

**MEETING MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK
TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2024
MILLS PARK TOWER
7:45 AM**

OFFICIAL RECORD

QUORUM

PRESENT: Commissioners Teitelman, Kelm, Socall, Walz and Chairman Muse

ALSO PRESENT: Staff: Pope, Swaggerty, Southward, Sinn, Cobb, Burgos, and Carpenter

PUBLIC: MPT Residents

ABSENT: Commissioner Sood

Vice-Chairman Muse called the January 16, 2024, regular meeting of the Housing Authority of the Village of Oak Park to order at 7:52 AM.

OFFICER ELECTION

Vice-Chairman stated that with the recent departure of Commissioner Kralik, a new Chairman needed to be elected from the current Board Commissioners.

It was moved (Socall) and seconded (Teitelman) to nominate Vice Chairman Muse for the office of Chairman. Hearing no further nominations a roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Commissioners Socall, Teitelman, Kelm, and Walz

NAYS: None

ABSTAINS: Vice-Chairman Muse

ABSENCES: Commissioner Sood

Vice-Commissioner Muse was elected to the office of Chairman by roll call vote.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 19, 2023, AND DECEMBER 12, 2023, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Muse asked if there were any corrections to the meeting minutes. Secretary Teitelman noted that there was a duplication of Case Manager, Johnathan Duckett's name in the December 12, 2023, meeting minutes. Ms. Swaggerty stated it would be corrected.

It was moved (Socall) and seconded (Teitelman) to approve the September 19, 2023, and December 12, 2023, regular meeting of the Housing Authority of the Village of Oak Park as corrected. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Muse asked that each speaker introduce themselves and limit their comments to three (3) minutes.

Resident White-Merritt stated that affordable housing continues to be an issue not only in Oak Park but throughout the U.S. She said that she is a professional volunteer and then shared her experience of having met Dr. Martin Luther King. She voiced her firm belief that we must model correct behavior, tell the truth, and remain actively involved in addressing the ongoing issue of affordable housing. She encouraged everyone to remember, "if it is meant to be it's up to me."

Another resident commented that her car had been towed for parking in the lot during the recent re-paving and re-striping of the parking lot. She shared that she had been misinformed by office staff that we were not going to re-pave the area where she parked. She asked if she would be reimbursed for the towing costs. Mr. Burgos stated that there had been sufficient notice and that those notices had been clear as to which parking areas would be re-paved and re-striped when it would occur.

Commissioner Walz asked how many cars had actually been towed. Mr. Burgos stated three (3). He stated that he would be happy to meet with those residents after the meeting to discuss the issue.

Resident Lloyd commented that there is a continuing issue with a male resident that has been harassing several female residents for a number of years, specifically Black female residents. She stated that residents feel that nothing is being done by management to stop the harassment and racial targeting by this individual. She added that recently a White female resident shared that she had also been harassed by the same individual and that maybe now management would do take action to have the harasser removed. She shared that she herself was harassed by this individual and went to the courts to get a one year "no contact" order against this individual and that previous management had enforced the order during the period of the court order. She said that more recently management has failed to take any action to stop this harassment and asked the board to bring someone in to speak to the residents about harassment and racial targeting.

Executive Director Pope responded by stating that management takes these situations very seriously and does not respond to these situations or treat individuals differently based on gender or race. He added it is not the policy or approach management would take regarding these issues. He said management urges anyone who has been harassed or assaulted to contact the police and notify us of the situation. He stated that management has acted on these situations before but cannot discuss what steps have been taken due to privacy issues. He stated he understands why this may be perceived as not acting on the issue, but assured residents that we have acted. He stated that residents have the right to feel comfortable in their home and not be harassed or treated inappropriately and that type of behavior will not be tolerated.

Resident Orgeta asked how long the harassment has to go on before the individual can be evicted for their aggressive and harassing behavior. Executive Director Pope stated that there are multiple evictions in progress, and it depends on the court and their response time.

Resident Reeves explained that he was the victim of this individual and called the police who told him to report it to management and that they won't come back because it is a building problem that should be handled by management. Executive Director Pope stated what the police told Mr. Reeves is incorrect. He said that the police are obliged to respond to any report of assault and must file a report. He added that management should be advised of the incident and that the police report and any evidence of the harassment and/or assault can assist management in the eviction process.

Commissioner Socall noted that situations involving the police are typically high stress situations. She asked staff if anything could be done to develop greater communication with the local police in terms of educating them as to how the residents need to be treated and responded to when they come to the building in response to a call. Executive Director Pope stated we could look into it. He added that it is difficult at times because most of these incidents occur when staff are not onsite. He stated that staff work to provide police with as much information and video evidence as possible to help the police determine which individual's recount of the incident is more accurate and, if caught on video, exactly

what occurred.

Resident Lloyd asked if a resident has filed a police report, gone to court, and been awarded a no contact order, or an order of protection against another resident and provides those documents to management, what can they expect from management when management goes to another court to try to evict the harasser?

Executive Director Pope explained that when management goes to court seeking the eviction of the harasser, they bring all of the evidence collected (including any and all judicial rulings) to our attorneys handling the eviction. He stated that no one can predict the outcome, especially in the case of evicting someone in public housing where an eviction could make them homeless. He added that this is why we need overwhelming evidence, but ultimately, we have to abide by the decision of the judge.

Commissioner Walz apologized to the residents who have suffered this abusive and harassing behavior. She said that she understands what Executive Director Pope has stated regarding privacy issues and also the constrictions management faces under in these situations. She suggested that management provide information to residents regarding their rights under the Violence Against Women Act and the Federal Fair Housing Act. She asked if it were possible for Hope Fair Housing Center or another organization to come to MPT and provide training to residents or talk to them about their rights under these various acts. She also asked if there was alternative housing that we could provide to remove the harasser from the situation. Executive Director Pope stated that we have explored that option in one instance and will discuss it further with Mr. Southward.

Resident Tillman shared that she had recently been the victim of a scam by a woman who had entered the building under the guise of a HUD inspector. Ms. Tillman reported that she had allowed the woman into her unit and later realized that her ATM card was missing. She reported this to Management who are working with police and have provided them with video of the woman exiting the building. Ms. Tillman said she hopes that no one else is victimized in this way. Executive Director Pope thanked Ms. Tillman for notifying management so quickly and stated that no one should provide access to the building or their unit unless they are known to them. Ms. Carpenter stated that management will always provide notice before scheduling any inspection of a unit.

Resident Jordan shared that the same individual called her, and she had hung up on the individual. She said that the individual showed up two hours later, but she refused to let her in. She shared that she is concerned as to how this individual gained access to the building. Executive Director Pope stated that it is everyone's responsibility to not allow access to the building by unknown individuals.

Resident Kelm shared that A+ cleaning continues to do a poor job of cleaning and stated that they should be removed if they can't do the job. Mr. Southward stated he would discuss this with the owner of the company. He added that our new on-staff cleaner would be starting in the next few weeks.

Chairman Muse called the public comment to a close and thanked everyone for their input.

HCV WAITLIST UPDATE

Executive Director Pope provided a brief summary of the 2022 waiting list opening. He stated that due to the large number of applicants who falsely claimed Oak Park residency, we ended up with a waiting list of only 36 applicants that qualified for the local preference vs. the targeted 135. He advised the board of the changes made to the actual pre-application to minimize false information being submitted and to the waiting list process to allow for verification of the local preference of prior to being placed on the actual waiting list. He added that a focus of this discussion should be whether OPHA wanted to continue the 90/10% split for the waitlist.

Commissioner Teitelman asked what we have learned from the last waitlist opening to ensure that

those claiming the local residency preference are genuine and actually qualify for selection in the lottery. Executive Director Pope explained the new approach being taken when assigning the pre-applications to the waiting list. He stated that those claiming the local preference would have their local preference claim verified before being placed on the waiting list.

Chairman Muse asked if individuals placed on the waiting list would only be notified by letter or would they be notified through other means. Executive Director Pope stated that all pre-applicants are initially notified by email that their pre-application has been received. Further information is sent both by mail and email. He added that OPHA is working with Housing Forward to provide a physical and electronic address for those who are homeless.

Commissioner Socall thanked staff for the data provided in the board packet. She said she was surprised by the number of single households and the applicant ages skewed younger than she anticipated. She stated that writing policies and procedures is timely and difficult and thanked the team for taking the time to do it.

Executive Director Pope stated that we will likely need to modify the HCVP Administrative Plan. He said any required changes will be presented for approval at the February Meeting. He said we will establish a target date and finalize it with YARDI. He added that once we finalize the date staff will reach out to various media outlets to announce the opening.

Chairman Muse thanked the staff for providing the information and asked if there were any further questions. There were none.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Mills Park Tower

Mr. Burgos briefly summarized the MPT occupancy, leasing, resident demographics, waiting list and building activities for December. He reported there were three (3) move-ins in December and no move-outs. He reported a vacancy rate of 2% with four (4) vacant units. He reported that one of the vacant units is undergoing significant rehabilitation which should be done in the next two weeks, while the remaining three (3) vacant units only need cosmetic work and cleaning. He stated that ten (10) applications had been sent out and two (2) units had been offered to qualified applicants. He added that there had been 57 work orders issued and 54 work orders completed in December. He reported there had been no calls for elevator issues during the month.

Commissioner Socall asked if we had an actual shut-down date for the elevator(s) for repairs. Mr. Burgos stated no, but he would have the date shortly and would ensure the residents had adequate notice.

Commissioner Kelm reported that the laundry room has been excessively cold. Mr. Burgos stated he would have maintenance look into it right away.

Chairman Muse asked if there were any further questions. There were none.

HCV Program

Ms. Cobb briefly summarized the HCV Program activities for the month of December.

Chairman Muse asked if there were any further questions or comments. There were none.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

Chairman Muse asked for a motion to adjourn the January 16, 2024, regular meeting of the Housing Authority of the Village of Oak Park.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved (Kelm) and seconded (Walz) to adjourn the January 16, 2024, regular meeting of the Housing Authority of the Village of Oak Park. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 AM.

Respectfully Submitted

Andrew Teitelman, Secretary