

**Board of Commissioners – Housing Authority of the Town of Morristown**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**200 South Street, 4<sup>th</sup>Flr, Morristown, NJ 07960**  
**July 24, 2023 – 6:00 pm**

**Board of Commissioners**

Martha Ballard, Chairperson  
Luma Oweis, Vice Chairperson– via phone  
Nohemy Zabala, Commissioner  
Tina Lindsey, Commissioner  
Eva Turbiner, Commissioner – via phone  
Derrick McCoy, Commissioner - absent  
Laura Lutz, Commissioner

**Housing Authority**

Keith Kinard, Executive Director  
Allison Durham, Deputy Director  
Paul Miller, Esq., MHA General Counsel Office

**Town of Morristown Officials**

Mayor Timothy Dougherty  
Councilman Robert Iannaccone

**Call to Order**

Chairperson Ballard called the meeting to order at 6:02p.m. The meeting was properly noticed under the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act. Roll call was taken and Chairwoman Ballard, Commissioners Lindsey, Zabala, and Lutz were present. Commissioner Turbiner and Commissioner Oweis were present via conference call. Commissioner McCoy was absent. The flag was observed.

**Pledge of Allegiance - Moment of Silence Observed**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes Summary–April 24, 2023 & June 7, 2023 (Special Meeting)**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Zabala and seconded by Commissioner Lindsey, the minutes summaries of the April 24 & June 7, 2023 Board Meetings were approved. Chairwoman Ballard, Commissioners Oweis, Lindsey, Turbiner, Zabala, and Lutz voted in favor.

**Executive Director Report**

Mr. Kinard reported on the following items:

1. Housing Choice Voucher Program: Update on the funding for the program from HUD. Typically, HUD is behind on submitting funding to authorities in a timely manner. However, on top of the typical funding process, MHA’s transition under the RAD program from public housing to project-based voucher funding further added delay to the usual concerning HUD staying on top of their funding allocations to MHA. We have had several meetings with the appropriate HUD officials to bring this matter to their attention. HUD has acknowledged this matter and is in the process of rectifying the funding allocations due to MHA. We anticipate the funds to be provided by HUD to fall between 2.5 to 4 million dollars. The numbers are being reviewed and we should have a final determination in the next few weeks to 60 days.

2. RAD Update – progress continues at the sites. We have approximately seven individuals from the senior buildings still at the hotel. These households are associated with the longer-term renovation schedule of the accessibility apartments. Notwithstanding, significant progress continues to be made on the lobbies, common space areas at 31 Early. At 39 Early work on the first floor is slightly behind but we anticipate seeing that work pick up over the next month or two. The only trees removed so far were solely at 31 Early Street. No trees were removed at Manahan Village to date. The trees that were removed were slated for removal in the original plan including the draft depictions of the exterior of the sites. Multiple meetings were held with residents prior to any work starting at the buildings during the planning phase. The work on the exterior was part of the discussions in those resident meetings. The exterior work plan was submitted to the Town for approval which included notations of the tree removals. It should be noted that over the years, MHA had paid out claims to residents due to damages done to vehicles by several of these particular trees. These trees did not provide shade for sitting locations for residents; they were primarily over the parking lot area. In addition, many trees were overgrown and affecting the retaining walls on the site. At the end of the day, the contractor will be meeting with the Town Arborist to have further discussions on the plan and no further trees will be removed prior to that meeting. At Manahan there are trees that also pose a hazard to the site and the residents and we hope to review those as well the Town Arborist.

At Manahan Village, renovation work is in progress. The work includes new roofs, windows, and siding at several buildings. The main issue we do anticipate at Manahan is relocation of large-sized households with children and finding appropriate accommodations for the families with more than three members. As we work through this matter and head towards the school year, we are very conscious of these issues and poised to meet this challenge. Exasperating the matter more is the lack of hotel rooms in Morristown for large families. We are looking at several options such as temporary relocation to vacant apartments, providing stipends to families to stay with friends or relatives to help get thru this phase. One other major issue at Manahan is the water piping structure which affects multiple households when one unit has a backup or leak issue. This work is to help alleviate this issue as we move forward with renovations.

3. The MHA's website has been updated to include a Resident Services section with extensive information on activities, services and the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program. The FSS program is a HUD initiative that helps families develop goals and provides a structure to enhance their employment possibilities and participate in an escrow savings component of the program. The website includes schedules of activities at the Marion Sally Resident Center and the senior buildings. We have also developed a newsletter for distribution to all the residents with more information on current activities and happenings throughout MHA including information on the renovations and OAHS management contact. MHA's resident services division also has a social media presence including Instagram and Facebook. Those sites are updated regularly as well.

### **Board Committee Reports**

Commissioner Zabala gave a summary of the Board Retreat which was held Saturday, July 1, 2023 at Commissioner Oweis' office space. She mentioned they reviewed the previous presentation on the RAD project while it was still in the negotiation stage and was able to see the progress that has been made since then. In addition, the Board discussed the project in great detail. The Board received an overview of the resident services division and had an

open discussion on the services residents are currently receiving and what other services and programs are in the works to provide to residents in the future. The Board discussed pinpoint challenges the residents are experiencing and how to help residents in these areas. One example is a growing issue in the senior population and making sure they're getting the appropriate help they need and monitoring mental illness, working with families and engaging the youth. The board discussed potentially adding home ownership training, career advancement goals, employment development, potentially creating a non-profit to help bring in grants and other resources to assist residents and work alongside the social services division. The Board discussed being more engaged with residents and filling the gaps identified and bringing in resources to the agency. The Board discussed building the FSS number of families up from 10 to 25 over the next two years. The Board reviewed the potential of using the computer lab to enhance other services and program for the residents including GED classes and being a GED test site, provide college prep classes, and technology training. The Board brainstormed about ways to move forward and help to provide more high-quality connections for the residents. The Board discussed potential opportunities to continue to provide the fresh food markets for residents who relied on that program that was unfortunately cut from MHA sites by the vendor. The Board also reviewed the opportunity to rebrand the agency as we go through a transition phase and wanting to present the best presence in the agency's new role. The Board reviewed current lists of committees and discussed how to refresh the committees to work at their highest potential to better serve the residents and the changes of the agency. Three committees discussed were asset management, resident advisory and perhaps policy and planning committee. The Board also talked about next steps and the future of the agency such as re-developing its mission and goals. With the changing role of the agency, the Board reflected on why individuals joined the Board and noted that it was not just to attend meetings and discuss the budget but with the purpose of focusing on actually getting out more and engaging with residents and the community to make connections and a positive impact. The Board discussed the importance of increasing board members presence and engagement in the tenant community and at events.

### **Old Business**

None

### **Resolutions**

#### **- 2023-012 Resolution: Schedule of Bills as of July 19, 2023**

Chairwoman Ballard motioned, Seconded by Commissioner Zabala. Chairwoman Ballard, Commissioners Oweis, Turbiner, Lindsey, Zabala, and Lutz voted yes.

#### **- 2023-013 Resolution: Adopt FY2023 State-Approved Budget**

Commissioner Zabala motioned, seconded by Commissioner Ballard. Chairwoman Ballard, Commissioners Oweis, Turbiner, Lindsey, and Zabala voted yes. Commissioner Lutz abstained.

### **New Business**

Commissioner Turbiner asked for a brief presentation on the financials provided prior to the meeting. Chief Financial Officer Pauline James reviewed the agency's financials including the revenues received and expenditures year to date. Commissioner Turbiner noted an asterisk on the financials related to a potential \$3.8 million shortfall of funds and asked if we could potentially be in receipt of \$1 Million over the anticipated budget. Mr. Kinard stated that it is not yet official on what the final shortfall amount will be and that the amount is going to be revenue to sure-up deficits. Commissioner Turbiner asked if the surplus amount of operating subsidy will be recaptured by HUD as it seems to be more than we had budgeted to receive. Ms. James noted that the increase is partially due to receiving more operating subsidy after the closing of the Manahan site and it is to be used to pay OAHs Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) for the site. Mr. Kinard stated that the beginning budget is always an estimate of what HUD will allocate and we were fortunate to have received more than budgeted in operating funds; however, HUD on the other hand has providing the MHA less than required voucher funds. Commissioner Turbiner commented that interest raised is now over \$200,000 and it appears to be due to the proceeds of the sale of the properties. Mr. Kinard stated

that is correct. Commissioner Turbiner asked if the notation on the financials as to the sales proceeds being \$13.2 Million, if that is just Manahan and does not include the senior sites from the year before? Mr. Kinard stated it includes the senior sites and a portion of the Manahan sales proceeds. The senior sites are around 9 million and approximately \$4 Million for Manahan. The remaining proceeds of \$16 Million for Manahan have not been received as yet and hopes to receive this Fall after the Department of Community Affairs meets to approve it. He reminded Commissioners that a Seller's Note with an interest rate of nearly 6% was issued on the Manahan sale, and this interest is currently accruing.

Commissioner Lutz asked what the total is for both properties and why it is not included in the financials. Mr. Kinard said 29M is the total but because all the funds were not expected to be received in Fiscal year '23, it would not all be included in this budget. However, the proceeds are noted on the MHA's balance sheet. Commissioner Lutz asked if we plan to put the amounts in the budget in the future as a projection. Mr. Kinard stated that as the amounts have not been received and remains speculative as to whether it will be paid in one lump sum or over time, it would not be included in projections at this time. In any event, it is recorded in our balance sheet and on a debt instrument. Commissioner Turbiner stated that she thought HUD's fiscal year was also October 1. Mr. Kinard agreed but they do not end up allocating funds until February, March the following year, in many cases.

### **Public Comments**

Tawanna Cotten – 30 Flagler Street, mentioned she was happy to hear about all the programs that will be offered to the residents. She asked the following questions: what happened to the Police having a satellite station at the Marion Sally Center; can people be banned from the site as habitual offenders, who watches the cameras, will there be a temporary bulletin board at the senior buildings during construction noting the various activities and can email addresses be provided for someone at OAHS for residents to utilize. Ms. Cotten stated she has called and no one answers which she understands they are busy with all that is going on and she did not mind just sending an email instead. Ms. Cotten further stated the following: there are a lot of dogs at Manahan Village and no one seems to be enforcing the leash regulation; having the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program is great, maybe MHA partner with Housing Partnership for homeownership potential and do a seminar on the subject; people did not internalize the removal of the trees and were shocked and overwhelmed when it occurred to be seen in real time.

Vanessa Brown -Vice President of NAACP – Ms. Brown recognized MHA for all the hard work she has been seeing throughout the past couple of years. She stated that although issues may always arise, how MHA is handling it as far as she can see, is great. Ms. Brown went on to mention how awesome the FSS Program is and that MHA should absolutely go along with the broadening of the program as it is very beneficial to the tenants and their future whether it is used towards a mortgage or paying off expenses. Ms. Brown further stated that in her opinion, partnering with a non-profit organization like Housing Partnership, which is in Dover, New Jersey, that could help MHA fund various types of programs. Through a non-profit, MHA could inquire about grants in the Morristown area to enhance various programs. Ms. Brown closed out her statements with “Keep up the good work MHA.”

Christine Ace - The Shade Tree Commission- Ms. Ace stated that the Shade Tree Commission has no purview over the matter but has the ability to educate and provide information on specific trees in the area and believes that 5-8 significant trees were removed at 31 Early Street. She stated that she was asked to attend the Board meeting to offer her expertise as trees clean the air, can provide up to 30 people shade, and can mitigate flooding, amongst other benefits. She offered herself and the Town Arborist as advisors. She spoke to someone on site about how to treat trees being replanted and she was troubled by their response to her. Commissioner Turbiner mentioned plans were submitted and approved by the Town. Ms. Ace replied

that the Arborist does review plans but private properties do not have to have their plans reviewed by them. Mr. Kinard stated that before any more trees are to be removed, the contractor will work with the Town Arborist. Ms. Ace thanked the Board for their time and offered her assistance on the matter moving forward.

Edward Ahearn, 31 Early Street- Mr. Ahearn was very upset and stated ever since the construction started, cleaning and maintenance of the building has been extremely lacking. He stated the hallways, elevators, etc. have not been cleaned and that the fire exits have things left all over which are tripping hazards. There is a lot of dust particles and slime. “We are being treated to live like animals” he stated. He further stated that the windows in his apartment and probably others have not been installed correctly, every times it rains it leaks inside. He also stated the areas of the popcorn ceiling are peeling and falling off in the hallways and being left there and the windows in the hallways do not open anymore. Mr. Kinard stated that the hallways are going to be outfitted with an air exchange control system to maintain fresh air throughout the building common areas. Mr. Ahearn also noted that it is taking so long to finish the entranceway of the building.

George Towns, 31 Early Street – Mr. Towns stated there is a lot of noise at the building, nothing is being cleaned up, his air filter was covered in gunk. He is wearing his mask in his apartment due to the level of dust around. He stated that 3 to 4 apartments were taped off for asbestos and asked if it is just those apartments affected by asbestos and why just the corner apartments were taped off? He asked what are the report findings of the man who monitored the air quality in the building during renovations? He emphasized that it has been stressful during this work for most of the residents. Mr. Towns further stated that there seems to be a lack of maintenance staff for the building as well.

Otis Davis, 31 Early Street - Mr. Davis mentioned that the piping in the building is old and that a band-aid cannot be put on it. He stated that rodents and too many flying bugs are in his apartment and his closet was not completed. He further stated that he feels disrespected. Mr. Kinard stated that he will instruct the contractor to work with the residents that needs items completed in the apartments checked and resolved.

### **Mayor’s Comments**

Mayor Dougherty stated that he will conduct a tour of the sites in two weeks with Mr. Kinard and Orbach. He stated that many were concerned about the trees but it is important for the proper parties to review the situation, find a solution, get a process in place and find a way to get it done. He has seen the changes spearheaded by Mr. Kinard that have been occurring at these sites and in the apartments for the betterment of the residents. He noted the following: there is a lot of work occurring at the sites and a lot of upgrades that will provide better living conditions in the future, there is a process in place to get things on the right track, cleanliness is important at the site and he is in support of every one of the residents. He added that he is pleased by the report given by Commissioner Zabala and the Board wanting to engage with the residents.

### **Council Liaison’s Comments –Robert Iannaccone**

Councilman Iannaccone stated the management company should be in attendance at Board meetings or that there be direct contact given to the company and they should hear the complaints and not have to go through a third-party. He noted that the MHA’s role is now different than it used to be and the MHA Board needs to understand the role of the organization moving forward. He added that the management company and owner need to be held accountable. He encourages the Board to address its committee needs and balancing its financial accounting and make use of the Town Council for expertise and resources.

Commissioner Lutz stated that she wished she could have attended the Board Retreat and felt that her email request to attend through Zoom should not have been ignored and that no response to her request left her feeling she was being prevented from being a part of the Board.

Commissioner Turbiner requested that the Board exit the public session and open Board only Executive Session. Commissioner Turbiner motioned and Commission Zabala seconded exiting the public session and opening an Executive Session. All Commissioners voted in favor.

**Adjournment**

Upon return to the public session of the Board meeting and with no further business Commissioner Zabala motion and Commissioner Ballard seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. All Commissioners voted yes to adjourn at 7:05 pm.