

**MINUTES OF THE  
REGULAR MEETING OF  
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2024  
MILLS PARK TOWER  
7:45 AM**

**OFFICIAL RECORD**

**QUORUM**

**PRESENT:** Commissioners Walz, Kelm, Socall, Sood, Teitelman, and Chairperson Muse

**ABSENT:** Walz

**STAFF:** Pope, Swaggerty, Carpenter, Cobb, and Jones

**GUESTS:** Various Mills Park Tower Residents

Chairperson Muse called the meeting to order at 7:56 AM.

**APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 11, 2024, and JULY 9, 2024, OPHA'S REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Chairperson Muse asked if there were any corrections to the June 11, 2024, or July 9, 2024, meeting minutes. There were none.

It was moved (Kelm) and seconded (Sood) to approve the June 11, 2024, and July 9, 2024, OPHA regular meeting minutes. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Rev. Dora White (Apt. 14D):

Rev. White emphasized the importance of addressing poverty and homelessness, inspired by Matthew Desmond's book *Evicted*. She stated that she had connected with Dr. Katrina Fisher, who used the book for her doctorate, and proposed setting up "evicted libraries" in schools and historically black colleges and universities (HBCU), similar to the one at Princeton University. She is advocating for more attention to these issues.

June Petrasek (Apt. 7H):

Ms. Petrasek expressed concern over the building's elevator issues, noting both elevators were down at the same time, forcing residents to use the stairs. She felt this situation was dangerous and reflected years of improper maintenance. She requested a more robust budget to ensure the safety of the residents.

Nora Natof (Apt. 9F):

Ms. Natof raised concerns about communication during the elevator outages, pointing out that residents were not adequately informed of the status of repairs during the incidents.

Jackie Jordan (Apt. 4D):

Ms. Jordan suggested exploring alternative solutions to address the recurring elevator issues and the delays in response.

Charlene Lloyd (Apt. 11H):

Ms. Lloyd, Residence Council President, acknowledged that elevator problems are expected during maintenance but emphasized that communication from staff needs improvement. She noted that residents without cell phones struggle to report issues, leaving some residents unable to get upstairs when both elevators are down.

Executive Director, David Pope explained the circumstances leading to the recent unplanned elevator outage. He stated that the plan is that when one elevator is under reconstruction the other should be operational. To avoid further unplanned outages, Suburban Elevator Company will briefly take the elevator offline weekly for maintenance checks. He also acknowledged the communication failure regarding the recent outages, where there had been a misunderstanding of proper protocol by both staff and the answering service. He stated that this issue has been corrected, and staff will ensure better monitoring and timely responses moving forward. He apologized and said the breakdown in communication was unacceptable.

Ms. Lloyd shared that the recent elevator outages resulted in several elderly residents and visitors either unable to get up to their apartments or stranded within their units when the elevators were not working. She also stated that even when the elevators were back online, residents were fearful of getting on them in case another outage should occur. She added that the lack of effective communication from the staff and the indifference of the answering service to the emergency was extremely frustrating.

Executive Director Pope acknowledged the lack of effective communication and the failure of the answering service to escalate the issue for timely response. She stated that this has been addressed with both the answering service and with staff. He added that a newly implemented protocol now identifies he and MPT Manager, Ms. Carpenter as primary contacts for emergency elevator issues. Ms. Lloyd asked if a direct line to Suburban Elevator could be established for residents to notify them when an outage occurs. Executive Director Pope stated that was not feasible, but that management would work on establishing a more direct, real-time notification system and also alternative maintenance methods to prevent future outages. Board members also acknowledged the residents' frustrations vowing to resolve the matter swiftly.

Chairperson Muse asked if there were any further public comments. There were none.

## **HA-2024-09-01 APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL PLAN**

Executive Director Pope presented the draft 2025 Annual Plan, explaining that it provides a high-level overview of the Oak Park Housing Authority's operations, specifically public housing at Mills Park Tower and the Housing Choice Voucher Program, which supports over 500 residents. He stated that each year the previous year's plan is reviewed to identify and incorporate any

mandated or prospective changes. He stated that generally there are few significant modifications to the plan from year to year. He added that input on the 2025 draft plan was gathered over the summer from Resident Advisory Boards and through a public hearing held on August 28, 2024, at the Village Hall.

Chairperson Muse acknowledged the efforts made to increase resident involvement this year and invited comments from both the staff and the Resident Council on whether the improved process worked well or could be further refined.

Resident Council President Lloyd expressed appreciation for the outreach efforts made by Executive Director Pope, Ms. Carpenter, and the Mills Park Tower staff. She noted that all residents were notified about the public hearing, and there was good participation. Despite a small scheduling issue, she felt the process ran smoothly and felt that all the resident input was given consideration. She added that the process went well.

Executive Director Pope emphasized that all comments received were addressed, and the final plan would be submitted by the October 15 deadline.

Ms. Swaggerty noted that a few minor typographical errors in the resident feedback section of the plan had been brought to her attention and that those errors would be corrected in the final draft before submission. Chairperson Muse praised the collaborative efforts between the Housing Authority staff, the Resident Council, and Resident Advisory Boards, emphasizing the importance of a transparent process. She encouraged continued improvement in future years and thanked everyone involved for their contributions.

It was moved (Sood) and seconded (Socall) to approve the submission of the 2025 Annual Plan. The motion passed by a roll-vote as follows:

**AYES:** Commissioners Walz, Kelm, Socall, Sood, Teitelman, and Chairperson Muse

**NAYS:** None

**ABSENT:** None

## **DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS**

### MPT REPORT

Ms. Carpenter briefly summarized the Mills Park Tower occupancy, leasing, resident demographics, waiting list, building activities, and maintenance for the month of August 2024. She reported a vacancy rate of 7% with 14 units vacant. She stated that of the 14 vacant units, 3 are ready for move-in, while the market-readies on the remaining 11 units have been delayed due to flooring/carpeting issues. She reported one move-out, but no move-ins during the month.

Commissioner Sood raised concerns about three vacant units that have remained unready for over 90 days however, Cynthia explained that these units moved from full maintenance to touch-up stages, with delays primarily due to flooring and carpeting issues.

## ELEVATOR PROJECT UPDATE

Executive Director Pope provided an update on the elevator project timeline. He mentioned that the project is slightly ahead of schedule, but they have requested an updated calendar. Once received, the updated schedule will be shared.

## HCV REPORT

Ms. Cobb, Director of the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP), provided an update for August. The program currently has 425 active vouchers, with three mid-month lease-ups that will increase the total to 433 for September. The program has a 99% lease-up rate for mainstream vouchers, with 58 active participants and new vouchers issued to mainstream applicants. Foster Youth Independence (FYI) program vouchers saw limited activity, with seven referrals and inspections scheduled for upcoming lease-ups.

Ms. Cobb also addressed challenges with credit scores preventing voucher holders from securing housing, despite the program's efforts to refer tenants to landlords more accommodating to low-income families. Commissioner Socall raised concerns about credit score discrimination and its impact on voucher holders, emphasizing the need for further advocacy.

## HCVP WAITLIST UPDATE

For the 2024 waiting list, 150 applicants were placed, with 135 meeting local preference criteria. There is uncertainty regarding new HUD compliance requirements under the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA), which may affect how the program proceeds with these applicants. Oak Park Housing Authority is awaiting further guidance from HUD, expected by January 2025, but will continue moving forward with current procedures in the meantime.

Mrs. Cobb ended by recognizing her staff for their efforts in processing the new waiting list and emphasized continued communication on upcoming changes.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Commissioner Kelm inquired about the status of the men's washroom, and Property Manager Carpenter confirmed it was scheduled for repairs on September 11, 2024.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Commissioner Kelm raised a concern about improper parking under a stop sign at the corner of 12th Street. He requested a "No Parking" sign be installed to allow police to ticket violators, noting inconsistent enforcement by the police.

**ADJOURNMENT OF SEPTEMBER 10, 2024, REGULAR MEETING**

Chairperson Muse asked for a motion to adjourn the September 10, 2024, regular meeting.

It was moved (Kelm) and seconded (Teitelman) to adjourn to the September 10, 2024, regular meeting. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Andrew Teitelman, Secretary