

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

March 28, 2024

Condensed transcription of taped minutes - Thursday,
March 28, 2024, Kroll Heights, 700 County Road, Secaucus, New Jersey.

ROLL CALL;

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

Also Present: Executive Director Christopher Marra
Joseph Natoli, Esq.

Absent: Commissioner Antonio Suarez
Commissioner Patricia Mondadori
Commissioner Michael Schlemm

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

"Adequate notice of this meeting, as required by the Open Public Meetings Act, has been provided by the filing of a Regular 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 15, 2023.

FLAG SALUTE

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES – February 22, 2024
APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION MEETING MINUTES –January 23, 2024

Motion to accept minutes made by Commissioner Bujnowski; 2nd by Commissioner Pardasani.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)
Absent: Mondadori/Schlemm/Suarez

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS

Commissioner Pardasani: What is \$10,000 bill for Rapid Recovery. ED Marra explained: In Kroll Heights on Saturday morning, 90-year old female resident had overflowing toilet; calls 800 number; maintenance shows up, but not there in a minute; water goes into her unit and downward. Lady didn't know how to shutoff toilet water. Her apartment was water damaged. Rapid Recovery actual bill is \$29,000. Insurance paid \$19,000/SHA paid
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\$10,000/deductible. Everyone paid prevailing wage making it very expensive. They're rebuilding apartment to some degree; little bit of damage in unit right below. Tenant had to vacate 6+ days.

Optimum Flooring is for multiple units; annual PILOT payment to Town of Secaucus.

Commissioner Fairman: What about electric savings at The Elms. ED Marra will show what electric/gas charges were for December, January, February, March next month.

Commissioner Fairman: What is frequency of bill from Johnson Controls noted on Page 2. ED

Marra: It is a bill that shows up frequently as we might be behind a few months. Johnson Controls is for 3 services. #1 is for 700 County Avenue for emergency system – pull the cord/monthly bill @ \$388.21. Also at 700 County is #2 – fire alarm through Johnson Controls – something must have been fixed on 2/9/24 - \$1,050. #3 is recurring bill @ 600 County, also for 100 units to push button for emergency. That's from 3/1 to 5/31 is about \$3,000 – quarterly bills that are sent. Commissioner Fairman: In report rider for this, is it possible that we have a sum total at the bottom for month-to-month.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee

In February budget had been introduced in January. At February meeting Department of Community Affairs approved budget. Now SHA has to adopt Resolution 2024-8 for April 1, 2024.

RESOLUTION 2024-8 - 2025 ADOPTED BUDGET RESOLUTION - SECAUCUS HOUSING AUTHORITY FISCAL YEAR: FROM 4/1/2024 TO 3/31/2025

WHEREAS, the Annual Budget and Capital Budget/Program for the Secaucus Housing Authority for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2024 and ending, March 31, 2025 has been presented for adoption before the governing body of the Secaucus Housing Authority at its open public meeting of January 25, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the Annual Budget and Capital Budget as presented for adoption reflects each item of revenue and appropriation in the same amount and title as set forth in the introduced and approved budget, including all amendments thereto, if any, which have been approved by the Director of the Division of Local Government Services; and

WHEREAS, the Annual Budget as presented for adoption reflects Total Revenues of \$7,713,590 Total Appropriations, including any Accumulated Deficit, if any, of \$7,438,028 and Total Unrestricted Net Position utilized of \$0.00; and

WHEREAS, the Capital Budget as presented for adoption reflects Total Capital Appropriations of \$50,000 and Total Unrestricted Net Position planned to be utilized of \$50,000.00; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the governing body of Secaucus Housing Authority, at an open public meeting held on March 28, 2024 that the Annual Budget and Capital Budget/Program of the Secaucus Housing Authority for the fiscal year beginning, 4/1/2024 and, ending, 3/31/2025 is hereby adopted and shall constitute appropriations for the purposes stated; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Annual Budget and Capital Budget/Program as presented for adoption reflects each item of revenue and appropriation in the same amount and title as set forth in the introduced and approved budget, including all amendments thereto, if any, which have been approved by the Director of the Division of Local Government Services.

Motion to approve Resolution #2024-8 made by Chairman Harper; 2nd by Commissioner Bujnowski.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)
Absent: Mondadori/Schlemm/Suarez

Account balances through 2/29/2024 noting that at April meeting looking at Account #4, which at 2/29/2024 had \$964,000. \$220,000 taken out of there, put into TD Bank for 6-month CD at 5%. SHA will have outside of Bogota, 3 CDs for almost \$700,000; there are a couple CDs with Bogota.

Commissioner Fairman: If my math is correct, SHA down to \$2.5 million at Bogota. ED Marra: We have a Letter of Credit @ \$3 million credit with them. Commissioner Fairman: I think we should continue to shrink money out of there from an Operating Account basis and put it into term money because of return on it and stability that you don't have any big projects underway anymore. ED Marra: That should free up some money to get extra return. I agree and Account #4 is an account like that, and as you can see Account #1 is an account we don't touch very often. We may try to find another bank to take out \$220,000 to \$240,000.

Remarks of Citizens was skipped over, we will wait until end of the meeting.

Professional Services Committee – nothing at this time

Personnel Committee

**RESOLUTION #2024-9 – ADOPTION OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT
4/1/24 TO 3/31/27**

This was discussed in closed session in January or February. Basically, there are 2 things: Contract stays the same except for 2 items: #1 – employees receive a 3% increase or \$2,000, whichever is more; and #2 – employees asked for and were granted an extra bereavement day for a variety of relatives who didn't fall into the original bereavement policy. I have a copy of Secaucus' White Collar Contract. It's a much more generous policy, but our Board was fine with what they asked for. They have also given me a letter that everyone was for the Collective Bargaining Agreement, no issues with it.

Resolution 2024-9 - (Approval of Collective Bargaining Agreement)

Whereas, the collective bargaining agreement with the employees of the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus expired on 3/31/2024; and

Whereas, the Personnel Committee has met with the union representatives in order to negotiate a new contract with the employees, and

Whereas, the Personnel Committee and the Secaucus Public Employees Association have arrived at an agreement on all personnel issues;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing

Authority of the Town of Secaucus that the collective bargaining agreement dated 4/1/2024 through 3/31/2027 be hereby ratified;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all non-union employees (except for the executive director), shall receive the same 3.0% salary adjustment or \$2,000 (whichever is greater), for each year of the contract as the union employees and shall be bound by the same working conditions and benefits outlined in the CBA document;

Chairman Harper: Commissioners Suarez and Schlemm worked on this a lot. Employees came to us with minimum sensible demands. We met them happily and Board had a few things we took out. It was very straight forward; good 3-year contract.

Motion to approve Resolution #2024-9 made by Chairman Harper; 2nd by Commissioner Pardasani.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Absent: Mondadori/Schlemm/Suarez

Commissioner Fairman: What does SHA typically see in permitted rent increases on an annual basis to compare to that? ED Marra: What you get in your rent increase is OCAF – Occupancy Cost Adjustment Factor. Several Commissioners and I went to The Elms and they asked what rents there were? There is a “contract rent” – number at The Elms is “\$690” for 1-bedroom. \$625 for studio. Every year HUD provides us with that. There's a point in time every year when I know that number, but not right now. November/December – yes, as it's changed January 1st. I'll send an email to the Board of OCAF number is then; generally between 2-4.5%, has been higher in inflation years. If you come into The Elms now and we calculate 30% of your income and its \$750 for that apartment and no assistance.

Policy Committee

I have been issuing letters at The Elms; issued a 2nd letter to a person about smoking. There are sporadic reports about smoking; still am inclined to install things in that building where they'd get a notification that they smoked. Question is do we have enough money to do 100 of those; monitoring of it also. I had a significantly long conversation with Wind Drift back in December. We went into people's apartments, hired a company Powers Environmental, using non-smokers and smokers to find if there was traces of smoke in apartments. Some smokers had it, some didn't. Unfortunately, some non-smokers also was found there – not a perfect test, but it could have traveled in from other areas. Continuation of that problem is in The Elms, doing what we can in terms of continuing to remind people not to smoke; sending letters for enforcement and not yet ready to go to Hudson County and try to evict somebody who smokes. It's been successful in Bergen County, but it is a different set of Judges. There are no fines, it's a non-smoking policy. Basically, there are steps: verbal, written, written, notice to cease, notice to quit – 4 steps. Those 4 steps have to happen within an 18-month period. Commissioner Fairman: I would continue to encourage because safety has to be our #1 priority to a human element, and secondly, to physical assets and I feel anyone that violates policies puts people's lives and safety at risk. I think SHA should take an aggressive position and aggressive attitude on it. Spend the money if it takes.

ED Marra: I haven't done it in writing, but do remind people verbally that we had a fire in The Elms that was clearly caused by someone smoking; person passed away. Luckily, it was contained to one unit. Family had 90-days to file litigation against SHA, but it did occur In April Of 2022. They filed a claim, but then certain amount of time after that. Mr. Natoli: It's a

90-day tort claim notice and then 2 years statute of limitation. ED Marra: Two years from event, it took place in April 2022; 2 years from date of claim, that took place in July.

HOTMA and NSPIRE: They are coming closer. Waiting List – People apply, 62 and older, meet income requirement, which is very high at this time for Hudson County, can be making less than \$60,000 – most make dramatically less. However, segment of population, which owns a house (an asset) and if they own that house when they are applying for it, **not eligible even if their income is low**. There is segment of population that applies for it; if they have assets that are solely in a 401 or 403B Program and assets exceed \$100,000, **not eligible to live here**. That will effectively take place January 1st. If you're on the list and 60-70, you make it in here by that date and you have those things, we're going to start telling people by mail that they may or not be eligible by the time they get near top of list.

NSPIRE is going to change the way we do inspections for Housing Choice Voucher Program and how people inspect our buildings going forward. There was an original regulation that talked about if people living in your buildings had assets of more than \$100,000, you would be required to give them a six-month notice to leave. That was changed. It then allowed housing authorities, as we are in process of getting our Administrative Plan rewritten, you can write it in your housing authority that you are ignoring that policy for people who are already living in the buildings. This is being written also for family properties, 3-bedroom house, 3-bedroom apartment, etc. There will be a segment of waiting list which won't be eligible, which I don't know right now, maybe 10%, so 70 people with a point, maybe its 5-10%, might have assets over \$100,000, but everybody else wouldn't. Policy goes into effect January 1, 2025 for us. NSPIRE inspections goes into effect 10/1/2024 for SHA and also based on what HUD is doing with certain software as well as PHA Webb, they have to modify their software also. HUD Director Marcia Fudge just resigned, but Biden Administration wants to get this done.

Buildings & Grounds

Resolution #2024-7, Award of a Contract for Removal and Replacement of Flooring in Imprevuduto Towers Community Room.

Memo given to Commissioners tonight from Lee Mestres. This Community Room painted last summer; by end of April this floor will be removed, covered with luxury vinyl tile, similar to penthouse; also a brand new television hooked to wall. Hopefully room will be nicer and nicer to use. This resolution is for upgrades - \$20,000. Commissioner Pardasani noted big differences between bids. Is \$20,000 a good number? Bidder has to pay prevailing wage and flooring is an Armstrong brand, every bidder had to do it based on that spec. Kroll has the most used Community Room, still has rug from 2010. There is also elevator discussion and sealant at 600 County. Optimum has done work for us before.

RESOLUTION 2024-7 - (RESOLUTION AWARDING THE CONTRACT FOR REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF FLOORING IN THE COMMUNITY ROOM AT 600 COUNTY AVENUE)

WHEREAS, the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus (hereinafter referred to as SHA) has determined that it needs to procure services for the removal and replacement of flooring in the Community Room at 600 County Avenue; and

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

WHEREAS, the SHA received bids from five (5) bidders on Wednesday, February 21, 2024; and

WHEREAS, on the public opening of the bids Optimum Flooring, Secaucus, NJ with a
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base bid of \$20,965 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 Company has been reviewed by the architectural firm of Habitech Architecture who recommended the contract be awarded to Company; and

WHEREAS, the bid submitted by Company 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 Optimum Flooring, Paterson Plank Road, Secaucus, NJ 07094 in the amount of \$20,965; 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 Resolution #2024-7 made by Chairman Harper; 2nd by Commissioner Bujnowski.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Absent: Mondadori/Schlemm/Suarez

Sealant work at Impreveduto Towers – we brought Blackstone 360 here to investigate water infiltration in #1202 getting water every time it rains hard and blows against building; in a corner of bedroom and bedroom closet. 7th and 8th floors get it in their windows. Blackstone 360 came, gave us a proposal – couldn't be accepted as over \$200,000 – needs to be bid; came back as Lee asked them to do something less -- \$96,000; wanting to make Board aware we are looking at these things. There was some consideration we might have done it, but now on back burner, unfortunately.

About a week ago, TKE (ThyssenKrupp) who service elevators at The Elms. The Elms' elevators modernized in 2018-2019. Earlier in the year TKE tells me right elevator needs a new sump pump and a scavenger pump - \$9,000. I signed off on them – basically, some oil leakage, sump pump would collect it; scavenger pump would collect it – end of that story. The Elms residents get worried about elevator; it doesn't stop even sometimes, makes noise, scavenger and sump pumps solve that noise 100% in Elevator #2. TKE come back, services Elevator #1 – they send me a proposal. Not known to me at bottom of elevator shaft is a "jack"; there since 1975. TKE claims jack is no longer any good, actually taping a bit of the meeting as this is not what I'm specifically familiar with, but started to talk to me about a "drift test". Bring elevator to a floor, leave it there for an hour and see how much it moves in that hour. Then they see how much oil has leaked from elevator.

Met with 2 representatives telling me they performed drift test on Elevator #1, left in place 1 hour, go back to see if it moved and what amount of oil leaked, claiming elevator did move and too much oil leaked. If this continues elevator would eventually crash to the ground as hydraulics would fail. Elevator #1 was shut down; telling me they'd have to replace existing "jack". Whatever it is, it's buried into the ground in basement. In order to do this, SHA would sign a contract with them for \$116,000 for repairs; asking did you include prevailing wage into this – they have union workers, so close to that number. Unless I do something under emergency procurement, SHA doesn't have any ability to do this other than to bid this job. I also sent an email to an engineering firm, Copamontebono Associates. They are engineering company that did bid specifications for The Elms modernization of elevators and also this building's modernization for elevators.

He called today as he spoke to consultant who worked on The Elms; said give me a call and I'll tell you what consultant said. I wrote to Bill Katchen and Counsel Natoli, asking isn't there some kind of Emergency Procurement Procedure allowing Authority to skip over bidding process because this is an emergency. Commissioners received this (indicating) tonight – Emergency Procurement Report – last 2 pages are memo from Mr. Natoli; first 3 pages are what is procedure and reporting requirements to do something for an Emergency Repair. I want to reach out to Bill Katchen tonight, as reading this more, does this meet the criteria of an Emergency Repair. Building is all senior, 2 elevators, meaning 1 elevator is going to work 100% of the time, 24/7 until other one is fixed. Procedure for this sounds insane – talking about drilling hole in the ground 90' into the ground, put in a new jack. If I magically signed this April 1st, when would it be done and it was concluded that all work done/inspected about 90 days in a perfect world with no problems. End of September – 6 months. We can't manage with 1 elevator for 6 months. In The Elms is a hydraulic pump that pushes elevator up, same thing as in Kroll Heights. This building it's run by cables.

Commissioner Fairman: Firm we have here is successor to TKE ownership; this is a private equity transaction that bought that business away from ThyssenKrupp when they were in financial matters. So they've owned it about 3 years. An enterprise that has an annuity strain and is private equity, I'm suspicious of their business practices when it comes to bidding and contracts from an economic point of view, not the question of deliverability or expertise, but do raise concern that we should have our other consultants, Copamontebono, really express an opinion on that from economics in addition to doability. ED Marra: Mark noted he had not seen jacks really fail, jack is 50 years old. I told them we had equipment modernized 4 years ago. They said nobody modernizes the jack. Commissioner Fairman: Was modernization done by pre-TKE when it was TK --- ED Marra: it was done before TKE, but not done by them at all – they didn't even bid on the job, never bid on any of SHA jobs to modernize and reason is: when engineer writes spec, he writes it for a generic piece of equipment that you can get parts for easily. When TKE modernizes your elevator, they want to use their parts, that way you are locked into them to make sure they're going to service it forever. I've been here 13 years and except for 2-3 years, they always end up winning bids somehow to service elevators. 90% of the time they do a fairly good job in a timely manner; they want to use their equipment even before private equity people.

Modernization done by general contractor, but real company who worked on elevator was Arrow Elevators of New Jersey in Sussex County, and who Mark contacted about this issue about the jack. Truth is that if we are able to do this through Emergency Process, we will seek another quote, not just sign TKE number even if it's \$90,000. I would pay Arrow Elevators to come to SHA for the day, get down in the pit, assess it, no, it doesn't need to be replaced. We need to do these things, and it's \$60,000, but we don't need to replace it. What TKE described to me when 3-4 days they're jack-hammering into the ground – bad. I will also contact people who modernized the elevators here as well. Mr. Natoli: You can hit the Emergency Contract button, but also shop around.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

Report for January through March in Commissioners' packets.

CORRESPONDENCE

First time in my 13 years at SHA, woman called me and I answered her questions about where she was on Waiting List; not happy with answers and submitted a complaint to HUD. I read the HUD answer and I would not have been happy with HUD answer, if I was that woman. I explain to people the preference points system. No one explains them when you call a housing authority. I explain you won't get zero points and will sit there on the list, woman on the list 8-9 years with zero points. I remind them every housing authority has preference points. She wasn't happy, complained to HUD, HUD investigated by contacting me. I gave HUD information and they answered her back.

OLD, NEW OR OTHER BUSINESS – nothing at this time

REMARKS OF CITIZENS

LINDA – RIT - #304 – Thank you for fixing change machine on 2nd floor; thank you for new washing machine. I called number on weekends, spoke with Joe. We had terrible rain. Brought something up to neighbor on 11th floor, then walked down to 10th floor via stairwell. Water coming in on stairwell, I almost fell – it was north side. Also in lobby when it rains heavy, which happened before, underneath Directory, it was all wet including rug. Also: neighbor who's lived here a long time, her bedroom and bathroom door is terrible – big hole in it, paint coming off – same condition as when she moved in. ED Marra: Right now working on problem with tenants' closet doors. We've been changing them, it's a space not dented or broken. We ran out of pantry door in kitchen, but getting 50 of those, shipped 10/month. Starting in April Stefan will go back and replace, hiring a contractor to do front doors. Many doors are from 1986, but have to balance economically what gets done. Flooring has been down 15 years.

BHARAP - #501 – Parking problems with bird droppings on his car; please cut the branches that are over his car. Every day he has to clean off his car. Yes, branches were cut back some last year, but not enough. The display in the elevator doesn't work on floor numbers -- showing if elevator going up or down; it isn't on the screen. Sofa in the sitting area is a dust collector. ED Marra knew screen didn't work for many months; now screen works and enunciates what floor you are on, but floor number still not on screen. It hasn't been a good idea with all the frustration. When we do the flooring, we will change furniture in the middle, but no couch again.

B.VANI - #1008 – Kitchen sink recently gets clogged. Once it got unclogged. Kitchen door is scary and always squeaky. Everything is good and fine otherwise. ED Marra: Unusual, that 10th floor sink would get clogged; lower floors yes, as everyone has same pipe. We can check under your sink.

MR. B. VANI - #1008 – Asked about net income. ED Marra: HUD says take gross income, it isn't SHA's decision, it is HUD's decision. Mr. Vani asked about temperature and capacity of hot water heater. ED Marra: We will come and check temperature. Heater can't be any bigger. Many people complain about not enough hot water, 2 people cannot take a shower back to back or wash dishes and wash dishes. Only Kroll Heights doesn't have hot water heater under their sinker. It was last building built.

Mr. Vani: Can smoke detectors be less sensitive to kitchen smoke? ED Marra: Almost no housing authorities for senior citizens have gas stoves – all have electric; simple reason of a
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fire. You are in a high-rise, and this building has a hard-wired smoke detector in your apartment that if it goes off automatically triggers the fire department. Kroll Heights or The Elms, because they are smaller, if your smoke detector goes off in your apartment, you can open your windows, get smoke out – no firemen come. But if you open your apartment door and smoke goes into hallway, fire engines will come. In this building, we do get a higher frequency of “unattended cooking calls”. People don’t pay attention to their stove. There are different nationalities and ethnicities that cook in different ways. On occasion there is a little extra smoke – alarm goes off. Turn vent on all the time you are cooking. At one time we had 50 fire calls here; fortunately, fire department doesn’t charge us even though they are here with all their resources, and might be delayed in getting somewhere where there is a real fire.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Chairman Harper; 2nd by Commissioner Bujnowski.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (4)

Absent: Mondadori/Schlemm/Suarez