

**REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Westmoreland County Housing Authority Board of Commissioners was called to order by Mr. Abraham and the following were present:

Thomas S. Abraham, Vice Chairman  
Norene Price, treasurer (phone conference)  
Joseph A. Dalfonso, Secretary  
Robert T. Regola, Member

Absent: Daniel J. Wukich, Chairman

Also present: Michael L. Washowich, Executive Director  
William McCabe, Solicitor  
Linda Metz, Executive Secretary  
Erik Spiegel, Director of Architecture and Engineering  
Mark Swetz, Comptroller  
Jim Kirshner, Asset Management Director  
Westmoreland County Commissioner Gina Cerilli Thatcher  
Westmoreland County Commissioner Doug Chew  
Rich Cholodofsky, Tribune Review

Members of the Public: Jerilyn Lewis  
Nicole Harshman  
Amanda Rose Piern, Voices of Westmoreland  
Diana Steck, Voices of Westmoreland  
Irzha Krajnak  
Patty Corbett

Public comment: Mr. Washowich said that the public's concerns would be addressed later during this board report.

Jerilyn Lewis of the Borough of Manor, questioned Mr. Washowich, and the Board on whether they review a report of projects at Jeannette Manor and whether anyone is aware of the site before and after projects are completed? She asked, "I'd like to know if you have a picture of exactly what's going on in the conditions of these buildings?"

Mr. Washowich said he would comment at the end of the public comment session.

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Nicole Harshman, founder of Survivor Siblings, an organization whose goal is to stop sex trafficking, provided photos of Jeannette Manor to the board in the which she claims the photos depict mold at the building. An asthma sufferer and having autism, Harshman said that “this is unacceptable.” And claimed, “If I were to stay in one of these places for a week, I would be hospitalized.”

She also expressed dissatisfaction over Authority work to rectify problems at properties, claiming people are wrongly displaced during the work period.

“Whenever they do these remodels, they displace people they don't let people go back to their own apartments, and they just move them. Like this is, OK?” she said. Getting accommodated to my surroundings takes extra time for me and having this happen to folks in public housing it's never acceptable.”

Irzha Krajnak, a Jeannette Manor resident, said she was informed of the plumbing project at Jeannette Manor at a meeting in August of 2021, and was told that the Authority would accommodate anyone who wanted to move out of the building into another site in the county. “So, my husband and I signed the paper, and we were given five choices. We were told the process would begin in November.”

According to Ms. Krajnak, she later was told project plans had changed and she would not be moving because although other residents had been moved. “I don't this this is fair,” she said.

Patty Corbett, a Jeannette Manor resident, claimed the building has a mold and insect, such bed bug and roach, problem.

She said she suffers from “a couple of immune conditions” and the “bug” problem is becoming a “health condition for me now.”

She also had a problem with parking at the Manor. She said that due to limited parking, many visitors and food deliverers need to walk blocks to get to the apartment because all of the parking spaces are filled.

“You need to come up with parking in that building,” she commented. “It's becoming an issue. It has to be dealt with.” According to Ms. Corbett, parking at the Manor has been an issue for residents for some time.

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Several of the speakers also alleged retaliation against them by managers and other residents.

Ms. Steck said, VOW was hearing complaints from the residents there (Jeannette Manor). “We thought that was an isolated case, but we have made thousands of calls, knocked on lots of doors, sent out surveys, and it appears the problem is not isolated at Jeannette Manor. There’s a major problem with the housing authority buildings” throughout the county.

The regular board meeting resumed following public comment.

**READING OR DISPENSING OF THE READING OF THE MINUTES**

Mr. Regola moved, and Mr. Dalfonso seconded the motion to dispense from the reading of the March 8, 2022, regular meeting minutes as submitted to the Board of Commissioners and accept them as presented, subject to any correction or deletions. On a roll call, the motion carried unanimously.

**RATIFY THE PAYMENT OF BILLS**

Mr. Dalfonso moved, and Mr. Regola seconded the motion to ratify the payment of bills that are properly authorized and signed as presented and travel expenses for the Commissioners attending this meeting. On a roll call, the motion carried unanimously.

**MANAGEMENT REPORT**

**EXECUTIVE REPORT:**

Mr. Washowich started his report by telling attendees that he was appreciative of their input. He then proceeded to say that as normal practice and protocol, WCHA managers conduct monthly meetings with the residents so that their “voices can be heard.”

Following the meetings, WCHA addresses “legitimate” concerns in a timely manner. Mr. Washowich explained that some complaints from residents are out of WCHA’s control. And, he strongly denied allegations of retaliation, including threat of eviction, and should it be found true, immediate disciplinary action would be taken.

Mr. Washowich then address Ms. Lewis’ questions regarding “modernization” projects of sites.

“In terms of our modernization issues ... we do go out and do look at our modernization needs,” he said. “Our entire modernization plans throughout our 2,500 units are developed

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based on Capital needs such as air conditioning units, heating, mechanical devise and so forth.”

He also explained that a meeting is held with the Authority’s Resident Advisory Board annually to discuss issues throughout the county.

But there is only so much the Authority can do with the \$3 million per year budget that is allocated by the federal government.

“Three million a year seems like a lot of money but when you’re spending \$3 million a year on over 1,600 units throughout the county ...”

As an example, Mr. Washowich referred to the riser project which is currently taking place at Jeannette Manor. “This particular project is costing the Authority \$1.3 million. So hopefully that illustration gives you an idea that that project will take up a large portion of our entire Capital budget.”

He said that these are the types of decisions that has to make annually, and if anything, the suggested that those in attendance reach out to their federal legislators and ask them to increase funding for public housing authorities.

He also pointed out that most of the Authority’s public housing buildings are older and work does need to be done. As an example, he said that Jeannette Manor is a 50-year-old building.

“It’s a good building. It’s a solid building. Do we spend capital needs on it? We most certainly do. Do we need more funds? We need more funds from a federal allocation standpoint to address all of our needs in all of our communities.”

In addressing mold and bug issues, Mr. Washowich explained that the Authority has contracted exterminating and environmental companies to remedy any problems.

Again, in our proactive manner, in which our residents’ concerns are always important to us, we are very aggressive and when we heard that there was mold in the building.”

He said, “We reached out to an environmental company and had the building thoroughly checked for mold and there was no mold present in the building.” WCHA spends more than \$100,000 a year on pest control.

“Bed bugs will continue to be a top priority of this agency. It’s just there’s not an easy remedy to getting rid of them. We need the cooperation of our tenants. We need to continue to aggressively identify them and treat them.”

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Mr. Washowich also pointed out some of WCHA’s recent accomplishments, including:

- New, affordable Senior Apartments – South Greengate Commons and Odin View – which provide 150 apartments totaling more than \$30 million in new development. Meantime, Grand View Senior Residences is expected to be completed in 2023.
- More than \$15 million in accessibility improvement for the disabled throughout the county.
- Modernization of WCHA communities in excess of \$70 million.
- The delivery of more than one million meals to families, elderly and disabled through a partnership with 412 Food Rescue.
- Educational scholarship through the Community Foundation of Westmoreland County.
- WCHA’s Family Self-Sufficiency program has assisted nearly 90 residents in becoming homeowners in the county.

Mr. Spiegel also addressed input from Ms. Krajnak.

“OK you, you're correct. Jim and I met with the tenants back in I believe August. At the time we needed to relocate up to 18 tenants to create a riser so that the plumbing work in the bathroom. At the time we did not know the supply chain issues that were going on would delay the supply of showers until February, so in the meantime we decided to use attrition of (normal) vacancies, created enough vacancies within the building to allow us to renovate a riser.”

He added, “We didn't end up moving anybody out of the building. There wasn't one person that was displaced. But if you want to transfer, there's still a process for you to transfer out of Jeanette Manor if you so desire.

In addition, Mr. Spiegel explained that parking is a problem at the authority’s high-rises because at the time that many were built there wasn’t such a great need. He said the authority is trying to address the matter.

He added, “And, as for mold, numerous environmental tests have been conducted and no detrimental mold has been identified. It's more of a mildew issue, and again, we try to educate the tenants.”

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“You can't run your AC with the window open right next to it. You're going to get mildew.”

**Board members input:**

Mr. Abraham: “On behalf of the board, I'd like to thank you all for coming down and expressing your opinions. I want to assure you I've been involved in I'm older than everybody here. I think I'm I've been involved in a lot of organizations and I'm telling you the three people here and the entire Authority staff are very professional, and they will follow up on your opinions. All opinions.”

Mr. Regola: “I would like to thank you for all attending. I am a new board member here. I've been able to observe the staff and what they have told me. I want to thank you for attending ... If you have concerns like you said, I encourage you to approach your manager at the building. If you're not getting results with the manager, feel free to reach out to the staff.”

MODERNIZATION REPORT: Mr. Spiegel updated the board on the 2021 Capital Improvement Plan (hard copy provided).

He pointed out that there are numerous projects or construction planned to begin this spring, including Grand View Senior Residences.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Mr. Swetz presented the Board with a report for the first quarter of 2022 (hard copy available).

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Hope in Life report for May.

Also, Mr. Washowich told the board that WCHA was informed by PAHRA that Mercedes Diaz, whose lives her family at Penn Manor, was named a recipient of the L. DeWitt Boosel Memorial Scholarship. The Penn-Trafford senior who studied at Central Westmoreland Career & Technology Center's Restoration & Design Department received \$2,000 to continue her education in visual arts.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Abraham asked if any thought had been given to holding an employee appreciation picnic/dinner.

Mr. Washowich responded that the matter is being looked into and he report back on Mr. Abraham's suggestion.

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**NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Regola moved, and Mr. Dalfonso seconded a motion to adopt Resolution 2022-04 approving the ex-tenants written off to collection loss:

<u>Month</u>	<u>Public Housing</u>	<u>Section 8 New Construction</u>
February 2022	\$ 14,691.40	\$ 00.00
March 2022	\$ 18,338.31	\$ 473.82

On a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Dalfonso moved, and Mr. Regola seconded a motion to adopt Resolution 2022-05 approving an amendment to the management agreement and guarantees and indemnities for Eastmont estates refinancing.

On a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Dalfonso moved, and Mr. Regola seconded a motion to adjourn. On a roll call, the motion carried unanimously.

The Vice Chairman declared the meeting adjourned.