

Housing Authority of the City of Vineland

REGULAR MEETING **Thursday, March 20, 2025** **6:00 p.m.**

The Regular Meeting of the Housing Authority of the City of Vineland was called to order by Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa on Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the office of the Authority located at 191 W. Chestnut Avenue, Vineland, New Jersey 08360.

The following Commissioners were present:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Absent)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	
Commissioner Albert Porter	
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	

Also, present were Jacqueline S. Jones, Executive Director, Wendy Hughes, Assistant Executive Director, Ron Miller, Director of Affordable Housing, Michael Watson, Esquire – Solicitor, Linda Cavallo – Accountant and Gloria Pomales, Executive Assistant.

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa read the Sunshine Law.

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on February 20, 2025. A motion was made by Commissioner Porter and seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Absent)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Abstain)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Fee Account's Report:

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for the Financial Report from the Fee Accountant. Linda Cavallo reviewed the Financial Report for the five months ending February 28, 2025.

Executive Director's Report:

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa requested the Executive Administrative Report. Mrs. Jones requested an update from Ron Miller on the construction renovation projects.

Ron Miller reported there is a resolution for the community room furniture for Kidson and Olivio Towers.

In regard to the Tarkiln Acres roof replacement, a proposal was received and is under review by staff. There will be negotiations with the architect on this. Further updates will be provided next month.

The Kidson and Olivio Towers elevator refurbishment is a little bit stagnant. The project is still in punch list. All four elevator cars are running. Otis Elevator, who is the subcontractor, has experienced a loss of a lot of their senior staff and we are having some trouble with technical

issues with a couple of the elevators. The Authority has not released payment #9 per the recommendation of the Authority's elevator consultant. The Authority is holding back additional money from Otis Elevator in an effort to get them to finish the project. The Authority has also not issued substantial completion on the project purposefully because the Authority wants them to finish it. The longer they take, the longer the Authority benefits because it extends the maintenance. While it is under construction, the maintenance is covered and not paying for maintenance. Once substantial completion is issued, then the Authority starts paying for the maintenance for the next 2 years.

There is a resolution on the agenda tonight in regard to a contract modification. This will be explained in the resolution section of the meeting by Solicitor, Mr. Watson.

The water filtration system equipment is being reprogrammed for the Kidston interior plumbing project. It went through reprogramming and the pumps failed. It was returned and the Authority is holding money from the contractor.

The fueling station the Authority is waiting for regarding the fire pump replacement is supposedly being delivered in April. Once it is delivered and installed, the project will be closed out.

A physical conditions assessment must be done for the RAD conversion on the remaining homes of the Scattered Sites. This is considered a RAD Physical Conditions Assessment (RPCA). All 39 homes will need to be assessed for their 20-year capital needs. This is part of the requirements to submit to HUD for the RAD closing. There was a kick-off meeting with AEI in conjunction with the Authority's consultant. The Authority expects the work to start on that within the next 2-3 weeks. There is a lot the Authority needs to put together internally to send to AEI and then the inspections in the field will start at each home. The Authority also had a meeting with the tenants. There was a good turn-out and was able to explain to the tenants the status of the RAD conversion and what they should expect moving forward.

Work on Building #1 at D'Orazio Terrace is still ongoing but will be occupied next week. The contractor is doubling up their crew starting tomorrow and expect to work through Sunday night. They must be done on Monday morning as the Authority will be occupying the units. All the tenants are ready to go, and the occupancy staff has all the appointments scheduled to show all the units. They are expected to all be leased by Wednesday next week.

The Authority received the A&E Proposal from the architect for the D'Orazio Terrace Community Room. It was a bit more reasonable but still not sufficient to the Authority's liking. Ron will be having a call with the architect to see about getting to a more reasonable conclusion.

The conversion of the two 6-bedrooms units at Asselta Building #3 into four 2-bedroom units. A proposal was received from the architect. It is still under review and also need to come to an agreement with the architect.

The A&E proposal on the camera replacement at Kidston and Olivio Towers was acceptable by the Authority. The Authority's recommendation is to move forward with \$8,000 in A&E fees. The Authority will introduce a resolution to the board for approval on this around May through a Sourcewell Cooperative Agreement to replace the cameras in the buildings. The original cameras were installed in 2005.

Melrose Court is 100% occupied.

In regard to Community Outreach, there was a nice event held at Kidston and Olivio Towers. Outlaw's Burger offered to help, and they set up a food truck. The Vineland Police participated. There was a clothing drive for the tenants. Staff assisted and it was well attended by the tenants.

The tenants were appreciated of it. Outlaw's Burger committed today to hold another event and one of the family properties. Upcoming events to look forward to are an Easter event and a back-to-school event will be planned. There is a commitment from Walmart to provide supplies for the back-to-school event. Horizon Health Care Company has offered to do some outreach. There is a lot of things in motion, and they are all positive.

Ron updated the Board last month regarding the infrastructure updates that Verizon is discontinuing the Authority's telephone service. The Authority is working through that.

Mrs. Jones asked Ron to provide an update regarding the security at Kidston and Olivio Towers with the homeless coming in and occupying the stair towers. Ron reported the Authority engaged with the security company early this year. It started just after Thanksgiving. There has been security in the buildings. As the winter went on, the number of hours were ramped up and it was randomized to the point where no one can tell when security was in the building or out of the building. It was coordinated through the Authority's lease enforcement/community outreach person. The Authority was also able to get a little bit more help with the Vineland Police through community policing and there has been a lot more success this year with keeping out the homeless. The Authority also installed an electronic system in the buildings called a guard tour system to ensure the guards are actually doing their job. There are touch points throughout the building and they have to go to them to touch a physical device to them. This will allow data to be downloaded to show the date and time when they went to a certain stairwell. This is random, ensuring the guards go to various places at different times. The Authority is getting less complaints from the tenants this year and overall, it is positive for the Authority and for the tenants. There are over 100 touching points. They are not all being used every day as it is being randomized. They are on every floor and every stair tower as well as all the common areas.

Commissioner Porter asked if the Authority is receiving any complaints about the elevators not working. Ron stated there were a couple of instances where they went down. In Kidston Towers the technical issues the Authority is running into is they are landing hard. This has to do with the programming and drives. It is a software issue according to the elevator consultant. This is a problem the Authority is running into with OTIS. Only their most senior techs can do the programming on them. It is difficult to get a hold of the senior tech. Due to this issue, the Authority is withholding money from them. Olivio Towers elevators have been running well, but that was a full modification. There has been a little bit of issues at Kidston, but it has not been bad. There were maybe 2 outages in the past month and both were resolved within a few hours.

Mrs. Jones mentioned the Administration is due for some HVAC repairs and this will be discussed in the resolution portion of the meeting.

Currently, the Authority is part of the State Health Benefits Program (SHBP) to provide health benefits to the employees and retirees. The cost has been increasing over the past couple of years. It does not appear that this will change any time soon and because of the state of the program as well as a lot of local employers are leaving the SHBP. The Authority has explored converting the health benefits to a Health Insurance Fund (HIF). There is a southern New Jersey HIF that the Authority has looked at previously and is looking at again. A few years ago, when the Authority looked at it, it did not make sense to move to it. At the time there was savings for the employee cost, but it was actually more for the retirees. This time, however, the Authority is thinking this is something it has to seriously consider and would recommend to the Board if the premiums come in at the right numbers. The Authority received its claims experience for the last two years for employees and retirees' use of health benefits and is currently sitting at 30%, which is good. It is a good time to get into a system like HIF. HIF does not accept everyone, and it requires a good rating before being accepted. The information regarding prescription usage was received today. The claims experience and the prescription usage is needed for them to come back to us with a number. The SHBP is almost going to be unsustainable. The projections right

now for the increases for 2026 for health benefits are in the teens (17%) again and prescriptions to go up 20%.

Mrs. Jones stated she wanted to discuss the funding from the federal government. The Authority is funded currently although it is not sure what will happen for 2026. However, one of the Voucher Programs called the Emergency Housing Vouchers may have funding issues. This was a new program that came as a result of COVID, and it was program that the Biden administration funded separately than the regular voucher program. It was targeted for those that are homeless or in danger of being homeless. The VHA was initially issued 15 vouchers to lease up and there are currently 13 vouchers leased. The VHA received information this week from HUD that this program is no longer going to be funded. There is enough funding to last through 2025. 2026 is in question as to how far the Authority can go into 2026. It was intended to be a temporary program but temporary to HUD is like 10 years. This would mean that residents, over time, would move off the program, pass away etc. and 10 years is enough time to accomplish that. The problem is if there is no money to house these families the VHA does not have the funds in its regular voucher program to fund the program. Mrs. Jones is not sure how this is going to be resolved. The VHA has 13 families, but other entities have up to 400 of these vouchers. Mrs. Jones wanted to make the Board aware of this issue. This may be the first time that families are not renewed for their vouchers. This is not just happening here but in the entire country. It would be a sad thing because these vouchers service a very vulnerable population. Mrs. Jones will provide more information as it comes up over the next few months.

In regard to the Scattered Site homes, there is one house left to sell. It currently does not have an agreement of sale. The VHA is looking for best and final offers in the next week or so.

Commissioner Porter asked if the 13 families under the emergency voucher program will not be impacted in the VHA's new fiscal year beginning October 1. Mrs. Jones stated they would be impacted in January of 2026. Based on the email, Mrs. Jones believes there is a pot of money for the EHO program and HUD knows the program can be funded through 2025. The question is how far into 2026 can the program be funded. Mrs. Jones feels that, based on the current administration, the EHO program will not be funded again.

Committee Report: None.

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

With no other discussion in related matters the Chairperson moved to the Resolutions.

Resolution #2025-11 **Resolution to Approve Monthly Expenses**

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa stated the bills have been reviewed and are recommended for payment in the sum of \$1,421,696.74. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Absent)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes) — abstain on Brown & Connery invoices.
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2025-12
Extending Pest Control Services Contract

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2025-12. Ron Miller provided an explanation for this resolution. A motion was made by Commissioner Porter; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Absent)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2025-13
Awarding Special Legal Services – Landlord/Tenant

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2025-13. Ron Miller provided an explanation for this resolution. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Absent)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2025-14
Authorizing Entering into a Contract Agreement
with Global Furniture Group – Deal of Record Nickerson, NJ, Inc.)

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2025-14. Ron Miller provided an explanation for this resolution. This is the beginning of the furniture replacement at Olivio and Kidston Towers. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Absent)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2025-15
Approving Contract Modifications with JH William
for Modernization of Elevators at Kidston and Olivio Towers

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2025-15. Mr. Watson provided an explanation of this resolution. This is really an amendment to the contract. It just happens that this contract actually combines amendments as modifications. The underlying contract that was formed and entered into in July of 2023, between the Authority and JH Williams Enterprises for the Kidston & Olivo Towers elevator modernization and maintenance project. It contemplated two phases of work. One being the modernization and once that was finished with substantial completion a 2-year period of maintenance. There were separate costs for the modernization and a separate cost for the maintenance. The contract is over \$1.1 million. The maintenance component of it is \$54,000. The problem is the contract contemplated that when substantial completion is reached in the modernization phase there will be a payment made to the contractor and the rest of the payments come forward during the maintenance phase. The way that the contract is bid it intermingled the cost in a confusing way where it would be difficult to close out the portion of the work for the modernization and move forward with the maintenance. It is in everyone's best interest once substantial completion of modernization is reached to be able to close that portion out. This modernization/amendment makes a clear distinction between the two phases of work and clear distinction between the two costs of the work as well as time periods for both. This would make it a lot easier and cleaner to close out when substantial completion of modernization is reached and to move forward. From a legal perspective, this is all compliant and consistent with NJ law and the open public contracts law. The one thing to pay close attention to is to make sure the scope of work, overall cost of the work and other material items were still consistent with the underlying bid otherwise someone who did not bid can say I would have bid on this project if I knew it was going to be that different. This is not the case with this modification or amendment to the contract. It is reclarifying the two phases of the work and the different cost components for each. Mr. Watson's opinion is that this is subject to challenge. If someone decided they wanted to challenge it, the Authority would have a strong defensive position to defend against such a challenge. This is a straightforward way for all the parties to this contract to move forward. A motion was made by Commissioner Porter; seconded by Commissioner Asselta. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Absent)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2025-16
Approving HVAC Equipment and Repairs – Administrative Offices

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2025-16. Ron Miller provided an explanation for this resolution along with explaining the issues with the HVAC units. Mrs. Jones stated there is reserves to cover the cost. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Daniel Peretti	(Absent)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

There is no need for an Executive Session.

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa asked for comments from the press, public or any Board Member. No Comments.

With no further business to discuss, Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa entertained a motion for adjournment of the Regular Meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Porter; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The Board Members unanimously carried the vote present. The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was adjourned at 6:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jacqueline S. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jacqueline S. Jones
Secretary/Treasurer