

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
SECAUCUS HOUSING AUTHORITY
700 COUNTY ROAD
SECAUCUS, NEW JERSEY

June 22, 2023

(This is condensed transcription of taped minutes taken on Thursday,
June 22, 2023, Kroll Heights, 700 County Road, Secaucus, New Jersey.)

ED Marra called the Roll Call.

ROLL CALL;

Present: Chairman Michael Harper
Commissioner Raj Pardasani
Commissioner Patricia Mondadori
Commissioner John Bujnowski
Commissioner Richard Fairman
Commissioner Michael Schlemm

Also Present: Executive Director Christopher Marra
Stephen Natoli, Esq.
Deborah L. Alvarez – Secretary/Transcriber

Excused: Vice-Chairman Antonio Suarez

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

“Adequate notice of this meeting, as required by the Open Public Meetings Act, has been provided by the filing of an Annual Meeting Notice with the Municipal Clerk, the posting of said notice on the official bulletin board in the Municipal Government Center, and delivery of same to the Jersey Journal on December 12, 2022. This body wishes to advise you that in accordance with N.J.S.A. 26:3D(1) et seq. (Smoking in Public Buildings), smoking is prohibited while this body is in open or closed session.”

FLAG SALUTE

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MAY 25, 2023 OPEN & CLOSED SESSION

Motion to approve Minutes of both meetings made by Commissioner Mondadori; 2nd by Chairman Harper.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)
Absent: Suarez

Abstain: Schlemm

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS FOR MONTH OF JUNE 2023

Motion to approve made by Commissioner Schlemm; 2nd by Commissioner Mondadori.

Commissioner Fairman: \$4,000 on trees. ED Marra: RMM hired to cut back trees touching Kroll Heights; people requested tree coverage against fence at Rocco Towers be cut back as birds in Spring make a mess on many cars.

Motion to approve made by Commissioner Schlemm; 2nd by Commissioner Mondadori.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

Absent: Suarez

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ED Marra introduced Mlak Hassan, Summer Intern, attending NJIT majoring in Biology with a concentration on Neurobiology. Last year Mlak won NJNHARO Scholarship. This year Mlak is interning at SHA in the Office. Mlak is working on recertification for tenants; enjoying the work and everyone is welcoming. Mlak will be here through end of July and as far into August as possible. After graduation she hopes to become a psychiatrist eventually. Mlak answers telephone, helps tenants and a great help in many areas to Linda, Tanya and Terry.

Today at NJNAHRO meeting they announced NJNHARO Scholarships for 2023. There will be 13 scholarships ranked based upon criteria, grades plus other things. Secaucus Housing Authority people received 3 of those scholarships, including persons ranked 2nd and 3rd. Mlak's scholarship is \$3,000/year for 4 years as long as she maintains needed GPA. Rules being changed this year – scholarship given first 2 years and then revisited in Years 3 and 4.

COMMISSIONER FAIRMAN: Where does funding come from? ED MARRA: NJNHARO has 3 functions to raise money: their annual April conference generating somewhere between 35-\$40,000 in net profits; event in November for 2 days and makes 15-\$20,000 to listen to seminars and attend League of Municipalities meeting; golf tournament in Spring before A.C. conference, which raises some money. Requirement is: Secaucus resident but people whose families use Section 8 vouchers.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Commissioners have monthly account balances through May 31, 2023; there are 2 CDs with Bogota which matured on June 9th – put back into respective bank accounts. ED Marra tried to open up, as a government agency, to open up a Treasury Direct Account, which we were unable to do as certain boxes have to be **checked** as to what type of organization you are; spoke to Mr. Katchen. Bogota Savings doesn't have an investment arm to request they purchase a Treasury Bond. Mr. Katchen suggested ED Marra contact Kearny Savings Bank, which does have "investment arm" – Kearny Investments; ED Marra sent in some documentation hoping to buy 3, 6 or 9 month bonds as they are over 5% at this time. It can be higher than a \$250,000 purchase. ED Marra didn't try TD Bank as Mr. Katchen suggested Kearny Bank. No money has been given to them yet.

Finance Committee met tonight with 457B Plan providers; meeting with current 457B Plan provider tonight which is now Carebridge Technologies. Just investigating whether or not SHA needs to change 457B or maintain as is.

Annual audit for fiscal year ending 3/31/2023 will take place July 25-26-27. Finance Committee along with Chairman Harper will meet on July 27th commencing at 3:00 PM, listen to Mr. Policari for an hour; come back at night to the meeting.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Report on resumes for Resident Services Coordinator sent to Commissioners; more people sent resumes after list sent to Commissioners. 4 have been chosen to be interviewed next Tuesday evening. Commissioner Mondadori is one of those on panel. Job description included on advertisement – last time receiving 70 resumes; this time just under 20. Many came through Town of Secaucus – through Tara Acquaviva, Social Services – as well as SHA web site.

POLICY COMMITTEE

During past 30 days, there were no **no smoking** enforcement issues. NELROD item included in Commissioners' packets had a seminar about firearms and housing authorities. More will be discussed at July meeting. At May's meeting, it was brought up about emergency action plan. JIF was contacted and said SHA was first housing authority to ever bring it up to them, which was surprising that no bigger urban housing authorities have had no discussions with JIF. A letter will be written to Chief Miller and Gary Justas to see if they offer anything. It isn't a "look up consultant". More information will be forthcoming in July.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

Resolution #2023-17 was tabled last month – Solar Landscape Proposal. Mr. Natoli, Esq. was asked to review agreements; he generated memo on that agreement; memo provided to Commissioners; and reached out to Solar Landscape.

MR. NATOLI: "I did speak with General Counsel of Solar Landscape in the matter of some of the provisions related to the contract that I wanted to see if Solar Landscape would be willing to either amend in some way or wholly take out. One of the big ones was the indemnification provision. I said the contract indicates that we are to indemnify Solar Landscape. I asked for it to be flip/flapped, for them to indemnify us. My position on that was largely related to the fact that they control a lot of the delivery of this energy and the systems, so they probably would be creating a liability here and, therefore, should be indemnifying us.

Additionally, I asked them rather than engage in binding arbitration, I wanted to know whether or not they would be willing to mediate in a non-binding fashion and not cause us to forego our rights, if mediation does not work out, to enter into a Court process if we wanted to.

And then lastly, one of the most important ones that I wound was they represented to us through their representative that there's no cancellation fee, but it seems like there's a provision within the contract related to default that reads like a cancellation fee. So I asked them to take that out."

I'm waiting to hear back from General Counsel, so what we could do is table it again until we get answers or we could vote on it tonight.

COMMISSIONER FAIRMAN: Looked into this and have questions about who really owns this, what the governance of it is, as I don't see this as reducing execution risk in going to the two (inaudible) that Counsel has identified. I feel SHA could be getting into something a little bit more than what the economic value is to SHA. I suggest they give us a floor of value and they won't do anything like that. I cannot tell who owns this company and where the money is behind it. I look to that as being a good opportunity, if there's some very sophisticated, smart money behind this, that would be to our benefit, but we're not able to determine any of that. No disrespect to them, but this is a lot more complex than, hey, we're regulated by the PUC and you'll be okay. It won't work that way.

ED MARRA: We will let it be until July and hopefully have some answers. COMMISSIONER FAIRMAN: Even if answers are satisfactory, is this something we want to do for \$5,000?

CHAIRMAN HARPER: That's at our discretion as a Board; get legal answers, nothing pressing about it. MR. NATOLI: I didn't get bad vibe from Counsel in the sense that she seemed open to suggestions and will be getting back to us. COMMISSIONER FAIRMAN: Ownership and monies would be very helpful to us as that's my biggest issue.

Commissioner Pardasani asked about Solar Landscape's representative and her background. Would there be any conflict as she previously worked for Town of Secaucus Environmental program.

RESOLUTION #2023-18 – AWARD OF CONTRACT TO BLACKSTONE 360 FOR THE REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF EIFS AND WINDOWS AT 777 FIFTH STREET

ED Marra sent out memo to Commissioners last night. Commissioners Suarez, Schlemm, Lee Mestres and ED Marra met with principle of Blackstone 360 – Ibrahim Hasan and Jason Brostoff.

COMMISSIONER SCHLEMM: It was very good meeting; principle Mr. Hasan spoke very well, said things SHA looking for – they want to communicate with SHA, build relationship with SHA, willing to work with our interesting way of financing project, one piece of it. They are willing to hold their price; a lot of questions were asked about how they planned on executing the construction, how will it affect the residents, what is going to happen. We talked about how they wanted to store some stuff locally so that they could easily get it, schedule timing. They said the right things in each case. We were very pleased with way discussion went. They seemed like they knew their "things" and not only are construction people, but they also build buildings for their own – to lease out and rent to tenants. They had a very good understanding of what SHA has to do with our tenants, what needs to be done communication-wise to let tenants know when workers would be around and in what areas, how they would schedule things. We haven't given them purchase order yet or **approval**, and they wanted to know if they could send some of their crew to come check out building and see 1 room SHA has where wall is ripped down – how does it look and what's going on. It was a really good meeting, lot of positives. Lee Mestres, Architect, felt pretty good about it as well – said he did – seemed excited and looking forward to working with them. He's checked out a few references and all checked out. The fact that they were willing to extend their price for an additional 30 days and understood that we're still trying to get additional money to finish the one side, they seemed like they were willing to work with SHA and do whatever was needed to do in order to get that done.

Company has been in business since 1995, Newark based. They started out in government work and went to private sector, wanting to get back to government work. Mr. Hasan spoke
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about getting all materials so that everything is staged and ready to go; have their own warehouse so they can buy everything up front, store it, move it locally; own their own equipment so no leasing of lifts or scaffolding to be set up. All the things Mr. Hasan was saying were things you wanted to hear; they can mobilize quickly, ready to go when SHA ready to go and execute as quick as possible.

ED MARRA: They want to come at 11 A.M. Friday (tomorrow morning). There are a few buildings on their web site that used this similar product – EIFs – and they also talked about a building they own/manage. I asked about occupied buildings – they just changed windows at this all occupied building in East Orange. They understand about it from management point of view – Mr. Hasan said we're not just contractors, but manage buildings and communication is important with residents.

All of the bids exceeded \$2 million, the first time. This time, first and second bids were separated by about \$50,000; 3rd and 4th bids were again over \$2 million. After speaking with them last night, I felt much more comfortable. Lee's May 15th write-up is here about his due diligence, checking them out making sure they were real. We've had lots of conversations – it's an outdoor project impacted by weather – rainy days will knock them out of the box – what happens in middle of November, Thanksgiving is end of outside work. What happens if they don't finish it by that time? Can you hold your price? Their answer was **YES**, because we bought all the materials. Material number doesn't change. If you had to restart again in April/May, what changes is the prevailing wage number, but they didn't indicate that would make them change the price of the project.

They want to start as soon as they possibly can; that was the other encouraging thing about this. Elevator project took 8 months before they started their first day of work – paperwork, supplies, insurance, etc. COMMISSIONER SCHLEMM: They spoke about doing other similar EIFs-type systems, but they were getting their certification in the one that Lee and we chose. They would get their certification by the end of this week; that was good they went and did that. Mr. Hasan spoke about doing 3-4 apartments, getting them ripped open, taken care of, waterproofed and back up and then worrying about doing inside to clean up/straighten out, but inside work could be done on rainy days, etc., so they could keep moving, but people could get back in their apartments and they'd be water-tight and ready to go with new set of windows. They said all the right things; very enthusiastic.

ED MARRA: They will bring us all the bonding, insurance, etc. when we sign the contract. We will mail them a contract, but they will bring it here first week in July – July 3rd or 6th.

COMMISSIONER BUJOWSKI: How long will resident be displaced? ED MARRA: Not sure that a resident would be displaced at nights. Resident might not be able to stay there in daytime. Initially, it was described, they would not scaffold the building but use hanging scaffolds – hook up on the roof, come down starting on the 6th floor. They don't do it floor by floor, but drop by drop. On the building there are panels, they pull off 6 and 5, everything gets put back on by the end of the day; complicating it is windows get installed too. It isn't clear that a tenant would not be able to sleep in their apartment that night. CHAIRMAN HARPER: That is the goal, weather-sealed, water and toilet. COMMISSIONER SCHLEMM: We spoke about how we did bathrooms, making sure tenant had working commode, but might not have a shower. Residents seemed fine knowing that a new bathroom was coming. ED MARRA: If tenant has a family member nearby, they might leave for the 2 days. If tenant has no one and they're uncomfortable after first night, we'll have to accommodate them for 1 night. When we had floods, tenants want to stay in their apartment. COMMISSIONER SCHLEMM: Items might have to be moved 5 feet back from windows, move it back when windows

replaced. They hope they will be able to use the boom. Back part they may have to go with scaffolding where it's tight in the back; front and sides hoping to use boom; own 2-3 and could work simultaneously.

COMMISSIONER FAIRMAN: Do we know about ownership of company? COMMISSIONER SCHLEMM: They are in Newark. ED MARRA: Three principles are people that own it; last name is H-A-S-A-N – family business. There is lots of press on their web site, very good at generating press for their projects.

CHAIRMAN HARPER: We are going to award this contract to BLACKSTONE 360 for the first three phases of the building and have funding for those first 3 phases and still in process of going to alternative sources for rest of that funding. It is an overdue project and something SHA has talked about for a long time.

**RESOLUTION 2023-18 -- (RESOLUTION AWARDING THE CONTRACT FOR
Removal and Replacement of EIFS, Windows, and AC Sleeves at 777 Fifth Street)**

WHEREAS, the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus (hereinafter referred to as SHA) has determined that it needs to procure services for removal and replacement of EIFS, windows and A/C sleeves at 777 Fifth Street; and

WHEREAS, SHA has published in the newspaper an invitation to bid; and

WHEREAS, the SHA received three bids on March 21, 2023, but rejected those bid; and

WHEREAS, the SHA published in the newspaper another invitation to bid; and

WHEREAS, the SHA received bids from four (4) bidders on May 9, 2023; and

WHEREAS, on the public opening of the bids Blackstone 360, 570 Broad Street, Newark, NJ with a bid of \$1,309,000 for Alternate Bids 1) \$692,00, 2) \$292,000 3) \$325,000 was found to be the lowest responsible bidder pursuant to both N.J.S.A. 40A:11-2 and N.J.S.A. 40A:11-4; and

WHEREAS, the bid submitted by Blackstone 360. has been reviewed by the Habitech Architecture who recommended the contract be awarded to Blackstone 360; and

WHEREAS, the bid submitted by Blackstone 360, Inc. has been reviewed and deemed by the SHA to be both responsive and conforming with all requirements set forth by the New Jersey Public Contracts Law, the bid specifications and the invitation to bid,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners of the SHA hereby finds that the contract for the above captioned work items as described in the bid specifications and drawings, be awarded to Blackstone 360, Inc. in the amount of \$1,309,000; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners hereby authorize and direct the Executive Director of the SHA to execute said contract and take any and all necessary administrative actions to implement this Resolution.

Motion to approve contract for BLACKSTONE 360 made by Commissioner Schlemm; 2nd by Commissioner Pardasani.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

Absent: Suarez

Geocon is painting at Rocco Towers – interior common areas – floors will be “chic gray” with “cracked pepper” as accent color. Four colors were used in that building last time it was painted – only 2 colors this time; investigating one other color around door area – doors are wood with piece of wall to right and left – it might be pure white.

Elevators are completed; completed punch list, no television screen not working there yet which would have messages – what floor you're getting off, number, but not operating yet. Company that supplies video has to come and do final work.

(An 8th floor tenant informed ED Marra that camera screen was not working properly tonight in elevator.)

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM

Paperwork Commissioners have shows April – June. SHA is using maximum amount of grants allowed for SHA, attributed to Linda Fanning and Angie Oliveros. Tanya Oquendo is 3 weeks into being SHA bookkeeper. Terry Weinbrecht doing majority of recertification, required to do 100 of the 200 recertifications; also Mlak is helping her.

OLD/NEW/OTHER BUSINESS – nothing at this time.

REMARKS OF CITIZENS

SAM – 5TH FLOOR/this building – GPS has issues in getting people to this address. Amount of traffic has increased. DPW painted double lines; 5 arrows pointing down hill; 5 arrows on right side as well. GPS indicating road is one-way going west. Cars, trucks and heavy trucks using both lanes. DPW did great job

Woman spoke about cars coming down hill even though sign indicates one-way.

Someone hit flag pole last Friday. New flag pole will be installed as soon as it's delivered here.

GARY MONGELLI – 2nd FLOOR – Please check sidewalk as it's uneven.

GIGI ELFARMAWI - #704 – She has a leak in her bedroom window. ED Marra didn't know about it. He will check it out and get it repaired.

FINANCE CONTINUED

COMMISSIONER FAIRMAN: There were numerous discussions over past few months regarding banking and collateralization and reconcile. ED MARRA: It's been discussed with Bill Katchen. COMMISSIONER FAIRMAN: At the audit with Mr. Policari, this will give SHA an opportunity to get our cash reconciled from a collateral point of view. ED MARRA: I'll discuss items with Mr. Policari on first day he's here.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Schlemm; 2nd by Commissioner Mondadori.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (6)

Absent: Suarez

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Alvarez
Secretary/Transcriber