

Housing Authority of the City of Vineland

REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, September 19, 2024
6:00 p.m.

The Regular Meeting of the Housing Authority of the City of Vineland was called to order by Vice Chairperson Chapman on Thursday, September 19, 2024, 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	(Absent)

Also, present were Jacqueline 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.

Vice Chairperson Chapman read the Sunshine Law.

Vice Chairperson Chapman entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on August 15, 2024. Tabled for next month.

Vice Chairperson Chapman called for the Financial Report from the Fee Accountant. Linda Cavallo reviewed the Financial Report for the eleven months ending August 31, 2024.

Executive Director's Report:

Vice Chairperson Chapman requested the Executive Administrative Report. Mrs. Jones asked Ron Miller to provide an update on the current projects. Ron Miller reported the Tarkiln Acres roof project has been in limbo a little bit. He received some clarification from Counsel on this project this month to enable the Authority to move forward. However, the Board will notice on the Agenda a resolution for awarding the architectural & engineering services proposing to change the current firm. The Tarkiln Acres roof project will be restarted with the new architectural firm if awarded tonight.

In reference to the elevator refurbishment at Kidston and Olivio Towers, Olivio Towers car #2 was put into service yesterday. The State Inspector passed it. Because of the fire alarm devices, which was holding us up, the Authority had to take the other car out of service immediately. The Authority was unable to run the new car for 2 weeks. It is an actual code requirement and you are not allowed to run by State Elevator Code. The car out of service at Olivio towers in under modernization as of today. Kidston Towers car #2 was returned to service. Car #1 was taken out of service for modernization. Tenants at both Kidston and Olivio Towers were notified of the changeover. One car at each building remains in service at each building. The Authority anticipates a time overrun because of the delays getting the fire alarm licenses and getting the State inspection. This will be approached next month for a potential time extension on the project.

The only item outstanding with Kidston and Olivio Towers interior renovations project is the water treatment system. Ron spoke with the general contractor today. He promised him an update

today, which he did not receive. Ron will follow up and anticipates having a better update for the Board next month.

Ron provided an update on the Kidston and Olivio Towers Fire Pump replacement. He gave a huge thank you to the Vineland Fire Department and the Vineland Water Department. Both entities were instrumental in getting this project completed. The Vineland Fire Department participated in both training sessions. The VHA has an exceptionally good repour with the Fire Chief and the Fire Marshall's office. Training sessions were setup for two platoons of paid staff at Station 6. They attended and held one shift over for us to assist in actually flowing water from the fire pump because this has never been done since the buildings were built. Everyone was pretty curious about how this would work. It worked and exceeded all the fire engineers' calculations with remarkable results. It also served as a training opportunity for the firefighters because they have never done this before. Vineland Fire and Water Department went beyond assisting the VHA. The pump is in service. The only thing outstanding on this project is the fueling station. The engineer designed a fairly complex electronic fueling system. There are some new code requirements. The system was designed by Simplex. There are some complicated drawings and the engineer is not happy with them yet. They have been sent back to Simplex for revision. Once the engineer is satisfied it will be ordered.

As the Board is aware, Building 1 at D'Orazio is being renovated from the fire loss. Flooring in three of the units is in as well as kitchen cabinets. The other seven units of the building are in the drywall phase. The doors have not been hung, but once the doors are hung the VHA's painter will paint. In the coming month there will be a change order for the drainage on the site and the courtyard. There was some delay with the architect's office on getting those plans which pushed back the contractor on their pricing. It could not make the meeting this month. The VHA has a plan to redo the concrete along West Avenue and around buildings 1, 2 and 3 areas reducing the widths of the sidewalks. Currently, they are 96-inch sidewalks, which is excessive. The VHA is responsible to maintain all that concrete as well as remove all the snow. The sidewalks will be reduced to a 60-inch sidewalk along with planting and improving the site appearance along West Avenue. Mrs. Jones stated the VHA would like to start to refurbish the D'Orazio community building. It was actually a house onsite which was the original housing authority office. The community building was built next to that. It is not an attractive building. There have been some issues with it. The VHA would like to start to work on a design to refurbish the building. It is a steel frame building. The VHA would like to move the laundry facilities more towards the front or the side of the building as well as change the entrance to the shop to the other side of the building so that we can have a better facade on the street side. Based on conversations with the Authority's consultant, if the Authority works on this now it will not affect the redevelopment being worked on for the future. It will not affect the tax credits and will be a positive affect because it will increase the appraisal value of the property. The residents would benefit from the Authority working on the community center now. A resolution will be presented to the Board next month on refurbishing the D'Orazio community building along with the anticipated cost.

Mrs. Jones provided an update on the scattered sites. There is another settlement tomorrow morning. There was one on Monday. The Authority is down to two houses under contract, one has an extension, another listed and two more just became listed a couple of days ago. This would complete the 33 houses sold with 39 houses the Authority will keep. The Authority received a contract from HUD to start the process to convert the scattered site properties to a RAD development. Hopefully all these properties will be converted in 2025.

Commissioner Porter asked why buyer backed out of property 1017 Alexander. Mrs. Jones believes they backed out after the inspection. As the Board is aware, the reason these houses are being sold is because they are on the outskirts of town and they may need septic and/or wells. The houses are being sold as is and if it is a first-time home buyer, replacing a septic system or well may not be in their comfort zone.

Committee Report: Vice Chairperson stated there are a number of items on the resolutions tonight for awarding professional services contracts. There was a single response for all professional services contracts with the exception of architectural and engineering with one of them being non-responsive.

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

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

Resolution #2024-40
Resolution to Approve Monthly Expenses

Vice Chairperson Chapman stated the bills have been reviewed and are recommended for payment in the sum of \$1,224,702.17. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Porter. 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	(Absent)

Resolution #2024-41
Awarding Fee Accountant Services Contract

Vice Chairperson Chapman called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-41. 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	(Absent)

Resolution #2024-42
Awarding Auditing Services Contract

Vice Chairperson Chapman called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-42. 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	(Absent)

Resolution #2024-43
Awarding Architectural & Engineering Services Contract

Vice Chairperson Chapman called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-43. 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	(Absent)

Resolution #2024-44
Awarding Legal Services Contract – General Counsel

Vice Chairperson Chapman called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-44. Tabled for next month.

Resolution #2024-45
Awarding Legal Services Contract – Labor Relations Counsel

Vice Chairperson Chapman called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-45. Tabled for next month.

Resolution #2024-46
Awarding Consulting Services Contract

Vice Chairperson Chapman called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-46. 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	(Absent)

Resolution #2024-47
Awarding Extending Painting Services Contract (2 of 2)

Vice Chairperson Chapman called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-47. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Acosta-Jimenez. 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	(Absent)

Resolution #2024-48
Adopting State Budget (2024-2025)

Vice Chairperson Chapman called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-48. Mrs. Jones informed the Board this is the same budget that was approved and passed by the Board in July. It was sent to the State and the State has approved it. Now it is back to the board for adoption. No changes have been made. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Acosta-Jimenez. 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	(Absent)

There is no need for an Executive Session.

Vice Chairperson Chapman asked for comments from the press, public or any Board Member.

Councilperson Vargas and Councilperson Spinelli were present. Councilperson Vargas stated they are present tonight due to complaints regarding the elevators from many people stating the elevators have been down for months at Kidston and Olivio Towers which Ron Miller previously updated on the elevator modernization project. Councilperson Vargas also was concerned about security issues at the buildings. He was let in the building with no questions asked. A resident informed him that just last week a homeless person was in the building. Councilperson Vargas asked if there is a security system in place to guard these elderly folks. He is concerned anyone can just walk into the buildings. He understands the tenants may be part of the problem of letting people in. He recommended the VHA send out a survey in Spanish and English to find out what the residents needs and complaints are. He left his card and would appreciate any updates that the Authority may have on a security standpoint.

Ron Miller stated the Authority has been in contact with JH Williams on an elevator modernization project. In reference to Kidston Towers, approximately 8 years ago the controls were replaced in that building. At that time, the machines that drives the elevators up and down were not done. This current modernization at Kidston Towers specifically is to replace those machines. While in the process of doing this one of the control cards in the controller went bad. The Authority is at the mercy of the company to provide the part. If they do not provide the card within 2-3 months the Authority has no repercussions and nothing to take action against them for that. There is always one elevator maintained as operational in Kidston and Olivio Towers at all times. There was never a period where both elevator cars were down. Even on the weekends the Authority has a call back service if the one operating elevator goes down to get it back up and running. The Authority is also up against the State. The Authority cannot operate these cars out of compliance.

At Olivio Towers, the new elevators needed a different type of detector in the hoist way to activate the fireman's recall. The Authority asked for a waiver from the State and the State denied the waiver because it is a life safety issue. The Authority hands are a tied with this because if the State does not grant this, the cars cannot be operated. This is why when the car was inspected yesterday by the State, we had to take the other car out of service because it no longer complies with the new code for the fireman's recall. The fire department has been very well aware of this and the VHA communicates with them frequently. The tenants have also been notified by post cards and the Authority has lease enforcement, which is a community outreach person for the Authority. She is bilingual and she is out in both buildings every day. She talks to these residents all the time. She tries to put their minds at ease. Unfortunately, we are dealing with a population

that are elderly and/or disabled and a lot of time they lose patience. The Authority understands their frustrations of only having one elevator operational. However, there is always one elevator in operation at each building.

Councilperson Vargas asked what if both elevators go down. Ron Miller stated there are stairs, but the Fire Department and EMS is aware of this. They actually have pre-plans because those buildings are life hazard use buildings registered with the State. Ron and the Fire Chief spoke recently about this a few weeks ago during the fire pump testing. The Fire Chief assured him they are updated on their trucks, in their computers and CAD systems. They put an engine company on that box when an elevator is down so they are out there assisting EMS. The City also has a plan in place on the emergency management side. The Authority has an open channel of communication as well as a good working relationship with them.

Mrs. Jones stated as Ron Miller stated, the Authority has had a tenant relations officer position for a couple of years. It is tenant relations, but it also leases enforcement. It is a full-time job keeping some of the residents in line with the lease so everyone can enjoy where they live. There are periodic meetings with the residents specifically at Kidston and Olivio Towers to talk about these security issues. Mrs. Jones stated she has been in this business for 40 years and residents letting any visitor in has been a problem as long as she has been in this business because residents just want to be helpful and let people in and they should not. The Authority tries to instill in the residents that letting unknown visitors in is a safety issue. Kidston and Olivio Towers are the most secure properties the VHA has. You have to get through the front door and then you have to get through someone's apartment door vs garden style apartments. The Authority will reach out and provide additional education with everyone so hopefully they stop opening the door, but they tend to not listen nor abide by the rules.

Mrs. Jones reported there has been an issue with homeless in the building and it has gotten worse in the last 4-5 years. The Authority has reached out the Police Department for assistance and some assistance is received occasionally but there are no arrests that result in this so it is not really a deterrent for the homeless to stay away from the building. They will stay in the stair towers overnight and the VHA's maintenance personnel go through the buildings every morning to make sure they are gone. The VHA lost a female maintenance worker because of this. She did not feel safe. The Authority had security hired overnight periodically, not on a set schedule, the last few years when the temperature got colder. We recently made the decision to start the security now. It is becoming a year-round issue with the homeless. Commissioner Vargas stated it is all over the City and they are forming an action committee to see what best practices are in other places to see what they could do to start reducing the issue. Mrs. Jones stated the Authority would love to be involved in that. Mrs. Jones stated she appreciated Council coming to the meeting and any time they have any concerns to please contact our office.

Councilperson Vargas stated complaints in regard to the laundry room. He went into the laundry room and confirmed it was nice and clean. The residents stated the reason it is clean is because no one uses it. Machines are not working. Councilperson Vargas stated he took a few pictures of wires cut so there must be some truth to them not working. Ron Miller reported he has recently worked with Director Rabbai at the City and provided video showing all the machines working. The Authority does not own the equipment. They are owned through a third-party vendor. The third-party vendor was notified quickly. At Olivio Towers there was a drain issue and has been resolved. All the machines are operating at Olivio Towers. Director Rabbai did not reach out to Ron about issues at Kidston Towers. Ron Miller will verify that the machines are working at Kidston Towers. The VHA has scheduled for four (4) machines to be replaced, two (2) in each building. The complaint the VHA received was specifically for Olivio Towers. The VHA can not fix it unless we know it is broken. The residents need to call and put in a work order to notify the VHA. Mrs. Jones explained the process for residents to communicate with the VHA when they have an issue whether its in a unit, outside the building or anywhere in the building is call in a

work order. It is the same phone number used 24/7 365 days and there is an answering service when the office is closed. There are two receptionists up front that answer the phone live and if they are both on the phone, the calls passed down to three other people in the office automatically. It is unlikely not to get a live person when they call. Both receptionists are bilingual as well as many other staff members. Once a work order is received it immediately goes into an electronic system and there is process on how the work orders are dispatched. It appears to the Authority within the last year or so that there are times when residents will call City Hall to call in a work order. It looks like the VHA is not acting on it, but we do not know about. When City Hall calls here most of the time, we have not even received that phone call that there has been a problem. We encourage the residents to call and several times a year we send out post cards to remind them of the process and of the phone number to enable the Authority to get the information quickly.

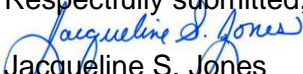
Ron reported the tenant relations person meets with a lot of the residents monthly because she accompanies the pest control company. She gets to interact with the residents. She does inform them, but a lot of what the Authority is seeing is people are going to directly to L & I for work ordered and in turn it is slowing down the process. L & I has to reach out to us and then the VHA has to put a work order in the system. When L & I calls now we are giving them the work order number so they can put it in their system for reference. If we do not have a work order in our system, then no one has called in the issue.

In regard to security at the towers, Ron indicated there is an active contract to install mag locks on the doors of the buildings because people are breaking the doors and forcing themselves through the electronic strikes. The VHA has spent a substantial amount of money in fixing them. Mag locks will be installed and what we are already seeing is the glass on the doors is being broken. The police department will not prosecute and will not arrest. Councilperson Spinelli stated the Attorney General will not allow them to because before the ink is dry on the paperwork they are out of jail. He is not making excuses for the police, but their hands are tied. This is an issue all over the City.

Councilperson Spinelli asked how the Authority controls pest control. Ron reported the residents are notified annually of the pest control schedule. The residents are advised of the date and time for their unit. If the tenant has a problem prior or after pest control visit, they are supposed to contact the Authority. Ron stated pesticide in the State of NJ has become highly regulated. Logs have to be kept in all the buildings. If the City or L & I calls regarding any issues we provide them the logs. You can not over treat the units. Tenants are encouraged to keep up with their housekeeping, but if they do not a notice to cease is given. Then followed with a notice to quit and pursue an eviction. Extermination reports are provided on demand to the City.

Councilperson Vargas thanked everyone for listening to their concerns. Vice Chairperson stated he has been with the Authority for an exceptionally long time and when it comes to the elevators there has never been a single resolution the Board did not pass with an open checkbook to make those elevators work. It sadly has always been a slow process to get them serviced. The Board is always in full support to have the elevators up and running.

With no further business to discuss, Vice Chairperson Chapman entertained a motion for adjournment of the Regular Meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Acosta-Jimenez. The Board Members unanimously carried the vote present. The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline S. Jones
Secretary/Treasurer