

# Scranton Housing Authority

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## MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SCRANTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

JANUARY 6, 2025

The Board of Directors of the Scranton Housing Authority met in a regular session at the office of the Scranton Housing Authority in the City of Scranton, Pennsylvania, at 5:00 P.M. on January 6, 2025.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

Ms. Cruz called the meeting to order.

### 1. ROLL CALL:

#### Present

Megan Alpert (via phone)  
Michael Hanley  
Julie Schumacher Cohen  
Devendrabhai Dave (via phone)  
Sarah Cruz

#### Absent

In addition to the Board Members, those in attendance were Karl P. Lynott, Executive Director; John Cappelloni, Deputy Executive Director, James P. Doherty, Esq, Paula McLane, Executive Assistant, Vince Alu, and several Scranton residents.

**2. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Atty. Doherty stated that litigation was discussed.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 2, 2024.**

Mr. Hanley made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of December 2, 2024, seconded by Mrs. Schumacher Cohen. A roll call vote was taken.

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert  
Mr. Hanley  
Mrs. Schumacher Cohen  
Mr. Dave  
Ms. Cruz

None

**4. TREASURER’S REPORT FOR THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 27, 2024, TO  
DECEMBER 31, 2024.**

Mr. Hanley read the Treasurer’s Report.

This report is as of December 31, 2024. The balances in our Checking Accounts and Money Market Accounts are \$1,335,314.84. Investments made in Certificates of Deposits amounted to \$8,376,689.15. Petty Cash & Magistrate Funds totaled \$11,400.00 for a grand total of \$9,723,403.99.

Paid bills from November 27, 2024, to December 31, 2024, were forwarded to all members.

If there are no questions, a motion should be made for approval of this report.

A motion was made for the approval of the Treasurer's Report by Mrs. Schumacher Cohen and seconded by Ms. Cruz.

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert  
Mr. Hanley  
Mrs. Schumacher Cohen  
Mr. Dave  
Ms. Cruz

None

**5. SECRETARY'S REPORT – COMMUNICATIONS**

A letter was received from Mayor Paige Gephardt Cagnetti and read by Mrs. Schumacher Cohen:

*Dear Board Members:*

*It has come to my attention that descriptions of your last meeting which included the discussion around rent increase and, financial distress at Park Gardens, have been purposely misconstrued to incite rumors that are harmful to the residents of Park Gardens and troubling to neighbors in Green Ridge. The rumors that have been circulated are false and predictably politically motivated. I write, in advance, of your upcoming monthly meeting on January 6, 2025, and your special meeting on January 13, 2025, to convey that it is important to make clear during these sessions that there is no risk to Park Gardens residents. No one is going to be forced to move. Please also make it clear that there is no plan as alleged via social media, calls and emails to Green Ridge Association members to convert the development into Section 8 housing. In fact, regulations that govern housing authorities limit Section 8 vouchers at housing authority properties to an extremely specific set of conditions and steps that must be taken. There is no path forward for SHA to use Section 8 at Park Gardens. Park Gardens has been a home to many senior citizens over the decades. As there is a need for a financially viable plan for the development perhaps that can include formalizing a senior citizen age threshold moving forward and pursuing funding available for the needs of that population. Scranton needs more housing units across income levels and life stages. Park Gardens should remain a place for seniors who want to age with dignity. The falsifying of what was discussed during your meeting is regrettable. I hope that as we enter this new year our community can commit to facts, solutions and caring better for each other. As Housing Authority Board members, you exemplify the leadership and care for your neighbors we need more of. Thank you for stepping up for your community.*

*Sincerely,*

*Paige Gephardt Cagnetti, Mayor, City of Scranton*

## 6. PUBLIC COMMENT

**Ms. Cruz:** Does everybody who signed the Sign-In sheet want to speak, or is this just an Attendance sheet? Who is here to speak? We will do this in order. The first speaker of the night.

(As Public Housing policy each speaker is limited to five minutes.)

There were many people present at the meeting that did not want to speak. In fact, Scranton City Council Members, Tom Schuster and Mark McAndrew were present, but did not wish to speak.

Jennifer Gerrity had a question, after listening to the mayor's letter to the Board Members, she is concerned if there is a possibility of selling Park Gardens, and would that sale open it up to Section 8 or something else that the neighborhood would not be prepared for.

**Ms. Cruz:** We are going to go through the Public Comment and then to the Chairman's Report.

**Kevin Hayes:** He thanked the Board Members for their service. He has lived near Park Gardens for 18 years and he wanted to commend the SHA for the successful operation of this housing complex. It is a success story from the standpoint of the Green Ridge neighbors. It is a clean and safe environment for many members of our Green Ridge neighbors, who can no longer maintain their homes but still be a part of the Green Ridge community. You can understand when the rumors were circulating that you were going to entertain changing the dynamic of that community that it made no sense to us. It is a truly successful place in the city, and I stand before you as a former seasonal employee of the SHA at Valley View and Hilltop. While there are many nice people living in those developments, there is a very different dynamic than Park Gardens. I think if you pull certain public safety records, this will bear out. I would like to hear from the Authority tonight that no one is contemplating changing Park Gardens. We were under the impression that there would not be public comments tonight. You would have had dozens of people here. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak tonight.

**Rick Little:** Mr. Little requested and was given the meeting minutes from the December meeting. He inquired if there was a list of openings at the developments of when people come and go out of these buildings, other than the post that I see downstairs that there is a 2 or 3 year wait.

**Mr. Lynott:** The Apartment Report will be later in the meeting stating how many apartments we have and how many are available and the same with Section 8. The # of vouchers we have in total and how many have been issued. There is no list of people moving in and out.

**Mr. Little:** I'm trying to understand that when I lived in Adams Avenue I was on a floor with 22 people and 20 of them are gone and they get new people in. He states that someone told him

that a person got a free apartment in Adams Avenue because he got a job through Matt Cartwright. How did that happen?

**Mr. Lynott:** I don't know who you are referring to but there was a fire on your floor and the whole floor was emptied.

**Mr. Little:** I'm concerned about housing and people are worried about being evicted from Park Gardens, things like that and other places but there's really no housing. After I got evicted, as you told me that it would follow me all around the nation to get into public housing, 7 years, I'll be dead in 7 years. There must be a record of a way they set up the housing thru the Catholic charities, taking care of the unhoused with these rooming houses. Why isn't the SHA inspected by the City of Scranton? There isn't a certificate of occupancy. There's no place to go. There has to be some kind of transparency, you're supposed to have records. You can't just put a sign downstairs saying there's a 2-3 year waiting list. Can I get the minutes?

**Christopher Kelleher:** Thank you for your service to the community. I'm also a neighbor of Park Gardens and I was interested to know if there is anything on the agenda this evening that has to do with Park Gardens, prior to Mayor Cognetti's letter?

**Ms. Cruz:** Today is the standard board meeting concerning other matters and the special meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> will specifically be about Park Gardens.

**Mr. Kelleher:** Was this special meeting set up before the mayor's letter?

**Ms. Cruz:** Yes, the special meeting was scheduled in December.

**Mr. Kelleher:** Would you be able to tell me what the topic of the special meeting regarding Park Gardens entails?

**Ms. Cruz:** A potential rent increase.

**Mr. Kelleher:** Thank you, I appreciate it.

**Roberta Jadick:** I'm Roberta Jadick, a resident of Green Ridge and on the Board of the Green Ridge Neighborhood Association. Park Gardens was dedicated in 1953 as middle-income housing, not low-income or senior citizens but for middle-income. There are families that live there, it's family housing, middle-income. We want to see it stay that way. Secondly, I'm concerned that you are slow in posting agendas and meeting minutes. The last ones were in October and the current board is not on your website. I think that should be taken into consideration. Finally, as the person who posted what I was hearing, it was not political, and not a "hatchet job", it was to inform the neighbors of Park Gardens of a potential problem that we need to be aware of. There was nothing malicious at all, it was just that we needed to be aware and before things were posted several of us checked things out. We were told we were correct in what we heard. Now we are told that we are not correct in what we heard and that's fine. I don't like being portrayed as someone who is out to do a "hatchet job" on the Administration. Thank you.

**Ms. Cruz:** Thank you, Mrs. Jadick, is there anyone else who would like to speak?

No other speakers at this time.

## **7. COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **7.(a) Chairman Report.**

**Ms. Cruz:** I want to thank everyone for taking the time out of your busy schedule to attend.

Mr. Hayes said that it was communicated to him, or he assumed that public comment would not be allowed at this meeting. Per the Sunshine Law, any meeting of a legislative body must have public comment. We had public comment at our last meeting. Public comments are always welcome. I do appreciate everyone who came out tonight to speak or to observe. As the mayor stated in her letter, Park Gardens will not be converted into Section 8 housing. That is not our plan. Next week's meeting which will be held in the multi-purpose room of St. Clare's Church on North Washington Ave, will be for the express purpose of voting on a potential rent increase at Park Gardens. At our last meeting in December, several residents of Park Gardens attended and about 40 people spoke. They told us there are many issues at Park Gardens, and since that meeting, I've been hearing from other residents, having conversations with many of you and I so appreciate them. We understand there are several issues to be addressed, and we will evaluate them in the future. In terms of what Mrs. Jadick said, I apologize that when you last saw the website it was not up to date. I believe that it has since been remedied as of today. I will say for this Board, I was voted Chairwoman in November, I've been here since June. Mrs. Schumacher Cohen was appointed to the Board in October and Mrs. Alpert was appointed in November. We have just implemented email addresses and as you can see, we have (muffled) tv, before the minutes were recorded and filed away. I and my colleagues are working hard to do what is in the best interest of the Housing Authority. The public housing, section 8 voucher recipients and of course the residents of Park Gardens.

Would my colleagues like to say anything. Mr. Hanley declined; Mrs. Schumacher Cohen made a statement.

Mrs. Schumacher Cohen: I too received some comments since the last meeting. Regarding the section 8 program. We are proud to provide these vouchers to section 8 recipients who use them with private landlords across the city. So, during some of those commentary times, I feel that we just want to be clear that these people are members of our community, and we are proud to serve them. Obviously, the next meeting on January 13<sup>th</sup> will be specifically about Park Gardens. There is no state or federal funding for middle-income housing complexes. What we are looking at now is this complex and the financial issues something that is solvent and (muffled).

Ms. Cruz: Now for the Executive Director Report.

Mr. Lynott wanted to take this time to respond to Mr. Kelleher. Because of the number of people at the last meeting, there were senior citizens, some handicapped and I'm sure we were over capacity here and it was very uncomfortable. We suggested having a meeting in Green Ridge closer to where they live. So that's why we have set up a special meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> for

the sole issue of Park Gardens' rent increase. The place will be handicapped accessible, it was a lot easier to do it that way instead of tonight because as you can see, with 20 people in attendance it's uncomfortable. That's why we are having two separate meetings; this is our regular monthly meeting for regular business and next week it will be for a rent increase. Park Gardens needs to address some financial issues and the only avenue we have to create revenue is to increase the rent. That will be addressed next week. Everybody is welcome. Now, at this time, we will continue to discuss our regular business. You are welcome to stay or not.

## **(b) Executive Director Report**

**Mr. Lynott read the reports:**

### **UTILITY REPORT**

The cost for gas consumption in December 2024 was \$60,502.18 as opposed to the cost in November 2024 at \$41,578.26.

The water cost for the month of December 2024 was \$58,154.97 as opposed to the cost in November 2024 at \$58,154.9.

The electric cost for the month of December 2024 was \$63,296.74 as opposed to November 2024 at \$51,752.85.

The sewer cost for the month of December 2024 was \$121,836.36 as opposed to November 2024 at \$122,585.99.

The total cost for utilities for the month of December 2024 was \$303,920.91 and for November 2024 was \$274,072.07.

### **DELINQUENTS**

December (346) \$268,136.30 as opposed to November (337) \$244,218.83 and to October (294) \$226,707.97.

## **CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS STATUS – January 2, 2025**

The following will serve as an update on the status of the construction projects at the Scranton Housing Authority, as of the above stated date provided by Vince Alu, Director of Capital Improvements.

### **Renovations Buildings 13 & 14 at Valley View**

All work at construction projects has been complete. Waiting for the final punch list to be completed.

**Site Work for Building #13 and #14**

As of Thursday, December 19, 2024, the SHA, Architect and KR Construction Group suspended the remaining site work temporarily due to weather conditions. This pause ensures that all remaining work can be completed to the highest standard once favorable conditions return in the Spring.

**Renovations Building #12 at Valley View**

We have some bids currently.

**GENERAL CONSTRUCTION**

KR Construction Group	\$1,534,782.32
Multiscape, Inc.	\$1,940,500.00
H & P Construction	\$1,829,485.00

**ELECTRICAL CONSTRUCTION**

Leber Electric	\$ 197,950.00
K R Construction	\$ 108,698.28

**HVAC CONSTRUCTION**

Robert Harrington, Inc.	\$ 238,000.00
KR Construction	\$ 66,374.55

**PLUMBING CONSTRUCTION**

Cosgrove's North End Plumbing	\$ 424,900.00
KR Construction	\$ 167,188.73

Will be reviewed at the next board meeting on January 6, 2025.

**SECURITY CAMERAS – JACKSON TERRACE**

HIG has all the permits and has started the work of installing the cameras. The work is still ongoing.



## **Riverside Apartments**

HIG has all the permits and has started the work of installing the cameras. The work is still ongoing.

### **(c) SOLICITOR REPORT**

Discussions were held in the Executive Session.

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### **(d) APARTMENTS**

#### **Mr. Lynott read the Apartment Report.**

Under our Public Housing Program, we have an A.C.C. of 1,214 units with 1,169 units under effective lease. There are forty-five (45) vacant apartments in which twenty-seven (27) vacant units are under modernization, vacant approved by HUD.

Under our Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, we have an A.C.C. of 1,050 units with 746 units under effective lease.

Total apartments under effective lease by the Scranton Housing Authority as of December 31, 2024, are 1,915 out of an A.C.C. of 2,264. That concludes the Apartment Report.

#### **8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

#### **9. NEW BUSINESS.**

**9. (a) Resolution No. 25-5 – Amending the Scranton Housing Authority’s Admission and Occupancy Policy Section 4, Residential Lease Agreement, part B. Notice of Lease Termination.**

Mr. Lynott read the Resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) requires that every public housing authority amend the Residential Lease and the Admissions and Occupancy Policy to assure each resident is provided a thirty (30) day notice in the case of failure to pay rent pursuant to 24 CFR 880.607 (c) (7), 884.216 (c) and 966.4 (e) for non-payment of rent from fourteen (14) days to thirty (30) days; and

**WHEREAS**, the Scranton Housing Authority has reviewed its existing policy and has deemed it necessary to amend the Residential Lease in order to be consistent with 24 CFR 880.607 (c) (7), 884.216 (c) and 966.4(e).

**WHEREAS**, HUD has changed the law to provide a thirty (30) day notice to all residents in the case of failure to pay rent.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** this 6<sup>th</sup> day of January 2025 that the Scranton Housing Authority Board of Commissioners hereby Amend the Residential Lease and the Admissions and Occupancy Policy to amend the notice to residents for non-payment of rent from fourteen (14) days to thirty (30) days.

Mr. Lynott: It is my recommendation that the Board of Directors pass Resolution No. 25-5.

Ms. Cruz made the motion to pass Resolution No. 25-5, seconded by Mrs. Schumacher Cohen.

A roll call vote was taken.

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert

None

Mr. Hanley

Mrs. Schumacher Cohen

Mr. Dave

Ms. Cruz

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

Awarding of the Contracts for the bid openings on the construction at Valley View Terrace, Bldg. 12.

There are letters from the KBA Engineering’s Director of Architecture, Paul Smola regarding each of the contracts and his letters of recommendation which are consistent with Atty. Doherty’s recommendations. (Atty. Doherty’s comments at this time regarding this subject were severely muffled and could not be transcribed.)

**9. (b) Bid Opening on November 20, 2024, for HVAC Construction – Valley View Terrace Bldg. 12.**

**- Recommendation by KBA to award the HVAC Construction contract to Robert P. Harrington, Inc. at \$238,000.00. May I have a motion to award this contract. Ms. Cruz made the motion, seconded by Mr. Hanley. A roll call vote was taken.**

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert  
Mr. Hanley  
Ms. Schumacher Cohen  
Mr. Dave  
Ms. Cruz

None

**9. (c) Bid Opening on November 20, 2024, for Electrical Construction – Valley View Terrace Bldg. 12.**

**- Recommendation by KBA to award the Electrical Construction contract to Leber Electrical, Inc. at \$197,950.00. Can I have a motion to award this contract. Mr. Hanley made the motion, seconded by Ms. Cruz. A roll call vote was taken.**

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert  
Mr. Hanley  
Ms. Schumacher Cohen  
Mr. Dave  
Ms. Cruz

None

**9. (d) Bid Opening on November 20, 2024, for Plumbing Construction – Valley View Terrace. Bldg. 12.**

**- Recommendation by KBA to award the Plumbing Construction contract to Cosgrove’s North End Plumbing at \$424,900.00. May I have a motion to award this contract.**

**Mr. Hanley made the motion, seconded by Mrs. Schumacher Cohen. A roll call vote was taken.**

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert  
Mr. Hanley  
Mr. Schumacher Cohen  
Mr. Dave  
Ms. Cruz

None

**9. (e) Bid Opening on November 20, 2024, for General Construction – Valley View Terrace, Bldg. 12.**

**– Recommendation by KBA to award the General Construction contract to H & P Construction at \$1,829,485.00. Can I have a motion to award this contract to H & P Construction.**

**Ms. Cruz made the motion, seconded by Mrs. Schumacher Cohen. A roll call vote was taken.**

**AYES**

**NAYS**

Mrs. Alpert  
Mr. Hanley  
Mrs. Schumacher Cohen  
Mr. Dave  
Ms. Cruz

None

**10. PERSONNEL**

Mr. Lynott: Under Personnel, Madam Chairman, Michael J. McDermott, has completed his 90-day probationary period for the position of Security Guard.

Also: Michael Palmitessa retired on November 29, 2024.

Paul Walsh retired on December 31, 2024

Thomas Zielinski retired on December 27, 2024

It would be my recommendation to accept the retirements of the above employees and to place Michael J. McDermott on permanent status as Security Guard effective December 21, 2024.

Motion was made by Ms. Cruz and seconded by Mr. Hanley. A roll call vote was taken.

AYES

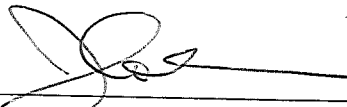
Mrs. Alpert  
Mr. Hanley  
Mrs. Schumacher Cohen  
Mr. Dave  
Ms. Cruz

NAYS

None

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Cruz: If there is no other business to discuss, may I have a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Mr. Hanley and seconded by Mrs. Schumacher Cohen. The meeting was adjourned.

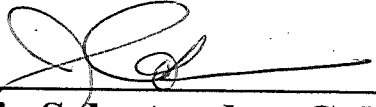
  
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**Julie Schumacher Cohen, Secretary**

## **CERTIFICATE**

**I, Julie Schumacher Cohen, hereby certify that:**

- 1. I am the duly appointed, qualified and Secretary of the Scranton Housing Authority.**
- 2. I am custodian of the records of said Authority.**
- 3. The attached copy of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of said Authority held January 6, 2025, is a true and correct copy of the original Minutes of said meeting, as approved at the meeting of said Authority on February 3, 2025, and is recorded in the Minutes of the Authority.**

**In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and the Corporate seal of this Authority this 3rd DAY of FEBRUARY 2025.**

  
**Julie Schumacher Cohen**  
**Secretary**