

## **MINUTES – September 13, 2023**

The Housing Authority of the City of Meadville met in the Regular Meeting in the Community Room at Holland Towers at 2:00 p.m., the 13th day of September 2023.

Members Present: Richard H. Zinn, Chair  
Thomas G. Youngblood, Vice Chair  
Marcia J. Yohe, Treasurer  
James D. Rozakis, Secretary  
Sonya D. Logan, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

Also Present: Vanessa L. Rockovich, Executive Director  
Jon M. Ketcham, Director of Housing Management  
Tammy L. Brown, Property Manager/Administrative Assistant  
Tommi Jo Davenport, Property Manager  
Susan Y. King, Section 8 Coordinator  
Ronald E. Smith, Maintenance Superintendent  
Kyle M. Lynch, Assistant Maintenance Inspector  
Daniel R. Harris, Housing Inspector  
Charlotte M. Mitchell, Management Aide  
Susan Y. King, Section 8 Coordinator  
Barbara L. Houserman, Resident Initiatives Coordinator  
Christopher D. Ferry, Solicitor  
Carl R. Oswald, Holland Towers Resident  
Kathleen A. Dunlap, Holland Towers Resident  
Maryland Hicks, Jr., Holland Towers Resident  
Wayne P. Shannon, Holland Towers Resident  
Christopher C. DuBose, Holland Towers Resident  
Jacqueline A. Commins, Holland Towers Resident  
Jaime Kinder, Mayor, City of Meadville  
Gretchen M. Myers, Council Member, City of Meadville  
Marion Sherwood, Allegheny College  
Mike Crowley, Meadville Tribune  
Joseph F. Tompkins, Associate Professor, Allegheny College

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2023, meeting was made by Mr. Youngblood, seconded by Mr. Rozakis, and unanimously approved.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Tompkins, Ms. Dunlap, and Mayor Kinder offered comments.

### **CONGRESSMAN MIKE KELLY & DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Rockovich reported that she was contacted by Congressman Mike Kelly's office stating that the Housing Authority received \$3,000,000 as a result of the Housing Related Hazards and Lead-based Paint Capital Fund Program grant application. Ms. Rockovich commended Mr. Ketcham for the excellent job he did writing this grant. The funds will be used to replace gas ranges with electric ranges along with electrical upgrades housing-authority wide.

## **Response from the Board of Directors**

Ms. Yohe presented the following handout responding to a letter that the housing authority received from Michael A. Horvath, Director Pittsburgh Field Office.

*Ms. Rockovich has been at the Authority less than 3 years, yet much has already been accomplished/addressed during her time with the Authority:*

- *Improved relations with staff*
- *Improved REAC scores*
- *Implemented on-line applications.*
- *Opened up Section 8 applications.*
- *Working hard to increase Section 8 lease-ups.*
- *Significant improvement in computerization of office practices*
- *Ms. Rockovich has been great at delegating duties and responsibilities to staff and holding them accountable, and they have blossomed under her guidance.*
- *Scanning and filing boxes and boxes of papers/records, many of which had gotten wet from water issues.*
- *Provided Holland Towers resident council their own office space separate from maintenance.*
- *Providing a free-standing library room with key-fob entry and a system to treat books for bedbugs.*
- *Despite years of one elevator not stopping at the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, Ms. Rockovich contacted a service provider, they identified the problem and fixed it, and she initiated a better contract, with faster response times.*
- *Another issue plaguing Holland Towers residents for years, was cockroaches. She determined they were the result of an improperly configured trash compactor. At her direction, this was removed, the chutes repaired and cleaned, and alternate trash disposal systems put in place. As part of this, she has arranged for maintenance, as a reasonable accommodation, to dispose of a resident's trash when needed. This has drastically reduced and nearly eliminated this longstanding problem.*
- *Much more oversight of maintenance and dedicated maintenance staff for high-rise*
- *Ensured units for relocated tenants at Holland Towers were cleaned up, painted etc. prior to relocation, since she didn't know how long they might be in these temporary units.*
- *She worked with solicitor to get Holland Tower's resident council their BINGO license (not their own attorney) --They wanted Authority to be the licensed agent which is not appropriate.*
- *She has been working hard with staff to update the agency's policies and sharing these proposed changes with the tenants.*

- *She and staff drafted an MOU, granted it was basic, to allow the resident council to function and be in compliance with HUD regs so they could receive their funding, which they have yet to ask for. Granted this was basic at the time, but they were informed this would be reviewed and signed annually, to make sure it was current and met all the party's needs. They were encouraged to review and make suggestions for tweaks they might like before the next annual update and signing.*
- *She removed charges for use of AC and other similar charges in high-rise units.*
- *She arranged and implemented direct pay for tenants and landlords which has been received, by many, as extremely positive.*
- *Despite years of neglect and water leaks dating back over 20 years, she is addressing those issues and the deferred maintenance at Holland Towers in conjunction with residents.*
- *She has taken the concerns of tenants with the renovations under consideration and made tweaks to them based on their concerns and needs (example found way to keep pantry, etc.)*
- *She has also done her homework to identify that while the previous director addressed asbestos in the ceiling, it may not have been addressed in the flooring, so that will be taken care of during this renovation.*
- *Understand some don't want the partial wall in their units, but this is needed to allow them control of the heat and air conditioning in their units, something they keep asking for, to improve outside air flow, etc.*
- *The resident council has been vocal about not wanting any of the units in Holland Towers combined to make fully accessible units. She has explained that the current units do not allow individuals in power wheelchairs or with other similar mobility issues to get around easily and are working to ensure the needs of ALL residents are being met.*
- *Must understand bedbug issue was caused by appeals of evictions which languished during COVID, and some are still waiting their day in Court, nothing she can do about that.*
- *She quickly identified that one staff person, on-site, was not sufficient to address the bedbug issues and worked with the Board to hire an outside firm that could do more, faster, and more efficiently.*
- *Solicitor and/or Board addresses Holland Towers resident council issues at each meeting, based on their correspondence and solicitor meets with resident council president and their attorney at least monthly to try and address issues.*
- *Given the number of units needing to be turned over for relocation at Holland Towers, it has made it harder for staff to also address vacant units at other sites. Thus, she got the union to agree to the hiring of outside contractors to help with cleaning, painting, etc. to get units turned around faster.*

- *Ms. Rockovich and staff valiantly stepped in when the moving company failed to meet its commitment to relocate tenants, and did so as just another added duty, with positive feedback from residents.*
- *HUD may not realize, but one of the Board members on the Authority was the City of Meadville's Code Enforcement officer for years and years and thus he does pay attention to code issues.*
- *The Board is taking all issues, including bedbugs, seriously. However, he also knows if tenants do not cooperate and do their part, there is little a landlord can do, outside of eviction.*
- *Ms. Rockovich has tried hard to help all tenants affected by bedbugs and reached out to multiple agencies for help and tried to get them assistance, with no response. She has even taken it upon herself and staff to do what they can to treat tenants' stuff and try to address this issue, but some are just not capable of doing their part or choose not to. Also, some are merely here because they cannot be evicted without a Court date and that is still in limbo.*
- *Ms. Rockovich has arranged for daycare to be provided on-site at Gill Village and provided them with space and had it painted etc. for this group. This group will also bus children from other sites to this location for this service*
- *Ms. Rockovich has worked with other groups to provide additional services to our residents and especially to our kids, along with improving the array of services provided by the Authority through its Resident Coordinator. This includes food boxes and fresh produce for Holland Towers residents.*
- *Ms. Rockovich has determined that not all units in Holland Towers have emergency electrical service during a power outage, and she is making sure this is corrected as part of the renovations to address oxygen and other needs of tenants.*

She stated that the housing authority does not have a written policy for bedbugs, yet there are specific procedures set by the exterminating company. Ms. Yohe acknowledged that the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) is very basic, but it was set up to be reviewed every year. She indicated that the Housing Authority has multiple resident councils, and the Holland Towers Resident Council is the only one that has issues. The other resident councils seem to be very happy with their MOUs. The housing authority encourages all the resident councils to offer any changes.

Ms. Yohe affirmed for the tenants benefit that the Board is very much aware of how Ms. Rockovich is running the organization.

Mr. Youngblood stated that tenants were not threatened, they were notified of issues, and no one has been evicted. Written notifications are given to tenants who are not following rules and they will be evicted if they do not comply. It is not the intention to evict tenants, yet when they do not follow the rules, it is the final recourse.

Mr. Youngblood addressed the comments that the tenants are being blamed for the bedbug issues. He stated that the Board is not bringing the bedbugs into the building, the tenants are. Mr. Youngblood stressed that the tenants need to work with the housing authority to combat this problem. He affirmed that the housing authority does not publicly share who has bedbugs, yet the tenants know who does and does not.

Mr. Rozakis concurred that the housing authority would love the bedbug problem to be gone tomorrow. There have been thousands of dollars spent as well as manhours. Mr. Rozakis asserted that we need cooperation from the tenants.

Mr. Zinn recapped the board members comments. He felt that the board should respond to Mr. Horvath's letter, as well as request an in person meeting in Meadville, so the housing authority is able to present their side of the story. Since Mr. Horvath signed the letter, he felt that he owns the content. The board unanimously agreed to send a letter to Mr. Horvath requesting a meeting with the housing board and staff in the city of Meadville. Ms. Rockovich will draft the letter and email to board and the solicitor.

### **SOLICITORS REPORT**

Mr. Ferry addressed the Right to Know request. He stated that Mr. Tompkins raised some points that he will respond to in writing.

Mr. Ferry commented on the response to the complaint filed with Congressman Kelly. He stated there were many items in the letter that he would like to have discussion as to the direction that HUD is expecting the housing authority to take.

Mr. Ferry stated writing a pest management plan would be easy, yet the enforcement could be more difficult. Ms. Rockovich stated she sent out a blast email to PHARA regarding Pest Management plans and she has received approximately six responses.

### **CAPITAL FUND GRANT PROGRAM**

Ms. Rockovich reported bids for the Holland Towers Apartment Renovations were opened August 24, 2023, and they were higher than anticipated. The staff will meet with the architect and review the plans. Ms. Rockovich will present the outcome at the October meeting.

Ms. Rockovich reported the housing authority was awarded \$3,000,000 from the Housing Related Hazards & Lead-based Paint Capital Fund Program. The funds will be used to replace gas ranges with electric ones as well as upgrade the electrical systems in all housing authority units.

Ms. Rockovich stated that she had not received any notification regarding the status of Emergency Security Capital Fund Application. The application was for \$250,000. This grant is awarded based on a lottery.

### **ELM, MORGAN, SCATTERED SITES**

Ms. Davenport reported that there were 12 vacancies, with no new leases in August 2023. There were six annual and one interim recertifications conducted. She served three eviction notices and did not receive any notices to vacate. There were not any housekeeping inspections conducted. Tenants Accounts Receivable totaled \$57,029.67. Ms. Davenport added she is doing a lot of lease ups, but evictions too. The evictions are mainly for non-payment of rents even though Promissory notes were signed by the owing tenants.

## **GILL VILLAGE**

Ms. Davenport reported that there were 15 vacancies with four new leases in August 2023. There were six annual and six interim recertifications conducted. There was one eviction notice served and did not receive any notices to vacate. There were not any housekeeping inspections conducted. Tenants' Accounts Receivable totaled \$24,093.53.

## **FAMILY SITE WAITING LIST**

The waiting list for William Gill Commons, Elmwood, Morgan Village, and Scattered Sites is One-Bedroom - 1; Two-Bedroom - 5; Three-Bedroom - 2; Four-Bedroom - 1; and Five-Bedroom - 4.

## **HOLLAND TOWERS**

Ms. Brown reported there were 31 vacancies and 52 people on the waiting list in August 2023. There were 7 annual recertifications and no interim recertifications conducted. She also stated there were not any eviction notices served and one notice to vacate was received. There were not any housekeeping inspections conducted. Tenant accounts receivable totaled \$8,573.34.

Ms. Rockovich reported there have not been any issues with the elevator since the last Board meeting. She contacted the company that was referred by the architect to conduct an assessment of the systems.

Ms. Rockovich stated that the library is progressing very well. The door has been installed and the installation of the FOB reader was scheduled.

## **SNODGRASS REPORT**

Ms. Brown reported there are currently three vacant units with five people on the waiting list. She stated that she had not issued any new leases in August. There were no annual recertifications or interims in August. She had not served any eviction notices or received any notices to vacate. There were not any housekeeping inspections conducted in August. The total accounts receivable amount for August 2023 totaled \$3,100.54.

Ms. Rockovich stated that there are four outstanding invoices for flooring replacement. There are reserves being held in Certificates of Deposit. She requested authorization to cash the Certificates of Deposit to pay the bills. Mr. Ferry advised waiting for approval from PHFA to use the Certificates of Deposit to pay the invoice. Mr. Ferry has received information from the Coalition's attorney, and he will advise the Board at the October meeting.

Ms. Rockovich reported that a contractor was hired to repair the damage caused by broken waterlines. The quote for the repairs is \$32,000.00. The work will begin following the contract execution and the issuance of the initial deposit.

## **MAINTENANCE REPORT**

Mr. Smith reported 164 work orders were generated during August 2023 with 31 still outstanding, including nine tenant work orders, four management work orders generated, zero inspection work orders generated and 18 for vacancy fixups. He stated that the seven vacant units were completed. There were four move-in inspections, two move-out inspections and no annual inspections conducted.

## **EXTERMINATION REPORT**

Mr. Lynch reported that during the month of August 2023, Holland Towers currently has 23 units being treated for infestations with none on a 45-day clear. The fourth and fifth floors had quarterly treatments. He stated that William Gill Commons currently has four units being treated and there are none on a 45-day clear. The quarterly treatments included Lots 2 and 3.

## **SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER REPORT**

Ms. King reported 162 units under contract of which there were no port-ins, three port-outs and 21 VASH vouchers for August 2023 with 15 outstanding vouchers. She stated that there are 364 families on the waiting list. The Housing Assistance Payment expenses for August 2023 were \$59,594.92. Ms. King reported that a Section 8 briefing was held on September 6, 2023. She notified 13 with only 10 that followed through.

## **SECTION 8 INSPECTION REPORT**

Mr. Harris reported that there were 20 inspections completed in August 2023, of which 7 were new and 6 failed.

## **APPLICATIONS**

Ms. Mitchell reported 21 applications were received and need to be processed.

## **RESIDENT INITIATIVE PROJECTS REPORTS**

Ms. Houserman reported that on August 24, 2023, Victory Church donated 20 boxes of back-to-school clothes, as well as adult clothes. The Gill Resident Council held free clothes give away on Friday, August 25 and Friday, September 1 at the Gill Community Center. Many thanks to Victory Church and Gill Resident Council.

Ms. Houserman reported that a field trip for children ages 5-13 will take place on Monday, October 9, 2023, to Sunview Golf in Edinboro. Sunview offers an 18-hole miniature golf course, all speed baseball, softball machines, go karts, bumper boats and more.

Ms. Houserman has arranged a trip on Friday, October 13, 2023, for children aged 5-12 to attend the Conneaut Lake Pumpkinfest after school from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Aside from the infamous giant pumpkin drop, the children will enjoy numerous activities tailored just for kids.

Ms. Houserman reported that a field trip will take place on Friday, October 27, 2023, to Port Farms Harvest Festival in Waterford, PA. The festivities will begin at 10:00 a.m. and feature the corn maze, wagon rides, slide mountain, ball zone, pumpkin carving contest and more. Children ages 5-14 will be attending.

## **RESOLUTIONS**

There were no resolutions on the table at today's meeting.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

After a brief discussion, a motion to accept the Treasurer's report for audit was made by Mr. Rozakis, seconded by Ms. Yohe, and unanimously approved.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business to report on.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Yohe provided information regarding the procedure for reporting incidents or concerns of the tenants to the housing authority staff. She advised that when tenants approach public officials and/or agencies, it is the responsibility of that entity to contact Ms. Rockovich to make her aware of the concern and give her an opportunity address the issue. It would also be beneficial if that entity was made aware of the whole story in order to get a better understanding of the situation. Ms. Yohe stressed that housing authority staff should be approached before correspondence is sent to HUD and/or the Congressman. She reiterated that HUD does not like to be involved in tenant conflicts as it is the housing authority's responsibility to resolve all issues.

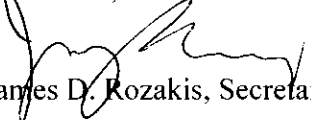
The meeting recessed into Executive Session at 3:17 p.m. to discuss personnel matters. The meeting reconvened at 4:05 p.m. with the following actions being taken.

A motion to send a letter to Michael A. Horvath, Director Pittsburgh Field Office, requesting a meeting in Meadville was made by Ms. Yohe, seconded by Mr. R Rozakis, and unanimously approved.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. R Rozakis, seconded by Ms. Yohe, and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Submitted,

  
James D. Rozakis, Secretary