



COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Chair
Councilor William H. Dwight
Councilor Eugene Tacy

MINUTES

Monday, July 15, 2013

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street

Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building, Northampton, MA

1. **Members present: Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Council President Bill Dwight and Councilor Gene Tacy**
2. **Meeting Called to Order: 5:00 pm**
3. **Announcement of Audio/Video Recording of Meeting: Councilor Marianne LaBarge. Ruth McGrath is videotaping the meeting for Adam Cohen, North Street Association**
4. **Approval of Minutes of June 17, 2013. Approved: Councilor Gene Tacy and Council President Bill Dwight. Vote was Unanimous**
5. **5:10 p.m. – Jon Hite, Executive Director Northampton Housing Authority**
Lisa Felty, Director of Leased Housing and Vash Programs, Northampton Housing Authority. Lisa Felty oversees the Section 8 Program.
John McKemie, Mixed-Population Service Coordinator, Northampton Housing Authority
Michelle Moriarity, Lease Enforcement Coordinator

Jon Hite stated that the Housing Authority services the needs of 618 households in the community, including Salvo House, McDonald House, Hampshire Heights, Florence Heights, Tobin Manor, Cahill Apartments, and some smaller housing on Bridge Street and State Street. They also serve 684 households in the Conventional Section 8 Program and the Veterans Affairs Housing Program. In the Section 8 Program they supplement the rent payments of private landlords, approximately 4.4 million dollars a year. This is for Section 8. The average rent paid by their public housing tenants is \$280.00 a month. The annual budget for public housing is 2.6 or 2.7 million.

This year they will be performing about \$800,000 in modernization work, including new roofs, new boilers and handicapped access projects. They just finished a project refurbishing some sidewalks on Fruit Street. In addition, in the last 12 months they have overseen about \$100,000 in Energy Conservation Work, working with Chris Mason, Northampton Energy Sustainability Coordinator. Chris works with the Housing Authority one day a week, and Jon stated his appreciation for the City allowing Chris to work with them. The Housing Authority pays the City for one day of Chris's time. Jon also wanted to thank the City Council for approving the \$6,000 in CDBG funds, that allowed them to improve the kitchen at Grace House.

Jon said that their major challenges over the next few years are largely financial. They are receiving federal financial and sequester cuts as well as budget cuts in Boston. The Government wants them to have a \$14,000 reserve, The Housing Authority will wind up with about a \$13,000 reserve this year. There are a total of 730 vouchers, only 713 will be used this year, the others are not funded and won't be handed out. There are Housing Authorities that have had to terminate people from their Section 8 programs. They have not had to do that and hope not to have to.

Lisa Felty will talk about leased housing and Vash Programs. Lisa is also the Treasurer of an organization that dovetails with the Vash Program, called Homeward Vets which provides furniture to vets who are homeless and moving into housing. Vash has 230 vouchers. Lisa deals with the VA and veterans who are homeless. Veterans go to the VA and fill out an application. Once the VA determines they are eligible the Veterans are referred to the Housing Administration. The Northampton Housing Authority is the only Housing Authority in Western Mass that handles VASH.

John McKemmie and Michelle Moriarity discussed what makes up a mixed-population – both Seniors and younger disabled. John covers five complexes for a total of 435 accounts. For those 435 accounts John and Michelle do everything they can to resolve problems. Basically there are two things they do: 1) Hook people up with services and 2) Deal with problems and disputes that come up between tenants.

6. Public Comment: Joyce Simola, Northampton.

Joyce had several questions. She spoke about people living in Cahill and Salvo who are not officially residents. People are taking in people, some homeless. Joyce says this is a serious issue. She thinks this is a safety issue. She thinks more social workers are needed. Also, a lot of interpersonal conflicts are ending up in court. Joyce gave many examples of personal problems in public housing. She says she has many concerns and thinks there are many things wrong with existing policies.

- 7. City Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Chair, talked about the agenda for the Month of September 2013. There is no meeting in the month of August.**
- 8. NEW BUSINESS: There was no new business**
- 9. ADJOURN: 6:15 pm. Motion to adjourn was made by Council President Bill Dwight and seconded by Councilor Gene Tacy. The Vote was Unanimous.**

The next meeting is scheduled for September 16, 2013 at 5:00 pm.