

Housing Authority of the City of Vineland

REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, December 19, 2024
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, December 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	

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, Gloria Pomales, Executive Assistant and Michael Thilker, Auditor – Bowman & Company.

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa read the Sunshine Law.

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on August 15, 2024. A motion was made by Commissioner Porter and seconded by Commissioner Asselta. The following vote was taken:

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

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on November 21, 2024. A motion was made by Commissioner Porter and 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	(Abstain)

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa changed the order of the meeting.

New Business: Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa moved the order of the meeting and requested the audit report from Mike Thilker of Bowman and Company. Mr. Thilker presented the Audit for FYE 2023. The audit was sent to the Board via email for review. Pertinent pages of the Audit were printed for the Commissioner's for the meeting.

Mr. Thilker stated the Standard Auditor's Report is template language, indicating there were no modifications, no findings, no management letter, and no issues in the audit that needed to be communicated to management. For the purpose of discussion this evening, Mr. Thilker wanted to focus on the Financial Statements. Mr. Thilker reviewed the Financial Statement line items of the Audit. Brief discussion on HUD HAP payment and its timing issue. Mr. Thilker discussed the foot notes of the audit as well as the new accounting standards that were adopted. The new accounting standards are changes to the accounting framework that they did not have last year. Mrs. Jones stated the Authority is ahead of the GASB rule on compensated absences reporting. The Single Audit Report and Yellow Book Report were explained. These reports were clean with no issues.

Mrs. Jones stated the full audit was emailed to the Board and it is understood they may not have had the time to review it in its entirety. Mr. Thilker is available for questions. There is a resolution this evening requiring all the Commissioners to sign. If they are uncomfortable signing it tonight it can be signed next month if need be.

Mr. Thilker thanked Jackie, Wendy, Ron, Gloria, and all the VHA staff for their assistance with the audit.

Fee Account's Report:

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for the Financial Report from the Fee Accountant. Linda Cavallo reviewed the Financial Report for the two months ending November 30, 2024.

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 all elevators are in service at Kidston and Olivio Towers. Olivio Tower's elevator just passed inspection from the state this week. The elevator refurbishment project is in the punch list stage. This project should be completely wrapped up in the next 3-4 weeks.

There is no update on the water filtration system at this time. The fire pump project is substantially complete. There is a change order on the agenda tonight and it will be explained in the resolution section of the meeting.

In regard to D'Orazio Terrace there is a lot of site work being completed. There are a lot of adjustments being made to the site drainage and water proofing around the building as well as new concrete. The Occupancy Staff has been directed to prepare for lease up for February 1, 2025, for all 10 units. At this point it is on track to meet that deadline. The D'Orazio Community Room is on hold pending the appointment of Architectural and Engineering Services.

Community Outreach had a significant turnout for the food giveaway at all of the properties provided by the food bank. This was all handled internally by our VHA Staff. It was remarkably successful. There is a Holiday Party scheduled for tomorrow for the children and will be held at the Corbin Center. Ron will provide updates along with pictures of the party. Toys will be distributed to the children as well.

Mrs. Jones stated there are holiday parties scheduled for the senior sites. They are all scheduled with the Social Services Department.

Mrs. Jones discussed the ability of touring D'Orazio. She suggested the possibility of touring next month prior to meeting at 5 p.m. and limited to three commissioners at a time.

Mrs. Jones provided an update on the Scattered Sites. Since last month, there were two closings. There are two homes left to sell. Both homes are under agreement of sale.

Mrs. Jones discussed funding for next year. Due to the new administration, she is not sure what will happen other than most likely cuts to public housing. The new administration will want housing authorities to move to RAD and move away from Public Housing. Cuts are expected in Operating Subsidy for D'Orazio and the remaining Scattered Sites as well as possible cuts in the Capital Fund. The good news is that about 20 years ago the VHA took out a bond and the bond payment came out of the Capital Fund for the last 20 years. There are only two payments left, and it will be paid off. This will mean more funds available to use at D'Orazio.

Discussed financing and funding. There is no federal budget that has been approved. There is a continuing resolution which expires tomorrow. There may be a shutdown. If there is a shutdown, the VHA will still operate because we are local government employees. Mrs. Jones stated the Section 8 Program is funded currently for January and February. The VHA knows it will receive the HAP funding to pay the subsidies for Section 8 for January and February. She does not know beyond that. The Authority does not have any reserves to pay landlords past February. If this got to the point where it became February and we do not have a continuing resolution, the Authority would send a letter to the landlords explaining the situation. There is an anticipated cut to the Section 8 Program as well for next year. This is what the industry groups are saying, and the Authority does not know this for sure but rather than funding it at 100%, Section 8 may be funded at 97%. The VHA has leased up 99-100% and last year it was a little over 100% because it was not getting the funding from HUD. HUD has caught up with us at this point, but the VHA has received a few letters from us warning not to over lease, watch on leasing units, watch renewals as far increases landlords may be requesting because it all matters. Last year the Authority was under a shortfall because HUD had not caught up to the authorized level of leasing and the prediction was that the Authority would not have enough funds to pay HAPs through the end of the year. Funds were taken from other Authorities who were not spending their Section 8 Funds. And the funding was given to the Authorities in a shortfall. In order to be considered for short fall funding for 2025, we cannot lease up until we are told we can. We cannot absorb any vouchers. The Authority is looking at its current level of leasing and how it will renew the voucher contracts. Section 8 is a one-year contract between the landlord, the tenant, and the housing authority. If the Authority does not have the funding at the time of renewal, it cannot sign the contract. Several years ago, there was a similar shortfall, and the Board passed an amendment to its policy on what to do if there are no funds. Someone would have to come of the program and who will it be. It was decided that those that are elderly or disabled/handicap would be subsidized and not be terminated. It was decided that the families that are on the program the longest would be the ones to go off the program first. The Authority is trying to avoid that as much as possible. The Authority believes it will be ok if it does not have a lot of requests for increases in rent from the landlords. If the Authority stays at its current levels, Mrs. Jones estimates that there will be 20-25 families that could lose subsidy if the government only funds the VHA at 97%. The VHA will avoid this as much as possible. Very few people leave the program on their own, but if they leave the program, the Authority is not issuing new vouchers. Regarding not receiving funding for Public Housing from HUD, the VHA has different pockets of money that can be used to survive for a while. Mrs. Jones will keep the Board updated on this situation.

Committee Report: Commissioner Chapman stated the committee met regarding awarding the Architectural and Engineering professionals services contract. The recommendation to the Board is to award the Architectural and Engineering professional services contract to J.W. Pederson Architect.

Commissioner Chapman stated the Re-Organization Committee met. It is the recommendation of the committee to nominate Mario Ruiz-Mesa as the Chairperson again and himself as Vice Chairperson. Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa turned the meeting over to the attorney, Michael Watson.

Mr. Watson stated tonight the election is for Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. By statute, Jacqueline Jones is the Secretary/Treasurer in her capacity as the Executive Director. A vote will be held to publicly show the board's approval. Nomination from the reorganization committee was Mario Ruiz-Mesa for Chairperson and Chris Chapman for Vice Chairperson.

Mr. Watson asked for any other nominations for the position of Chairperson. With no other nominations for Chairperson; Commissioner Porter motioned for Mario Ruiz-Mesa for Chairperson. Nominations were closed.

With no other nominations 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)

Mr. Watson asked for any other nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson. With no other nominations for Chairperson; Commissioner Asselta motioned for Chris Chapman for Vice Chairperson. Nominations were closed.

With no other nominations 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)

Mr. Watson stated we will let the record reflect that pursuant to the State Statute the Executive Director, Jacqueline S. Jones, assumes the position of Secretary and Treasurer.

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)

Mr. Watson turned the meeting over to Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa.

Old Business: None.

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

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

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-44. 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	(Abstain)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Abstain)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

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

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-45. 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	(Abstain)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Abstain)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Mr. Watson thanked the Board for the appointment of General and Labor Relations Counsel. It is an honor and privilege for the firm and for him to work with the VHA team.

Resolution #2024-63
Resolution to Approve Monthly Expenses

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa stated the bills have been reviewed and are recommended for payment in the sum of \$1,572,939.55. 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) – abstain on Brown & Connery invoices.
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes) – abstain on Brown & Connery invoices.
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2024-64
Approval of 2025 Board Meeting Dates

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-64. 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 #2024-65
Appointing JIF Fund Commissioner

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-65. 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 #2024-66
Appointing Risk Management Consultant

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-66. A motion was made by Commissioner Chapman; 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 #2024-67
Designate Public Agency Compliance Office (P.A.C.O.)

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-67. Ron provided a brief explanation. 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 #2024-68
Audit Review Certificate FYE 2023

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-68. A motion was made by Commissioner Chapman; 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 #2024-69
**Approving Change Order # 3 for the Fire Pump Replacement Project
at Kidston and Olivio Towers**

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-69. A motion was made by Commissioner Chapman; 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 #2024-70
Awarding Architectural & Engineering Services Contract

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-70. 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 #2024-71
**Approving One-Time Compensation Bonus Payments to Certain Authority
Employees Based on Increase Hours and Responsibilities in Connection with the
Authority’s Shared Services Agreements, Management Agreements
and Housing Assistance Payment Agreements**

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2024-71. 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 Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The Board Members unanimously carried the vote present. The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jacqueline S. Jones
Secretary/Treasurer