

**MINUTES OF
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF JEFFERSON PARISH
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING**

September 16, 2020

AGENDA ITEM I: CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Commissioners Special Meeting was held on this date at the Marrero Community Center, 1861 Ames Blvd., Marrero, LA, 70072 and called to order by Vice Chairman Darin Collins at 6:00p.m.

AGENDA ITEM II: PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice Chairman Darin Collins led the Pledge of Allegiance

AGENDA ITEM III: ROLL CALL

Roll Call: Darin Collins, Michael Hinyub, Donald Jones, David Martinez, Newell Normand, Nancy Pearson

Absent: Brian Davis

**Also, Present: Teri Rouzan, Executive Director, HAJP
Bess Renfrow, ESQ., Legal Department, Jefferson Parish
Pilon Atkins, Accountant, HAJP
Dorian Jenkins, Nan McKay**

AGENDA ITEM IV: AGENCY UPDATE:

Agency Update will be given by Claude Silverman with Ericksen and Krantel

- Two packets were given to each Commissioner. Each packet contained the Summary of Audit Results. The Summary of Audit Results listed each of the findings, starting with 2017. If there was a repeat finding from subsequent years, it was noted.
- Financial Statements for 2017, 2018 and 2019 all have a clean and unmodified opinion. The Statements are fairly stated.
- Report for Internal Control over financial reporting and compliance, and other matters. Seven material weaknesses were identified, and one significant deficiency was found.
- Six were related to non-compliance
- Compliance with Federal Programs. HCV program had 1 material weakness related to that program.
- Make changes to Meeting Minutes.

AGENDA ITEM V: ITEMS FOR APPROVAL:

- **Resolution #2020-20** – Approving and accepting audited Financial Statements for Fiscal Years 2017, 2018 and 2019

The motion to approve and accept the audited Financial Statements for Fiscal Years 2017, 2018 and 2019 was made by Commissioner Newell Normand, and seconded by Commissioner David Martinez

Commissioner Darin Collins opened the floor for Public Comment on the Financial Statements for 2017, 2018 and 2019

**No public comment
Floor Closed**

This matter was submitted to a vote, as follows:

AYES – Darin Collins, Michael Hinyub, Donald Jones, David Martinez, Newell Normand, Nancy Pearson

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Brian Davis

ABSTAIN – None

The Resolution passed.

- **Resolution #2020-21** – Approving the budget for Fiscal Year 2020

Commissioner Darin Collins opened the floor for Public Comment on approving the budget for Fiscal Year 2020

Question – There is a lot of uncertainty regarding the budget. What does this mean for the tenants? What is the time frame for the tenants?

Commissioner Newell Normand – A lot of what we discussed was on internal controls regarding procedures on how we keep our records. We had deficiencies there. So, when we talk about clients' files, there are requirements that certain documents be in your file, as well as on the Section 8 side; and those documents were there. We are trying to figure out how we catch up and make sure those documents are there. What that means to the tenants is not much. It's more meaningful to HUD, as the overseer, as they watch how we conduct ourselves.

Question – Yes. That explains a lot, because you and HUD do not do things the same way.

Commissioner Newell Normand - HUD has the rules and we are supposed to comply with them.

Question – Oh, you are supposed to comply by HUD's rules?

Commissioner Newell Normand - That is a lot of the observation that the external Auditors made under HUD law, and federal procedures we were deficient. We did not meet their standard.

Question – So, is HUD interested in rewriting the contract?

Commissioner Newell Normand – The contracts that we were talking about are the Leases on the Section 8 side. We didn't memorialize all the transactions and make sure they were in each tenant file. So, that is why we spent a lot of time talking about it to make sure, as we were talking about core documents, that at the very minimum these are the documents that need to be in these files. The Auditor took a random sample and found that they did not have those documents in the files.

No more public comments - Floor Closed

The motion to approve the Budget for Fiscal Year 2020 was made by Commissioner David Martinez, and seconded by Commissioner Newell Normand

This matter was submitted to a vote, as follows:

AYES – Darin Collins, Michael Hinyub, Donald Jones, David Martinez, Newell Normand, Nancy Pearson

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Brian Davis

ABSTAIN – None

The Resolution passed.

- **Resolution #2020-22** – Approving contract for grass cutting services for the Acre Road Complex

The motion to approve the contract for grass cutting services for the Acre Road Complex was made by Commissioner Newell Normand, and seconded by Commissioner Donald Jones

This matter was submitted to a vote, as follows:

AYES –Darin Collins, Michael Hinyub, Donald Jones, David Martinez, Newell Normand, Nancy Pearson

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Brian Davis

ABSTAIN – None

The Resolution passed.

Steven Rosario, Nan McKay - Update on FSS Program

- Reviewing resident files
- Identify all transactions
- Discuss all options that residents have on the program
- Anticipated timeline is to complete review of all tenant files by October 31, 2020
- Reconciling HUD files for the last 5 years
- Meet with residents and begin counseling sessions in Public Housing and Section 8 Program
- Marketing Outreach to enroll families

AGENDA ITEM VI: PUBLIC COMMENT:

Kim Fluker – I have a storage container in my back yard. I keep my lawn mower and weed eater in it, because I want to cut my own yard. Ms. Linda told me that I can have it and came back and said I could not. If it is not allowed inside my house, then where am I supposed to keep it?

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – Ms. Linda did bring this to my attention. She told me the issue you have with the storage unit. She did explain that she told you that it was ok to keep it to store things when she asked you to clean up your yard. Unfortunately, as this is, we are now enforcing that part of the Lease, because other residents have filed complaints about their surrounding areas. It's not necessarily you. It is not you. I am left to make a decision. I completely understand that residents have had BBQ grills, furniture and other things on the exterior of their units for many years and no one has said anything about it. I don't want to be the one, at this time, to kick dust up in that area. However, when I get a couple of complaints from residents about issues with other residents, I have the Lease that governs everything, and then I have to enforce the Lease; and I can't tell one person that they have to remove the things that are restricted by the Lease. I must send that out to everybody. So when Linda initially told you that, it hadn't gotten to that point; but I have made other residents move similar items that they were storing things in, and I cherry-pick what part of the lease I am going to enforce. So, unfortunately, I must abide by the Lease, and it must be across the board.

Kynyutta Hall – What is the timeframe for getting a Section 8 Voucher? I was told it would be in October and I have been looking around for apartments.

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – It will not be in October. We have a SAC Application that has to be submitted and approved by HUD. So, it won't be in October. The other process is that we have an Environment Review that will be completed in November. It's a process, and as we get into it, we will know better what that timeline is.

Bess Renfrow, ESQ – It will be more around January or February. We have to give residents a 90-day notice so that you know it's coming, and you can start that process. We will have someone for you to meet with individually, regarding that.

Hope Davis – Is there a mediator between HAJP and the residents. I am asking because of a couple of incidents I have had myself with some people in the Housing Authority. I had a spat with one of the maintenance men and that particular day, I asked for an Incident Report to be written up. Months later I ask for a copy of that report and the report was not written up. It was made up that day. I don't have it with me, but in that Incident Report, the whole truth was not told and some of it was lies. According to the Incident Report, they had what I told to the person who wrote the incident. So, if the Incident Report is not true and it is written against me, who's going to come forth to defend me against the Housing Authority, because I am constantly getting written up for foolishness. Who do I go to when I have issues with the Housing Authority? Another thing is that we had an issue about the grass and lawn furniture. Everyone else was told to get rid of certain things, like BBQ grills and things like that. In my letter, I was told I had to get rid of my lawn furniture and things like that.

Bess Renfrow, ESQ – That is incorrect, we have a copy of that letter. The letter is very clear that lawn furniture is allowed.

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – I have it right here Hope (a copy of the letter).

Hope Davis – I really don't care about that, because it's over. My point is, who do we go to when there are disagreements between the Housing Authority and residents? If they are writing Incident Reports on us that are not true, who do we go to?

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – The Board. I am going to put it on record that you have not been written up for anything.

Hope Davis – When we go to get our vouchers and they have something pending against us we won't get our voucher.

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – Hope, that is not true. You have not been written up for anything. I know the Incident Report that you are talking about. There was an incident that happened, and the Housing Manager documented the file and put an Incident Report there based on her perspective of what happened.

Hope Davis – The incident happened between myself and Maintenance. So, I don't see why she was the one who wrote the report when she wasn't there, and she didn't put the part that I told her about in the report.

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – I can't speak to that because honestly, I wasn't there.

Newell Normand – What is the procedure, I have no problem with an independent third party writing the report if they are interviewing Maintenance and the individual tenant.

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – That is probably where the ball is dropped. Yes, that should have happened. That was a discussion. So, you have to get both sides. What the process should be is when there is an Incident Report, the Housing Manager will write up that Report. That is Ms. McClue. She should get the Staff's position (if it is a staff person) and then the resident's position on it. If two residents, it should come from both.

Newell Normand – Does that go to you?

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – The incident report just goes in the file. I don't necessarily read the incident reports as they come in.

Newell Normand – This is something that is documented, and we have. I don't want to go to the negative side, but I am going to go there. Had we wanted to take adverse action relative to the tenant.

Bess Renfrow, ESQ – There is a grievance procedure.

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – What would happen is, Kay, she is the Housing Manager. She would send a letter out to the resident. The resident would be asked to come in and we would have a meeting and discuss the issue. The first meeting, I would not be in. If the incident happened again, I would be included, when I was the Deputy. For a third situation, it would be the Director and Housing. If there is an eviction or a resident is told, "You have to move within 14 days, because of," such and such; typically, there is a grievance. At the Grievance Hearing, we have, and I don't know who, because I was asked this by another Board member, gotten Pastor Brown involved. He is the unbiased person who sits in the Grievance Hearing and he makes the final decision. It is the resident, and if they want to bring somebody to witness, the Housing Manager and myself. Bess has sat in on a few.

Bess Renfrow, ESQ – The reason I sat in (I do not normally sit in), but the reason that I sat in at this particular one is because the resident wanted to bring in their own Attorney, which we allow. So, as the Attorney for the Housing Authority, I thought I should be present at that.

Newell Normand – I just don't think there should be documentation of any incident with a tenant, with only a one-sided perspective, at no time.

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – Agreed.

Newell Normand – We need to memorialize both sides of the story and a Supervisor needs to approve it, in my view, before it goes in their file

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – Agreed.

Newell Normand – I just think that is a sound practice. I want to go back to, allegedly, what Hope said she received, relative to her lawn mower. You said you have one.

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – Yes, I do

Newell Normand – Does it include lawn furniture?

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – Yes, the letter states that during a routine inspection of the property (it gave the date, August 7), the following items were found in your yard, and it was a bunch of things and everything was listed: At least three BBQ grills, bench, broom, mop, garden tools, watering can, milk crates, charcoal, gas can, buckets, tables, three trash cans, lawn chairs, tire planters, punching bag and unused flowerpots. That was a list of things that were observed. It says photos were taken and attached to this letter. I don't have the photos here. Then it goes on. This is a direct violation of your Lease Agreement and it gives the section and highlights where it was a violation. What it says where it is highlighted (I highlighted it, because I knew I was bringing it here), "Porches (front and rear) should be clean and free of hazards. Any items stored on the porch shall not impede access to the unit. Only furniture designed for outside use is to be kept on porches or in yards. **No overstuffed furniture, garbage, garbage cans, milk crates, barbeque pits, car parts, tires and/or children's toys.**" It says only furniture designed for outside use. So, to reinforce that in the next paragraph I even wrote, residents can keep furniture that is designed for outside use on their porch or in their yard. So, I didn't say, I just listed everything we observed and what was in the pictures, but I didn't say get rid of those things, and it is in two different places within the letter.

Darin Collins – I saw the picture and I will be honest, and from generally looking at it, I am not trying to take pity on anyone; we are dealing with some of the poor people in our community. A lot of people don't have the education that most people have, and when you look at that letter, that looks like things that have to go. I saw it and in presumption when it says lawn chair, when it comes back and says you can keep them, it's confusing. Again, I can't even discuss this. There is no clarity of what you could keep, and you can't keep. If you would have had type of furniture with an X through it and then type of furniture that you could keep, it would be a little clearer. A lot of that stuff that is inside the Leases is not clear.

Newell Normand – Ok, So I added it in the body of my letter, and it was in the Lease that I attached. I understand what you are saying is when I sent those pictures, it looked like I was saying get rid of everything.

Newell Normand – I do not understand where the conflict is. Were all those items prohibited?

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – Not all of them were.

Newell Normand – So, why would we not just itemize the prohibited items, and say we took this picture, and there are items that are prohibited, and list the items. You don't have to throw it away, but you can't have it where you have it. It either goes inside or whatever.

Bess Renfrow, ESQ – That point was made as well. I believe Ms. Davis had a conversation with Ms. Rouzan where she told you that you didn't have to throw them away. They just couldn't be outside of the unit. Ms. Davis, did you not have that conversation?

Hope Davis – No, not about lawn chairs.

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – By the time we had that conversation, Hope had gotten rid of most of her things. This is the letter that came out right before the storm,

which was Laura, and it said that the items needed to be removed in preparation for the storm that is predicted to affect the area.

Hope Davis – Inaudible.

Newell Normand – Did anyone else get the letter for Laura preparation?

Teri Rouzan, Interim Executive Director, HAJP – I sent the hurricane letter out to everybody and there were 3 letters sent out on that day. The reason we pushed them out on that day and did the hand delivery, was because of the storm. There were three residents that had a lot of stuff in their yard, and because I had gotten several complaints. So, I directed my staff to go out every week and inspect the property, and I knew there was going to be backlash, because I am telling these people they cannot. So, the following week more letters went out. So, now we are in week four of this.

Bess Renfrow, ESQ – If I may, a complaint was called in. It had merit, so the letter went out.

Newell Normand – Did you say this in the letter?


Bess Renfrow, ESQ - No


AGENDA ITEM IX: ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2020

AGENDA ITEM X: ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned.

 1/20/2021
Brian Davis, Chairman

 1/20/2021
Teri Rouzan, Deputy Director
Interim Executive
Board Secretary Director