

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

May 23, 2024

Condensed transcription of taped minutes - Thursday,
May 23, 2024, The Elms, 777 Fifth Street, Secaucus, New Jersey
Commencing at 6:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL;

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

Also Present: Executive Director Christopher Marra
Stephen J. Natoli, Esq.

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 15, 2023. 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

MINUTES – APRIL 25, 2024 REGULAR MINUTES

Motion to approve minutes of April 25, 2024 made by Commissioner Schlemm; 2nd by Commissioner Pardasani.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

Absent: Mondadori/Suarez

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS – MAY 2024

Motion to approve payment of claims for May 2024 made by Commissioner Fairman; 2nd by Commissioner Schlemm.

Commissioner Fairman: If SHA takes out JIFFA, then would bring SHA down to 125; that's about what you expect. ED Marra: We're going to start seeing it, that's what we see as we're calculating it out for the year.

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

Absent: Mondadori/Suarez

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INFORMATION FOR COMMISSIONERS

1. Commissioners got letter about status of elevator and what's wrong with it.
2. Anecdotal story about workings of SHA sometimes, acknowledgement of work of Chairman Harper. Over past several months, SHA and Town of Secaucus have come upon new layer of problems that people have in our community. People born and raised here, moved here 15 years ago or showed up here 18 months ago. They deal with complicated problems of homelessness, domestic abuse, things SHA is not capable of handling. Town isn't capable of handling these either. There are Social Services dealing with hundreds over course of a year who have needs of food, file for EBT card, nothing – hundreds of times more than that.

On May 3rd, Mayor Gonnelli calls me to his office, calls Social Services. We are with a woman who was evicted from her house 2 weeks ago, living in hotel, running out of money at hotel. Husband has a job, has 16-year old daughter, and won't be able to stay there 1 more night. I call Chairman Harper, who works in the County and knows Social Service people. I drive them down to County on Friday, May 3rd. County will call us back, do intake, and send me to Garden State Episcopal (which is for emergency services) – they can't help her even though we drove there at 3 PM. On Monday she goes to County, submits all her paperwork, County does intake and will help you with 1st month rent/1st month security.

Meanwhile, Mayor Gonnelli somehow manages to get this family a 1-bedroom apartment at 220 Meadow Lane without them filling out an application. Fast forward to May 17th, 11 A.M. (as County has done nothing in 2 weeks). I call Social Services, say I'm driving to County; try to meet woman who helped me once. Mr. Harper has personal relationships with many in County, specifically Frank Mazza, Director of Department of Family Services & Reintegration. I explain about woman needing 1st month rent/1st month security. She's in system, but it is stuck. Mr. Mazza comes to Mr. Harper's office 45 minutes later after consulting with his staff, lays down a paper. Piece of paper says County will pay their security deposit, May's rent, June's rent and July's rent if management company is willing to wait 3 days to get check in mail (a promissory note) so people could live there over weekend. They accept. That wouldn't happen if Mike Harper wasn't in the County, but has nothing to do with Human Services; I don't know anyone in County.

In the past few weeks, I've spoken with Mayor Gonnelli and Gary Jeffas that we need better understanding of what County Human Services does. We were under the impression they put people in a hotel, pay their hotel for a while until they found some housing. County claims they don't do that. You have to go to not-for-profits to do that.

In addition, there is another organization called North Hudson Community Action Corporation, a simple not-for-profit, but has millions of dollars providing a multitude of services: health care, housing, translation, immigration. The housing authority uses them to send people there – 82 Polk Street, Guttenberg, to help them get their security

deposit (most are Section 8) when they don't have enough money to get one. We don't use them enough and need to understand.

I don't have statistics on this, but this one tiny anecdotal story. I get calls in my office every week, almost every other day from people who mostly live in Secaucus: about housing or other services. Five years ago, I got those calls once a month. Our town gets them every single day. Story is to acknowledge and recognize this isn't part of our job to do these things, but things we do sometimes.

Chairman Harper: Thank you for the kind words. The relationships are important and Secaucus has been blessed we didn't need the County all that much. We might be under-represented in County and Secaucus not someplace they might often think about. I am in Elections, but deal with a lot of other offices and feel like a Secaucus representative and nice when system works and you really get to help people who deserve it.

3. Over past 12 months and fully understand there are 2-sides to this story. What I am asking residents to do is: we are having a problem specifically with one neighbor in this neighborhood. That particular family in that house has lived there for more than 25 years, but for whatever reason in the past year starting last June, a person who lives there has contacted me several times about incidents that they are having with residents. I'm asking residents to not engage with these people, and if you are verbally assaulted by a person, whether it's that person or anybody else, pick up your cell phone and immediately call the police so that you are the one initiating the action and not playing defense if they're the one that initiated it, because I had that person in my office for an hour last week. Before me, he was in Mayor Gonnelli's office for an hour. I'm telling and asking you – I'm here 13 years and hasn't been a peep from anybody on either side of our building or on east side of the building: **don't engage with this family as best you can.** If they initiate something, contact police. The camera doesn't reach; only makes it to front of sidewalk.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

You have monthly bank account balances. We now have close to \$1 million that are not in Bogota, which we're working on getting more money out of there. By June meeting, I hope you'll see something, taking out another \$200,000 and put in another bank with decent rate of return. You can see as I explained last month why 3-31 was an anomaly; the fact that there was a \$400,000 payment made in March that should have shown up in April, but gave to SHA on 3/29 instead of 4/1.

I hope within next 2 weeks to establish audit date, contact Finance Committee for our audit that ends 3/31/2024.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

RESOLUTION #2024-13 - SETTLEMENT OF CONTRACT WITH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 4/1/24 – 3/31/27

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

Resolution 2024-13 - Settlement of Contract with Executive Director

Whereas, Christopher Marra, Executive Director, current salary is \$125,307 and received his last increase on April 1, 2023; and

Whereas, the Personnel Committee has met with Christopher Marra, Executive Director in order to negotiate a new agreement, and

Whereas, the Personnel Committee and Christopher Marra, Executive Director have arrived at an agreement on these matters; and

Whereas will receive a 3% increase effective 4.1.24, 4.1.25 and 4.1.26.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Town of Secaucus that Christopher Marra, Executive Director will receive the following increase to his base salary effective April 1, 2024.

Name	Current	2024	2025	2026
Marra	\$125,307	\$129,066	\$132,937	\$136,925

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

Absent: Mondadori/Suarez

Commissioner Fairman: I'd like to make an observation – that from time it is important for the Board to seek and obtain information to validate the market for ED Marra holds. It is only fair to him and his family, that would be a more normal practice as to Executive Director comps in New Jersey market. I support what we've done tonight, but I think it's important so that we're fair to his family and to him for the job that he does. Chairman Harper: The Board and I respect your input on any and all financial matters coming from the private industry. If you want to look at it, I'll appoint a Sub-committee that you're in charge of to look into that and market here in New Jersey. Commissioner Fairman: Happy to do that. ED Marra: Thanked the Board for their continued confidence in his job.

SMOKING POLICY

In past month, a sister of a resident living in The Elms went to ED Marra's office after resident received a letter stating **you are violating the lease. This is your second letter and if I come back here again, we're going to evict you.** I saw him and through translation told him that. I told his sister, just come here and we'll give him a voucher and he can move out, paying same 30% and let him go where he thinks he can smoke somewhere else. She was super upset, didn't want him to go, understands the seriousness and tried her best to relate that information back to him. There is still an issue going on here at The Elms. I'm not prepared to talk about what we're going to do, as I haven't lined up all my duck in a row. I'm trying my best under the circumstances to stay on top of smoking topic.

BUILDING & GROUNDS

Status of removal and replacement of floor at Rocco Towers. Text sent out today about Rocco Towers Community Room – rugs taken up, replaced with flooring. TV will be hung in that room; have a social for residents up there to see what's being done.

There is a specific mouse problem on 5th floor here. In talking to resident through translation, I hear that other people are telling her "I have mice too". I just kill them, that's what you have to expect. I sent out email/text other day stating "if you have a mouse, you need to tell me." I got 2 feedbacks: 1 on 3rd floor (at that end indicating) and other one – Loretta doesn't have them, but wanted to identify people next to her have gone away and we need to go into apartment to check. Stefan went in to look around, including opening up coat closet at front door, looking at bottom and finding holes there, which he filled, but no evidence of a mouse. People use glue trap/doesn't work. Use glue trap/it does work. Bait with snap/kill works or doesn't work. No exterminator has come up with a better solution other than filling holes, putting poison inside hole and filling them. Message is: if you have a mouse, call Office. You can't just tell Adam; we need to know it in the Office. A work order is created: refrigerator broken, toilet problem, mouse here. They click button on data base when they're done, so Office knows it's been accomplished. Here you see Adam and ask him. Kroll and Rocco, they call Office.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM (HCVP)

Commissioners given information about where we are through month of May 1st. We submitted our SEMAP Report this month. We're using 250 of 254 actual vouchers that SHA is allotted; we continue to try to have 254 vouchers used. It's a dynamic program changing month to month; never want to be over the account.

REMARKS OF CITIZENS

MIKE - #606 – Mice are in the walls, I put food in traps and caught them. ED Marra: When we were doing work on the building, front doors were wide open for many weeks. We've secured better doors on back of building sealing up the space.

MARGARET - #211 – Someone leaves back door open by parking lot. They put a rock there. ED Marra: Whoever does that, if you see it, take rock away and shut the door. If you have a pass, you don't need to do it.

VINNY - #505 - #1 elevator car – do we have a preventive maintenance program? I haven't seen one yet. ED Marra: Yes, we do. SHA has Thyssen Krupp, called TKE now. Elevator equipment was upgraded in 2018-2019; all old taken out, new equipment installed. TKE started talking about a "jack", which is at base of these elevators. Jack moderates oil usage within elevator. You talked about elevator wouldn't stop or level off the floor properly. TKE thought it could be fixed with something else. Then made the determination that the jack at base of elevator, which is 50 years old, was no good; needed to be replaced. SHA hired a company that did modernization of that elevator equipment, having an elevator consultant working for them. They came to verify what TKE said, verify what TKE's proposal was and SHA accepted another proposal from another elevator company to make sure that TKE wasn't throwing down any number – originally \$116,000 to replace the jack. Another bid was \$110,000; TKE was informed and are monitoring what they do. My memo sent out at end of April says the issue is a drill. Jack is removed from 90' hole it's in, it has to come all the way up

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and out. New jack goes in after you drill down 90 feet. Jack has to get made. Contract signed April 10th; their estimated date is end of July, which includes inspections by State of N.J. so elevator can go back into operation. I will check in after Memorial Day to see if we're on schedule for this. TKE does come in. I log into a web site, as it's all digital now, telling dates they were here to do maintenance, look at it, clean out pit, make sure they do what they do. It's usually our maintenance men that are there; they might stay or say okay, call me when you're done, so I know you're done. It's a 3-year contract due up this year. TKE is a reputable company. It should be fixed by end of July.

ED Marra: Tree out front will be trimmed next week. Meeting tonight was moved to 6:00 P.M. as Board has a Closed Special Meeting after this one. The room will be cleared and used for at least one hour.

FRAN - #506 – Back door light is out.

BETTY - #604 – Please put names back on the mail boxes. ED Marra: We'll work on a new system, as right now there is the phone system, which is at Kroll Heights – piece of paper by the button that you press with names/apartment numbers. We'll do something similar to that in the “cube area”.

DIANE - #502 – There was water in hallway when it rained, not in my apartment at end of hallway.

ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTE: AYES/All Present Commissioners (5)

Absent: Mondadori/Suarez

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Alvarez
Secretary/Transcriber