

Scranton Housing Authority

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MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SCRANTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

APRIL 7, 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 April 7, 2025.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

Ms. Cruz called the meeting to order.

1. ROLL CALL:

Present

Megan Alpert
Michael Hanley
Julie 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

Mr. Doherty stated that litigation was discussed.

3. APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF March 3, 2025.

Ms. Cruz made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Monthly Meeting held on March 3, 2025, seconded by Mr. Hanley. A roll call was taken

AYES

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

NAYS

None

Mr. Lynott: We have 4 “yes” votes on approving the minutes of the March 3, 2025, Meeting. Motion was approved.

4. TREASURER’S REPORT FOR THE PERIOD MARCH 1, 2025 TO MARCH 31, 2025.

Mr. Hanley: I have two different reports, the first one is a report of our actual expenses which only goes through the end of February because the March books are not yet completed. So overall the SHA is now running a deficit of \$141,715.00, that’s throughout all our buildings. I’m told that we are six months into our fiscal year and that by the end of our fiscal year that will be zero because we have other funding coming in. Park Gardens is now currently running a deficit of \$1,945.00. So that’s until the end of February.

Mr. Hanley read the Treasurer’s Report:

This report is as of March 31, 2025. The balances in our Checking Accounts and Money Market Accounts are \$1,269,653.62.

Investments made in Certificates of Deposits amounted to \$8,487,519.30. Petty Cash & Magistrate Funds totaled \$11,400.00 for a grand total of \$9,768,572.92.

Ms. Cruz: May I have a motion.

A motion was made for the approval of the Treasurer's Report by Mrs. Cohen and seconded by Mrs. Alpert.

AYES

NAYS

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

The motion passed 4-0.

5. SECRETARY'S REPORT – COMMUNICATIONS

Mrs. Cohen: I do not have any communications for this month.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Cruz stated that as per Housing Authority policy, each person is allotted 5 Minutes. The first person on the list is Rick Little.

Mr. Little: Rick Little, Scranton. My question is about people that live specifically at Adams High-Rise which is a subsidized HUD facility. If there is any protection for, who is responsible for finding out if a person lives exclusively on federal money, like social security. Who would be responsible for protecting that person from becoming a delinquent to be evicted. Do you know who that would be?

Mr. Lynott: Each site sends out delinquent letters each month, in the middle of the month. So, I don't know if that's protecting them, it's making them aware of their current balance.

Mr. Little: I understand that. Certain people live exclusively on social security and I'm not exactly sure what is entailed in a delinquent letter because that's all.

Mr. Lynott: I'm not 100% sure of what you are asking. But to be clear, the rents are determined whether you are getting income from a job or social security or disability. Your rent is determined from that. It is the tenant's responsibility to pay what that number is.

Mr. Little: What's the remedy if they question the determination by the cashier/clerk?

Mr. Lynott: Initially, when you move in or every year you get a re-examination, your finances are reviewed with the clerk, or the manager and they give you a determination of your monthly rent at that time from the income that you are reporting. After that, the tenant either agrees or disagrees.

Mr. Little: If they disagree, what is the process?

Mr. Lynott: The rent would remain as it is at that point in time prior to the new calculation if there was one. However, they would have to appeal.

Mr. Little: What's the appeal process, who is above the manager?

Mr. Lynott: You will be put under eviction and then you have to take it to the magistrate.

Mr. Little: So, would it automatically go to the magistrate?

Mr. Lynott: No, there is a process. I don't know if you are familiar with our grievance process. It starts with the manager informally; the grievance would come downtown. Mr. Cappelloni is our Hearing Officer and then determined upon that, it would either go back to the manager's office resolved or it would be forwarded to a local magistrate.

Mr. Little: Last week I talked about you contracting people who are not employees like David Coyne, but the managers are employees of Scranton Housing Authority, correct?

Mr. Lynott: Managers of all sites are Scranton Housing Authority employees, that is correct.

Mr. Little: So, if you disagree with them on a rent amount, like if your rent is garnished by the federal government. I'm talking about people who live there who are totally on social security. A lot of people don't understand social security, it's hard to figure out. The managers are privy to the social security, like I was told by Mr. Coyne, that they see everything that goes into my bank account at People's Bank from Social Security and that's the only income I'm living on and then I go to court and.

Mr. Lynott: In your case, you didn't pay any rent, I don't know if you were challenging the determination, but you stopped paying your rent. You must pay rent no matter what. Even throughout the appeal process or the grievance process. You fell way behind Fred.

Mr. Little: I fell way behind because it was COVID, and I was not getting a response from you for nine months after they broke into my storage unit and confiscated my stuff which ended up for 2 ½ years until I was evicted. My question is about the federal funds, who is responsible, is it the manager, because that's the name on the complaint.

Mr. Lynott: Correct. She is evicting whatever tenant she feels violated the lease.

Mr. Little: So, they are the ones responsible for looking at your social security and seeing what your income is.

Mr. Lynott: We can resume this next month, but yes, they do determine whether to take you for eviction or not. Ok?

Mr. Little: Ok.

Ms. Cruz: Next is Gus Fahey.

Mr. Fahey: Gus Fahey from Valley in Motion, I was here a couple of months ago to talk about a trails project that is behind Valley View, Hilltop Manor and Skyview. I thought I would give you a quick update on that and let you know what the next steps are and somehow get our ascent on where our direction is going with that. To review the project, there is a tract of land with trails on it that are owned by SHA and Geisinger Hospital System that have trails that go underneath 81 and connect to the Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources land. (Pinto State Forest). So, thousands of acres of recreation land that is accessible and available to the public. So, what our non-profit organization is interested in doing is assembling stakeholders to develop these trails so people from Southside can have ready access to this recreation resource that is really a rare opportunity in the State within the city limits, thousands of acres of forest lands and miles of trails that are back behind there. They go all the way to Lake Scranton, around Montage Mountain and further. So, we had a stakeholder's meeting in February, Mrs. Alpert was in attendance. We also had DCNR, Geisinger, Trust for Public Land which is one of our national partners, Lackawanna Valley Heritage Authority and others. They all thought it was a good idea to develop this recreational resource. I had talked about what would be the best places to access it. We talked about other concerns that you would have to access the forest land because you must cross a railroad at some point and also cross Stafford Brook at some point. We are just sort of working through those kinds of questions and challenges. It was suggested that we pursue an engineering feasibility study to look at what the options are. What the cost options would be, what the maintenance cost could potentially be. So that is the next step we want to pursue. There's the Parks & Recreation Dir. From the City of Scranton was there and he suggested that we should look into from Connell Park, putting a trail between Skyview and Valley View and connect directly to this land so that you could potentially park at Connell Park, use those trails there and have this spur that connects to this wider set of land there. A possibility that we could explore further but that's part of what this engineering study would give us a sense on the feasibility of that and then we could explore that. It would potentially go on SHA land. There are grants that are coming up this next month and we are getting a cost estimate for doing a feasibility study. That's my report on what we've done, but I also want to answer any questions related to whether this is something that's worth pursuing, or anything else that you would have questions or concerns about that we should address before we start pursuing the funds for this kind of action. If we gather the money to get this feasibility study then I think we are talking about applying, and the stake holders agree on a common plan, so getting an agreement on the plan might come by the end of the summer and then applying for grants after that, the main grant that we would pursue would be DCNR Community Planning Grants but they are larger grants that they would help you implement. So, we would apply for that grant this time next year for things that will be implemented in 2027. I think 2027 would be the earliest that we would do actual formal work.

There are other kinds of informal things that we can do on the trail to make it more like a trail and less like an "ATV" track.

Mr. Lynott: I think we discussed earlier two different issues with the stakeholders besides the SHA are they granting easements or total access to their properties?

Mr. Fahey: What Geisinger has talked about is a trail easement. As it stands, they are only interested in granting a trail easement on their part of the land that they don't consider to be marketable. In other words, the "hillier" it is or the less buildable it is.

Mr. Lynott: To coincide with that, what type of liability insurance would be.

Mr. Fahey: Right, what I took away from the last two meetings, the liability and maintenance. Who is responsible for both of them. I don't really have a good answer on liability but from my understanding, at least from solicitors on our board, there is legislation in Pa to protect users of trails and owners of trails. I can't come up with a better answer than that, but I can connect you with Sean McDonough that is our solicitor.

Mr. Lynott: We have an expert right here.

Atty. Doherty: What he is talking about is sometimes the state legislature will take parts like that and give you the cap that is under the political sub-division which means your exposure is capped. The Housing Authority cap is \$250,000, assuming the legislature would have to individually approve it. They could say that this trail or something would fall under the sovereign immunity dealing with housing authorities which gives you a \$250,000 cap per claim. You would still have liability; you would have to have insurance coverage for \$250,000.

Mr. Hanley: Right now, there are all-terrain vehicles running through there, and people hike there anyway. We took a walk back there and you could see the trails where there are 4-wheelers.

Mr. Lynott: I would assume, motorcycles, quads, walkers use this.

Mr. Hanley: So, something like this would be more controllable?

Mr. Fahey: Yes, more controllable. There would be signage and in general, ATVs usually don't go where there are walkers and other kinds of recreation. So, the more you formalize it, the more likely they are going to find another sort of unmanaged space to go on.

Mr. Hanley: The Heritage Trail, where I have been walking, you can't get in there with an ATV, just bikers and hikers. How much land do we have back there?

Mr. Lynott: Behind our building, at least 10 acres. Geisinger owns part of it. We have it fenced off toward the Valley View side. The part Mr. Fahey is talking about is the parcel between Connell Park, which is the city property. I would think access would come from there.

Mr. Fahey: Yes, ATVs go up Gibbons St and then they access the trail which may or may not be Skyview land right there.

Mr. Hanley: What do you need from us tonight? Informational?

Mr. Fahey: Informational, the plan was to sort of pursue this grant to get a feasibility study. If you have any objections to that then we won't pursue it. Would the Board be willing to write a letter of support for the study of trail access to this land.

Atty. Doherty: If I may ask, are you looking to the Board to make any financial commitment now as far as contributing to the feasibility study? Would a letter be taken as a financial commitment to the feasibility study?

Mr. Fahey: No

Atty. Doherty: This doesn't have to be voted on, the Board can do a letter.

Mr. Fahey: Mr. Doherty, to answer your question further, when it comes to the implementation stage there would have to be some sort of financial contribution from the authority. Not only because we probably need it to make the project whole but any application that we would do with DCNR would require a match. It would also demonstrate commitment.

Atty. Doherty: From your research, are there grants available to the Housing Authority to satisfy the match so that we don't have to go into our own budget?

Mr. Fahey: Potentially, yes and we have a terrific national partner called Trust for Public Land who have been working with other housing authorities around the country, particularly the Boston Housing Authority, to develop recreational access on housing authority lands. There are potential other partners out there. I would still say that a state entity would want to have some sort of 'in-kind' or cash contribution from the different partners.

Atty. Doherty: For discussion, is the "in-kind" contribution land?

Mr. Fahey: That's a good thought, so "in-kind" could also be maintenance. I think that's a better one to go with.

Atty. Doherty: Again, going back to the liability and insurance. I think the legislature works with you so you can get that cap. But when you are dealing with different governmental entities there are different caps. The City of Scranton's cap is \$500,000 because that's a political sub-division like a borough or town. State entities are at \$300,000 and housing authorities are at \$250,000. So sometimes what they do, they have an inner government agreement that then would say who is the front one so then the cap would be at a certain amount. That must be approved and sometimes that benefits everybody. Let's assume somebody was hiking and they tripped on Scranton property and then went over into housing property so where is the cap on liability. So sometimes when they do these government agreements or called the point entity. The point entity then, whether it's the city or the housing authority, would have the cap. Sometimes they like to go to the entity that has the lowest cap.

7. COMMITTEE REPORT

7.(a) Chairperson Report.

Ms. Cruz: On Thursday morning, Commissioner Cohen and I along with Directors Lynott and Cappelloni met on a zoom call with regional and national representatives at HUD to discuss recent issues with Park Gardens. The meeting, which was an initial planning meeting, was the result of a resident (muffled) congressional inquiry to assess the financial state of the

development and possible options going forward. A secondary meeting will be scheduled at a date and time to be determined. That's all I have for this month.

(b) Executive Director Report

Mr. Lynott: Just briefly, Madame Chair, I met with the Planning Commission, which Mr. Fahey was part of, several weeks ago regarding the Hilltop Heights Affordable Housing Development Project. We are committed to providing project-based vouchers up there pending the approval of the Commission, which they did approve it. We are going to commit (2) one-bedroom vouchers, and (6) two-bedroom vouchers. The tentative closing date on the land lease will be mid-June and hopefully that moves forward throughout this year. I want to thank Mr. Fahey for voting in the affirmative on that matter. Thank you.

Mr. Lynott read the reports:

UTILITY REPORT

The cost for gas consumption in March 2025 was \$82,157.69 as opposed to the cost in February 2025 at \$102,106.92.

The water cost for the month of March 2025 was \$59,169.54 as opposed to the cost in February 2025 (water bill had not been received as of this date.)

The electric cost for the month of March 2025 is \$66,097.25 as opposed to the cost in February 2025 at \$75,049.3.

The sewer cost for the month of March 2025 was \$123,331.76 as opposed to the cost in February 2025 (Sewer bill had not been received as of this date.)

The total cost for utilities for the month of March 2025 was \$330,756.24 as opposed to the cost in February 2025 at \$177,156.23.

DELINQUENTS

March (326) \$231,182.41 as opposed to February (329) \$252,748.90 and to January (334) \$286,641.55.

CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS STATUS – March 20, 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.

Site Work for Building #13 and #14

As of Thursday, December 19, 2024, site work for building #13 and #14 are still on pause until weather conditions are suitable for the work to be done.

Renovations Building #12 at Valley View

All contractors have started the project.

General Construction

- The contractor has stated that demolition is completed.
- Exterior porch slabs are being poured.
- Ten (10) bathroom windows have been framed.

HVAC Construction

- The contractor has stated demolition and core drilling are completed.
- Furnace and ductwork are complete.
- Crawlspace fans have been installed.
- Started core drilling and installation of dryer vents.

Plumbing Construction

- The contractor has stated demolition and core drilling is still in progress.
- Crawlspace main line modifications to the sewer, hot and cold water are 80%.
- Gas lines are completed in the crawl space minus the floor penetrations.

Electrical Construction

- The demolition is completed in the apartments.
- The contractor started the demolition in the crawl space.
- Main feed for the new panel is installed.
- Started the apartment feeds.

- Installed the feeds for the smoke detectors in the crawlspace.
- Cutting holes in brick for exterior outlets.

SECURITY CAMERAS

Jackson Terrace

The cameras are all installed, and payment has been sent.

Riverside Apartments

The cameras are installed, waiting for certified payrolls to be completed and payment to follow.

Mr. Hanley made an inquiry regarding how many of the developments have security cameras. Mr. Lynott: We are about half-way done. We have Riverside Apartments and Jackson Terrace on this project, Jackson Heights is already covered, everything on Adams Avenue is covered and Washington West Apartments and Washington Plaza. The big sites will now be our focus in the next couple of years, Valley View, Hilltop and Bangor Heights.

(c) SOLICITOR REPORT

Atty. Doherty: Nothing other than what was discussed in Executive Session.

(d) APARTMENTS

Mr. Lynott read the Apartment Report.

APARTMENT REPORT FOR APRIL 2025

Under our Public Housing Program, we have an A.C.C. of 1,214 units with 1,176 units under effective lease. There are forty (38) 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 **725** units under effective lease.

Total apartments under effective lease by the Scranton Housing Authority as of April 30, 2025, are **1,901** out of an A.C.C. of **2,264**.

Total apartments under effective lease at Park Gardens are **156** out of **166** apartments.

That concludes with the Apartment Report.

(e) BOARD COMMENTS

No other Board Members had any comments.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ms. Cruz inquired if there was anything under unfinished business.

Mr. Lynott: No Madame Chair.

9. NEW BUSINESS.

9. (a) Resolution No. 25-8 – Approval for the Disposal of Excess Equipment.

Mr. Lynott read the Resolution:

WHEREAS, the Scranton Housing Authority on June 5, 2000, adopted an Amended Disposition Policy; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with said Disposition Policy equipment and/or personal property that is worn out, obsolete or surplus to the needs of the Housing Authority excess to be disposed of, must be written off and disposed of in an efficient manner; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED on this this 3rd day of March 2025 that the Scranton Housing Authority Board of Commissioners hereby approves the attached list, designated as Exhibit "A" of worn-out excess equipment from the referenced developments be written off and disposed of in an efficient manner.

List of Appliances:

(12) Refrigerators

(6) Stoves

(1) A/C Unit

Mrs. Cohen asked if these appliances are recycled.

Mr. Cappelloni responded that these appliances are trucked down to our warehouse on Meridian Avenue and put into dumpsters then DeNaples picks them up and recycles them and we get a check. These appliances that we dispose of don't function anymore and sometimes are infested with bugs.

Mr. Lynott: Can I have a motion to pass Resolution No. 25-8-Approval for the Disposal of Excess Equipment. Ms. Cruz made the motion, seconded by Mr. Hanley. A roll call vote was taken.

AYES

NAYS

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

None

The motion was passed 4-0.

10. PERSONNEL

Mr. Lynott: There are no Personnel matters this evening.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Cruz made the motion to adjourn and was seconded by Mr. Hanley. The meeting was adjourned.



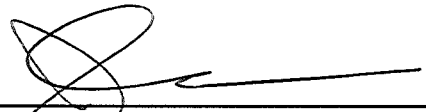
Julie Cohen, Secretary

CERTIFICATE

I, Julie 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 April 7, 2025, is a true and correct copy of the original Minutes of said meeting, as approved at the meeting of said Authority on May 5, 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 5th DAY of MAY 2025.



Julie Cohen
Secretary