that's how I got evicted. I got rid of my pests with an ultraviolet C light. I discovered in the 14 ½ years I lived there that this whole thing is "bug wrangling". Because Orkin is the company, and I had experiences where they are telling me to get out of my apartment. It's just abusive because they spray one apartment and the chemicals, they use end up attracting bugs. It is not a solution. I see it as a device to move people around. The thing I was wondering about is when you go to re-certify they always ask you if you have food stamps. They say food stamps are not counted as income so why is it that they always ask if you are getting them? What does that have to do with the re-certification? I'm having a problem now I'm dealing with the State building which is actually the municipal or county building. They took my food stamps away. It's very difficult when you are homeless. You spend all your money on that, and I haven't had any food. It turns out that my food stamps were put on in Harrisburg or by the county. I just don't understand the chain of command of how it works. They are directing me to go to the Scranton Police Dept. as a remedy and they have no detective fraud division there. I go why don't you call the Attorney General's office or the Inspector General. It is just like making people run around, filling out forms, doing stuff and that seems to be the modus operandi of the whole area. I was wondering about this sign. (He held up a sign.) A few years ago, now this was to do with notice requirements in my lease before they could break into my room. People were breaking into my room all the time. I went to the manager when I first got there and asked about renter's insurance. I couldn't get anything, but they flooded my apartment twice, the bug wrangling thing goes on, but I am really wondering about this arson thing. It says arsons at Adams High-Rise, anyone who has information regarding the person responsible for setting fires at Adams High-Rise is urged to call Scranton Police as soon as possible. Please leave a message for Inspector Martin Monahan. Your call will remain anonymous. I had no fires on my floor, the fires were like 4 floors up. Water damage was the real damage. A problem tenant above me flooded my apartment. It took a month to fix but it destroyed three thousand dollars' worth of Family Court transcripts when they took my child away. Everything is okay, so you call the maintenance, and they fix it. My stuff was taken out of my storage unit when I was living there. Put away for 2 ½ years, my time is up. Ok.

Ms. Cruz asked Mrs. McLane to make sure that the last two meeting minutes are sent to the city council before the council meeting tomorrow.

I want to acknowledge Mr. Gerald Smurl and thank him for being here tonight.

## **7. COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **7.(a) Chairman Report.**

Ms. Cruz: First, I want to thank everyone that is here tonight. Secondly, I wanted to apologize

Ms. Cruz: First, I want to thank everyone that is here tonight. Secondly, I wanted to apologize for failing to do this at last month's meeting, I wanted to thank Mr. Vincent Alu, Director of Capital Improvements, for his technical assistance with the last meeting's power point presentation. His contribution was invaluable to me and to all of us in putting that presentation forward, as well as Mr. Lynott, Mr. Cappelloni and Mr. Lombardi in providing the information and data presented. Since that meeting I and the other Commissioners have been contacted by residents asking for rental assistance options. I have forwarded information. Mr. Lynott, could you compile a list of organizations local and statewide that the residents can contact to receive information about rental assistance. We also have been receiving questions from the public, people who are raising concerns about some things presented at last month's meeting concerning a breakdown of the Park Gardens' budget and asking questions about the origins of the suspended newsletter as well as the three executives' salaries, which are public knowledge. I've learned even before the meeting two weeks ago and since then that a lot of people are really interested and invested in the Housing Authority even though previously it did not seem that way. They are really committed and want to see a commitment from the individuals here to continue to provide safe, affordable housing for the citizens of Scranton, which is why we are committed to ensuring the solvency of Park Gardens, why we are not selling it. As well as our Section 8 housing, scattered sites and our developments, which is why I am thankful that Ms. Braithwaite came here tonight to discuss her issue. That's why on the table tonight we will be voting on a motion to hire a consultant to look at the operations and finances of the Housing Authority holistically to see what else needs to be done going forward with this organization to continue to move it to a place of greater solvency, transparency. I thank everybody for their interest and advice, to continue if they have any other advice or information for us, and to continue reaching out to us. Our emails are on the website as well as the three executives' emails and phone numbers. Thank you.

### **(b) Executive Director Report**

**Mr. Lynott read the reports:**

#### **DELINQUENTS**

**Park Gardens:** There are 162 occupied units out of 166. The other four are being prepared for occupancy. The Scranton Housing Authority is currently creating a new application process for Park Gardens. There is one delinquent, and I believe they are currently under eviction and it's roughly \$2,500.00 owed.

#### **Public Housing:**

January (334) \$286,641.55 as opposed to December (346) \$268,136.30 and to November (337) \$244,218.83.

## **UTILITY REPORT**

The cost for gas consumption in January 2025 was \$85,730.78 as opposed to the cost in December 2024 at \$60,502.18.

The water cost for the month of January 2025 was \$62,909.24 as opposed to the cost in December 2024 at \$58,154.97.

The electric cost for the month of January 2025 was \$70,057.51 as opposed to the cost in December 2024 at \$63,296.74.

The sewer cost for the month of January was \$118,298.98 as opposed to the cost in December 2024 at \$121,836.36.

The total cost for utilities for the month of January 2025 was \$336,996.51 and for December 2024 was \$303,920.91.

## **CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS STATUS – January 29, 2025**

The following will serve as an update on the status of the construction projects at the Scranton Housing Authority, as of the above stated date provided by Vince Alu, Director of Capital Improvements.

### **Renovations Buildings 13 & 14 at Valley View**

All work at the construction projects have been complete. Waiting on final punch list to be completed.

### **Site Work for Building #13 and #14**

As of Thursday, December 19, 2024, the SHA, Architect and KR Construction Group suspended the remaining site work temporarily due to weather conditions. This pause ensures that all remaining work can be completed to the highest standard once favorable conditions return in the Spring.

### **Renovations Building #12 at Valley View**

The contracts have been awarded to the contractors. Pre-construction meeting is set for February 5, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.

## **SECURITY CAMERAS – Jackson Terrace**

HIG has all the permits and has started the work of installing the cameras. The work is still ongoing.

### **Riverside Apartments**

HIG has all the permits and has started the work of installing the cameras. The work is still ongoing.

## **(c) SOLICITOR REPORT**

Discussions were held in the Executive Session.

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## **(d) APARTMENTS**

**Mr. Lynott read the Apartment Report.**

APARTMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2025, TO  
JANUARY 30, 2025.

Under our Public Housing Program, we have an A.C.C. of 1,214 units with 1,174 units under effective lease. There are forty (40) vacant apartments in which twenty-seven (27) vacant units are under modernization, vacant approved by HUD.

Under our Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, we have an A.C.C. of 1,050 units with 744 units under effective lease.

Total apartments under effective lease by the Scranton Housing Authority as of January 30, 2025, are 1,918 out of an A.C.C. of 2,264.

That concludes the Executive Director Report.

## **(e) BOARD COMMENTS**

Ms. Cruz inquired if any of her colleagues would like to comment.

Mr. Hanley: I would just like to thank you Chairman Cruz for all the great work you've been doing in the last few weeks of putting this all together. Hopefully as we go forward there will



be more confidence from the public regarding what is happening here at the Housing Authority as we become more and more transparent.

Ms. Schumacher Cohen: I appreciate that we are doing this evaluation to get a consultant in. I think we've received a lot of feedback in the last meeting, as Chairwoman Cruz had said that there is interest in transparency and looking at best practices and getting ideas from other communities. I know we have a Resident Advisory Board. I haven't attended any of the meetings, maybe I will attend one, if that is appropriate. I would like us to have a public engagement process as part of our evaluation to get further feedback from the public.

## 8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

## 9. NEW BUSINESS.

**9. (a) Resolution No. 25-6 – Amending the Procurement Policy of the Scranton Housing Authority to increase the threshold amount for small purchases from \$23,200 to \$23,800.**

Mr. Lynott read the Resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) requires that every public housing authority establish a Procurement Policy to insure that any expenditure of public monies is conducted pursuant to 24 CFR 85.36, as well as the applicable procurement status of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and

**WHEREAS**, the Scranton Housing Authority (“Authority”) has reviewed its existing policy and has deemed necessary to amend the Procurement Policy in order to be consistent with 24 CFR 85.36 and applicable procurement status of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has recently changed the law to increase the threshold amount for small purchases to \$23,800 so that advertisements and sealed bids are only required for contracts expected to exceed \$23,800; and

WHEREAS, the current Procurement Policy references the threshold amount for small purchases on Pages 3, 4, 9, 11, 13 and 14; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** on this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of February 2025 that the Scranton Housing Authority Board of Commissioners hereby Amend the Procurement Policy; specifically, Pages 3, 4, 9, 11, 13 and 14 to increase the threshold amount required for small purchases from \$23,200 to \$23,800.

Mr. Lynott: It is my recommendation that the Board of Directors pass Resolution No. 25-6.

Mr. Hanley made the motion to pass Resolution No. 25-6, seconded by Ms. Cruz. A roll call vote was taken.

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert

None

Mr. Hanley

Mrs. Schumacher Cohen

Ms. Cruz

**9. (b) Proposals for Engineering Services, Self-Managed EPC**

Mr. Lynott: Engineering Services Proposal for Self-Managed EPC, it is my recommendation that the Group 14 Engineering Group, which was the only submission, if I am correct, scored a 92 and they have managed several of our other EPCs. They were evaluated by Mr. Cappelloni, Michael Morrison and Martin Flynn and they recommend that the Self-Managing EPC Engineering Services be awarded to the Group 14 Engineering Group. May I have motion.

Mrs. Alpert made the motion seconded by Ms. Cruz. A roll call vote was taken.

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert

None

Mr. Hanley

Mrs. Schumacher Cohen

Ms. Cruz

**9. (c) An Evaluation for a Consultant to Review the Organizational Structure and Operation of the Scranton Housing Authority.**

Mr. Lynott asked for a motion. Ms. Cruz made the motion, and it was seconded by Mrs. Schumacher Cohen.

A roll call vote was taken.

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert  
Mr. Hanley  
Mrs. Schumacher Cohen  
Ms. Cruz

None

**10. PERSONNEL**

Ms. Cruz:

- (a) Acceptance of the Retirement of Jim Kobrynich.
- (b) Acceptance of the Resignation of Michael T. May
- (c) Acceptance of the Resignation of Mackin Brier.

Mr. Lynott: May I have a motion to accept the retirement of Jim Kobrynich and the resignations of Michael T. May and Mackin Brier.

Motion was made by Mr. Hanley and seconded by Mrs. Alpert. A roll call vote was taken.

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert  
Mr. Hanley  
Mrs. Schumacher Cohen  
Ms. Cruz

None

Mr. Hanley: Before we adjourn, Karl could you explain when you were doing the Apartment Report on Section 8. We have so many Section 8 units and so many under lease. There is a huge discrepancy there. I think for the purpose of the public can you explain why there is that difference. It looks like 250 empty Section 8 vouchers.

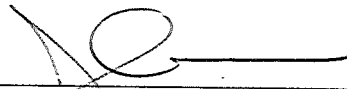
Mr. Lynott: We are funded at a level that does not meet the maximum that they designated over the years 1,050. We are funded at approximately 750 to 775 and it is currently 744. That money is not there to provide additional vouchers and that is a national issue and not a Scranton Housing issue. HUD has indicated to us for the foreseeable future in 2025 that it will not be increasing the subsidy for that. We are going to be in that neighborhood, we are not withholding vouchers or voucher money by any means.

Mr. Hanley: Ok, I just wanted to clarify.

#### **11. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Lynott: May I have a motion to adjourn the meeting.

The motion was made by Mr. Hanley and seconded by Mrs. Schumacher Cohen. The meeting was adjourned.



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**Julie Schumacher Cohen, Secretary**

## **CERTIFICATE**

**I, Julie Schumacher Cohen, hereby certify that:**

- 1. I am the duly appointed, qualified and Secretary of the Scranton Housing Authority.**
- 2. I am custodian of the records of said Authority.**
- 3. The attached copy of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of said Authority held February 3, 2025, is a true and correct copy of the original Minutes of said meeting, as approved at the meeting of said Authority on March 3, 2025, and is recorded in the Minutes of the Authority.**

**In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and the Corporate seal of this Authority this 3rd DAY of MARCH 2025.**

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**Julie Schumacher Cohen**  
**Secretary**