



TOWN OF BROOKLYN

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BROOKLYN, CONNECTICUT 06234

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Brooklyn Housing Authority

Clifford B. Green Memorial Building

Minutes

Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at 10:00 am

Brooklyn Housing Authority

Mailing: #87 Quebec Square

Brooklyn, CT 06234

1. **Roll Call** – Bruce Parsons called the meeting to order at 10:02am.

Members Present:

Chairman	Bruce Parsons
Vice Chairman	Sandra Brodeur
Member	Lisa Arends
Member	Anna Whalon Ramos

Others Present:

Connecticut Housing Finance Authority/ Selectman	Joe Voccio
Brooklyn Schools Superintendent	Patti Buell
Putnam Housing Authority Executive Director	Kathy Carter
Putnam Housing Authority Executive Director	Sarah Schoppe
Recording Secretary	Lisa M. Lindia

- B. Parsons – Before we start, I would like to address a few things. First, I would like to talk about the agenda, send me a copy before you post it. So, I'll be aware of what's going on. The second item is there are two spots for public comments. I would like to strike the one at the beginning and leave only the one at the bottom.
- S. Brodeur - We do not have to answer any questions. We can take note of what is being said.
- B. Parsons - We do not need to have it in both places. I've have never had in both places before it has always been at the end, and this is where I want to keep it.

- L. Arends - When I first got involved with the town years ago, I fought to have public comment in two places, at the beginning and end of the meeting. It gives the public a perspective of transparency with the opportunity to speak and ask questions. The board then can continue with the meeting and the public could speak again. In both times the board is not under any obligation to answer back to the public. It is just an opportunity for the public to speak and the board to hear. Then if the board chooses to act on what the public is sharing. It can be added to an agenda in the future but really is not meant for a back and forth. I think some commissions get caught up by going back and forth with the public, but it is just really kind of a feature in the municipal or board setting to allow the public an opportunity to come to these meetings and have a voice even though they may not get a response back. I believe that all the town commissions now have it in two places, but I was one of the ones who fought for it back in the day to make sure that the public could be heard because they may introduce something that you want to think about even though you don't respond and at the end of the meeting after they listen to the meeting they may want to share their perspective one more time before the board concludes and we go up into our own thing. So that is my opinion in terms of the public comments and being in two places and why it should be there.
- B. Parsons - I served on the PZC Commission for about 27 years and it was not in both places at that time. It has always been at the end, what is wrong with having it this way? I feel it is unnecessary because there is an opportunity at the end to talk about anything that comes up. We have not discussed it yet. And if they have a question, what if I say wait until we get done with the agenda.
- S. Brodeur - We will just say thank you and move along again.
- A. Whalon Ramos - I have no issues with the two locations. When was the last time someone came? So, I feel it's unnecessary to remove it is just a working document at first time if it came to a point where too many people were coming in or we were having these problems. Then I do not think it makes sense to change it now just for personal preference. I have never had this situation happen before. From a public perspective we offer the opportunity for the public to speak. It sounds very important to others on this commission. It sounds less important to me. It sounds like to me to you that you just don't want to offer them an option to speak which sounds silly and so I know that that's not what you mean, but it doesn't make sense to change it when no one's coming for public comment and there's nothing wrong with having it twice on the agenda.
- B. Parsons - All right majority wants to keep it in both places.
- B. Parsons - Next issue. Is the discussion on Quebec Square it is not a part of the Brooklyn Housing Authority. There is no business for Quebec Square to be on this agenda. Quebec Square is a separate entity. We are the Board of Directors of Quebec Square; any issues will be addressed at the Quebec Square meeting after the Housing Authority meeting.
- S. Brodeur – I would have done that when I put this together. When I got the agenda for Quebec Square Housing Authority meeting. There is nothing on there to discuss the paperwork that was sent to us. It was basically for the rest of the committee to see it.
- S. Schoppe – Explained that is why the information came into separate emails.

- S. Brodeur –There was nothing on there to discuss the paperwork that was sent to us. It was basically for the rest of the committee to see it.
- B. Parsons - We will strike the bottom item review of Quebec Square financials and will review during the Quebec Square meeting.

2. Public comment

- None

3. Action for the minutes

- Approve minutes from February 21, 2024 with corrections 1.) under the minutes the ZIP code in the top left corner there's two twos and the zip code should be 0 6 2 3 4 and 2.) There is no space between Meeting Minutes Wednesday in the heading. Motion to approve minutes with corrections made by L. Arends. Seconded by S. Brodeur.

Motion passed unanimously by vote 4-0-0.

4. Old Business

Discussion on information about Rental Cap Commission – possibly refer to the Board of Selectmen.

- B. Parsons -All business discussion on information about rental cap commission possibly research through the board of Selectmen.
- B. Parsons: That issue I believe is in the state of Connecticut is working on some revisions to rental caps or is that correct?
- S. Brodeur - It was quite a while ago and in reviewing the paperwork that Anna gave us, and they said that we could any town that had 25,000 people or more, but we are supposed to have housing. We are certainly below the requirements. However, it looks like something that would be interesting and no one I read it. I was wondering if you might be able to approach NECOGG. I thought maybe they might take something like this but unfortunately probably will charge all the time, but I think it's good enough idea. I would like to go there because it is easier to get many towns to participate in to keep the cost of the nightmare the whole thing just to themselves. I know I think that we should make a recommendation to Austin to approach NECCOG.
- L. Arends- I was thinking the same thing because I thought that Brooklyn in and of itself is too small to establish a viable experiment Commission in terms of trying to get a board and volunteers members. We need to do something because this is an issue statewide. That would be great if NECCOG could help us set up a regional experiment commission for the Northeast region as opposed to each town in this region trying to set up its own because we are not required to do it but does not mean it is not needed. To be a good commission you really need to have a good body or good board to accept issues, manage the complaints, and have hearings. I was concerned as to whether it would ever get off the ground in Brooklyn because of the nature of the size of our town and all the other commissions that we struggled to get volunteers for. I was thinking if NECCOG could do something from a regional perspective and work with the

whole northeast corner because a lot of folks that we see seeking services really are sometimes just transitioning from one town to the next person such a small region that would make the most sense.

- A. Whalon-Ramos - I am thankful to everyone. I had no idea how to go forward from here. But I am so glad that you have ideas. I will try to follow through with it myself as well. I appreciate everyone for looking into it.
- S. Brodeur - Anytime you have ideas. This is where to drop them off. We may not be able to take care of it ourselves, but we will hand it off to somebody who can.
- L. Arends – Would the next step be to ask Austin to contact NECCOG. I mean What is the next step?
- S. Brodeur - I think the best thing to do would be to approach Austin. If A. Tanner is not interested, we can approach NECCOG ourselves. I do not see why we cannot.
- B. Parsons - I am just wondering why we as a Housing Authority are involved?
- L. Arends – You mean with the Fare Rent Commission who else would be involved?
- B. Parsons - The Town itself, I do not feel it is a Housing Authority responsibility. How do you girls feel?
- K. Carter - It has nothing to do with the Housing Authority. But I think NECCOG is an innovative idea because there are some towns that could be a little bit burdensome, because you must have your Building Official on board because he is the one that's going to have to go out to do inspections. Then the staff person might be a little overwhelmed. I am going on if you got 10 Towns together or something. That might work out. So, I would put it to A. Tanner to contact NECCOG and just get it out of the House Authorities purview. Just say to A. Tanner we just discussed it a little bit and think if anything NECCOG would be the place to go because it is a sharing of the burden. None of these little towns that over 25,000 people but together collectively it might be, that would be the way to go, not through the Housing Authority. It would not make sense for the Housing Authority to get involved in it because it is our own Commission with its own appointed Commissioners. I think NECCOG would be real.
- A. Whalon-Ramos - The Housing Authority obviously does not have the capacity to do this, but it is just getting it started for someone else. So that is why important because we are supposed to be advocates for low-income people. That is what we are doing is being advocates for low-income people in the housing realm and if it was out of our purview which it is just moving up to the next person and I can do something about it.
- L. Arends - We are not taking it on that is the purpose of NECCOG in terms of having a housing government in the Northeast region. In my former capacity working for the state of Connecticut. I represented the Department of Labor at NECCOG at these meetings we talked about the homeless, charettes and other things that are right up NECCOG's ally.
- S. Brodeur - I will go to A. Tanner, I see him almost every day. I will give it to him, I am going to see him tonight.
- B. Parsons - One of the first things he is going to say is we cannot get volunteers.

Discuss a possible referendum to give the Housing Authority the Right of First Refusal to purchase properties being foreclosed or already owned by the Town for possible sites for low-income housing.

- B. Parsons - The next item is to discuss the possible referendum to give the Housing Authority the right of first refusal to purchase properties being already owned by the town of Brooklyn for sites for low-income housing.
- S. Brodeur - Joe said that he would try to put that together for us. That is why it's back on the agenda just to see where that stands with him. I am not sure that he is going to be able to discuss something.
- Joe Voccio: Sandy, thank you for that. I did take a little personal time to be on this call. I have not finished a written draft of that. I was hoping to have a draft for your initial review for this meeting. I have not finished the initial draft of that ordinance for your consideration. I hope to complete that and can send it to the board members for your consideration. If you want to add it to next month's agenda for discussion, I would be happy to participate when the time comes.
- S. Brodeur - Okay, we will put it on the agenda again for next month. Thank you, Joe.
- B. Parsons - Sandy, maybe you could explain exactly what the intent is as far as providing low-income housing here referring to the Housing Authority owning the property.
- S. Brodeur - Is that if we have a site? Then we can qualify to go to the state either issue bonding or do whatever we have a chance to have a project. We just need a site then we can try to find a contractor. Does the Housing Authority want it? I honestly do not know how it must go myself. Joe has more information on that and if he has more time next month to talk about it or sometime this month to talk about it, we could talk about it again. I do not know if the Housing Authority will own it. I know it will not be all together like Quebec Square necessarily unless we can find a big piece of land. But if we could find something even a place where you could build a duplex or even a single family house we could make it so that if a bond is issued you have your person who supplies the money for the bond you have the contractor comes in and says good I've got lower costs to build this house and it's between the two of them for what happens with it. The person who issued the bonds is going to be the person who gets the money from it. I do not know if they will own it or what the deal is. I do not know enough Joe's has more knowledge on that. I do know we have to start doing something or we are not going to have any low-income housing if we do not get involved?
- Joe Voccio - So to answer Bruce's question, it could go a bunch of different ways. I think. Whenever a parcel is being made available for sale. The intent is to allow the Housing Authority to acquire that parcel. Depending on the size of the parcel, if it's a single-family home lot. The Housing Authority would have the ability to say reach out to one of the Habitat for Humanity local offices that they had a family and funding to construct a single family home, one of the things that they struggled with as well is getting site control of land in order to site one of their homes, if we were to transfer a particular property to the Housing Authority could either sell that property to Habitat for Humanity with certain restrictions in place that it would have to go to a first-time home buyer something like that. There are so many groups out there that want to construct affordable housing. Land is at a premium, they usually get priced of those opportunities and if the Housing Authority can play a role in acquiring sites and providing them to developers to build more affordable housing so that kids and families who grew up in town can stay in town. That would be a big plus. If it's a larger site, then obviously we're talking about potentially rental housing in a small subdivision. I think what I was envisioning with this mechanism is that it is

probably going to be individual sites. I used the term, trying to acquire the missing teeth and the smile on it again street that I think would be the goal.

- S. Brodeur - Thank you Joe.
- B. Parsons - So you are telling the housing authorities because it is going to become a broker. We are going to acquire the property.
- Joe Voccio: Not necessarily a broker, just an intermediary. An entity that can hold a piece of property so that the Development Group could come in and do it.
- B. Parsons - Who from the Housing Authority is going to monitor the whole deal?
- Joe Voccio: In what way?
- B. Parsons - Make the application for the bond for the money and how long does it take for the Housing Authority to acquire the funds to purchase the property knowing from the experience or DOH in the past it will take months not days not weeks it will take months. Who is going to sit there while the Housing Authority makes an application for the funds?
- Joe Voccio: That is the beauty of this. So, if the town is willing to participate in this through an ordinance, then if the Housing Authority cannot put together a fund to acquire the property from the town. The Town can retain ownership in the Housing Authorities name until a suitable buyer comes forward again. That buyer could be Habitat for Humanity or some other nonprofit developers, the Access Agency or others who would then acquire the property from the Town and in develop that is needed. Where they get their funding is completely their responsibility. This is all about retaining site control until a suitable developer can be put in place.
- B. Parsons - It still does not answer my questions.
- S. Brodeur - Yes, it did.
- A. Whalon-Ramos - They would manage it until somebody else bought it.
- B. Parsons – Who on behalf of the Housing Authority is going to administer the program?
- S. Brodeur - What's to be administered if we have a parcel of land, how do we get the parcel of land. Maybe the Town is foreclosing on the property, and they have decided that they're going to donate it to us. We have properties in our name, and we approach Habitat for Humanity, and we say are you interested in this property? They can take the site and they build a home on it. Then we are out of it.
- B. Parsons - But you are also talking about the Housing Authority owning property and renting it out also.
- S. Brodeur - No I was not saying that.
- B. Parsons - I thought that is what you said. That it was either will be renting it selves or selling it.
- S. Brodeur – What is our mission?
- B. Parsons - Our purpose is to provide housing for low-income families.

- S. Brodeur - How are we supposed to do that?
- B. Parsons - We cannot have a single-family homes scattered throughout the Town.
- S. Brodeur – We can because we do not own them.
- B. Parsons - We cannot even if you want to go out and take one by eminent domain or if the town gives you one because they foreclose on it.
- A. Whalon-Ramos - I think we should table this to move it until Joe is able to write up his proposal and we can review it. I think that Sandy makes some good points and I think that you just really don't understand what she's saying so we should move on because it's uncomfortable. That is it.
- B. Parsons - We're not going to be purchasing property.

Other old business

- None

5. New Business

Joe Voccio will be present to participate in New Business discussions.

- S. Brodeur - Joe does not necessarily have new business. He is here to participate.

Patti Buell will be present to discuss recent information that the Homelessness Charette has received from the CT. Department of Housing concerning financial assistance to help provide low-income housing.

- Patricia Buell - Good morning.

I first would like to just commend the Housing Authority for taking on this hard work. It is hard work to try to figure out how to provide affordable housing. It is a conversation that I've been participating in for many years and most recently since I've been in Brooklyn have participated in the Homelessness Charette, which is a group that meets out of TEEG. TEEG kind of initiated this and there are several communities Brooklyn, Pomfret, Woodstock, Thompson, of course, there may be others that have been participating. Over the years we have addressed different problems or different challenges that our homeless face and we have tried to resolve a couple of those, and we've made some nice progress on those. The Homeless Charette you are at was part of the no free shelter.

Are getting that up and working with Access Agency. There were a lot of agencies that participated in those meetings as well. As elected officials and my role in the school district is as the homeless liaison every school district has a homeless liaison and it is the responsibility of the homeless liaison to provide continuity of programming for children who become homeless and there is a lot of definitions for that. It is not just if you're out on the street, although that is considered homeless. There are a lot of definitions where students can qualify for being homeless. Over my years and I've seen students that have experienced homelessness and as every school district is obligated to continue to provide a program for children in the Town that they were living in when they became homeless or if that family chooses, they can attend school in the town where they're now residing. It may be just temporary maybe with Grandma, but it's

considered homeless if it's not fixed adequate housing and so I tell you this just for a little bit of background and when you talk about affordable housing. I had a situation. I think it was last year and the family told me you can talk about this because this is a prime example of what has happened for families. They could not afford their rent anymore. The family that owned the home came in and said we are moving you out they force them out. Then they could not afford the rent in any of these refurbished housing right on South Street or off Tiffany Street. Some people came in and renovated those houses. There are those apartments there and this family could not afford it. The town of Brooklyn was paying a significant amount of money to transport a child a long distance because we are obligated by law to go from another town to Brooklyn and that family was living in a hotel for months. They had to cross the street go into a different Hotel just so they did not look like they were living in the hotel and then they went back. So again, I tell you that story just for background.

This happens more frequently than you would like to know in Brooklyn, but it happens in every town and so the Homeless Charrette you are right to look at some of these situations. I did provide some meeting minutes to Sandy just so that you would have those but most recently we had a meeting with Brandon McGee. He's the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Housing for the state of Connecticut. I'm sure some of you guys know who he is. I had never met him, and he came in and met with a small group of us from the charette and he was very motivated to support Northeast Connecticut to do some of what you guys are talking about and what we've been talking about through the charette is how can we create some?

Affordable housing not just low-income housing but affordable housing because as when a family becomes this place and becomes homeless, they end up homeless for potentially easily over a year, but it could be years that they're homeless and the burden that places on the communities and the state is more significant than what might be to help them in the front of this. So, Brandon McGee did a lot of talking about some of the options one of the things that they were talking about is how do we create more affordable housing.

I left that meeting very excited about the options and the opportunity and knowing that the Housing Authority in Brooklyn is trying to address increasing the number of spaces or units that Brooklyn may be able to offer of affordable housing. So, the next meeting I think is April 8th of the homeless charette. I think that they are going to try to connect with Brandon McGee again. So, I would invite anybody that wants to participate to attend our homeless charette and engage in this kind of conversation. We're not talking about anything that's going to happen in the next six months, but we need to plan a year out and for example, acquiring a piece of property and adding one more place where the family could live that that's affordable and not become homeless. So, the cost of homelessness is impacting everything including their education. That is why I feel passionate about advocating for this because it goes far beyond where they're going to live. It is a significant impact, but I am open to answering any questions. Thank you for letting me speak if there is something that you want me to share specifically, I can do that as well.

- **S. Brodeur** - When and where is your meeting, Pattie?
- **Patricia Buell**: April 8th and that meeting usually I think starts at 4 or 4:30 and it's online. A link comes out and I can share that with you. If you do not hear from me, call me to remind me to share the link? I'll try to remember to share it.

I do not think we have a date for Brandon to come back out again, but that's in the works. Basically, what he said is these larger communities have more resources obviously and more resources go to them. He said a group like TEEG or the Homelessness Charette which represents the Northeast area would be excited to try to help. By providing somebody to help us flush out the plan and to write the grant. The grants for some of these projects, writing the grant is like getting your doctorate. He said he has got people that can help to write those grants. It's just a resource that I think we need to dig a little deeper into. If an opportunity were to come up,

then he would help us I think connect us to some of those resources.

Basically, he said you've got to ask if you don't ask nothing is ever going to change and they don't know we need it if we don't ask. We have talked about creating mobile showers. Some of the local communities have showers but Brooklyn does not and so if you are homeless in Brooklyn, you never have anywhere to go take a shower. You are never going to look clean enough to even get a job. Never mind, housing who's going to rent to you even if you had money so that we talked about case management, we need people that can help these people once they get an apartment to make sure that they don't fall down and lose that apartment and lose that job. We also talked about some Early Head Start funding for families to help with housing and he talked about a job situation where they will help pay for housing if someone is in a job training situation.

I think we need to figure those pieces out. We do not have social services in town, but we have people that care and want to try to connect the dots. I think regionally is the way to do it. There are a few of us that are very excited about this possibility and I'm glad that you guys are talking about it, too.

- S. Brodeur - Do you have any questions for Pattie? I did give them a copy of the minutes Pattie.
- Patricia Buell: Okay.
- S. Brodeur – This Commission has received the minutes to see what's been going on. I know I probably will be there on April the 8th unless something comes up. I plan on going to the meeting.
- Patricia Buell: Wonderful. Thank you.

Request a map of town owned land to review for potential building sites (prior map was too small).

- S. Brodeur – We did receive a copy of the map, but it was 8 ½" x 11" and was too small. TYCHE has taken Jana's position, maybe we can get a copy of a large map from the Interim Town Planner.
- L. Arends – Does NECCOG have maps?
- S. Brodeur - I will contact the Interim Town Planner to get a copy.

Review of financials from the Putnam Authority that is managing Quebec Square and information concerning refinancing of Quebec Square housing. Need for transparency of ownership and status update.

- Sarah Schoppe – You should have received the information in your emails.
- A. Whalon-Ramos - I was hoping that you could schedule time to take a tour so we can see exactly where it is.
- Sarah Schoppe - They do not have any vacant units right now. I can tell you the physical location to drive by.
- S. Brodeur – They are really nice.

- S. Brodeur - I was looking at the inspections and I noticed that the one for Quebec Square said that Bruce was the owner, and the Housing Authority is incorporated.
- K. Carter – Upper Village is owned by Brooklyn Housing Authority, HUD gave us some money to buy those two units on Tiffany Street in Front Street, there are only 11 units' total.
- L. Arends - It says 57 units?
- S. Schoppe – That is Quebec Square that was in a separate email.
- K. Carter – Housing Authority owns Upper Village which consists of 11 units that are 100% HUD. That is not CHFA or Navigator.
- L. Arends - So the Housing Authority owns all 11 units at this meeting. The 57 units we are going to talk about right after this meeting at the other meeting.
- K. Carter - It could be 5 different people on Quebec Square Board but a lot of times it is easier having the same people. B. Parsons is the Chairman for Upper Village, on the inspection report. Anything that was sent out goes to our Chairman and Bruce is the President for Quebec Square Inc.
- L. Arends - If we had any questions or concerns about the 11 units, we would discuss it in this meeting. Since it's really nothing to discuss other than you guys are doing a great job taking care of those 11 units.
- K. Carter – We tried it's just an eyesore for the town.
- L. Arends – So many people come to me and ask why can't you do anything about it?
- K. Carter - But that's what happens you take a chance that project like Three Rows that you're hoping for if everybody would have sold up there. That would have made a significant difference. It is same thing here with Tiffany Place, the two buildings that the guy still owns now and Middle Street Elm Street. It could have been different if we had all of them, they could have been beautiful. Quebec Square is down the hill those look beautiful.
- L. Arends – Do you have a waiting list?
- K. Carter - Yes, on the 11 units.
- K. Carter - I just wanted to tell you just so you know, I know that the housing authorities' goal and mission obviously is to help provide affordable housing. I want to let you know less than 10% of the people on our waiting lists are local.
- L. Arends - There are a lot of out of state people living in the area down the hill.
- K. Carter – That is what happens once one family member gets in. They tell others you must see this town.
- A. Whalon-Ramos – Is there a preference for the waiting list or just exactly who was in order or prioritization.
- K. Carter – It is in order by date and time and working family preference.

- A. Whalon- Ramos - Can you explain that?
- K. Carter – A working family preference is when somebody who has a job works more than 20 hours a week.
- Sarah Schoppe - They can have a preference. But with only the 11 units. The turnover is slim to none. There is 12-20 each bedroom apartment.
- K. Carter – They are not many local residences on the list it is less than 10%. You would think there is such a housing need. Like I said when you talk to Patti at the Charette meeting the waiting list is open and people can apply. She has kids at school the family should apply,
- L. Arends - Would they get preference for being a local resident? Do you have any residency preferences?
- B. Parsons – There was a point system with some of the housing. Some towns use to give preferences if you are a resident if you are handicapped and various other issues. It is up to the individual Towns how they set up their rating and ranking. I remember sometimes Towns use to give you so many points; if you were resident so many points, if you were handicap some points based on your income.
- L. Arends - Which begs the question whether or not if we have homeless in the area they should give a preference. If you have homes in the area and they happen to be from the area, you think they would have the first preference.
- K. Carter - Have them contact us to apply to the Putnam Housing Authority office. We have an application they fill out for all the places with the amount of bedrooms that we manage.
- S. Schoppe - Most people who need housing know they have been in this predicament. They need a place next week and they assume there is availability. Nobody has emergency housing unfortunately.
- L. Arends - Do you cycle through the wait list? I know that it takes a long time for an apartment to open.
- K. Carter - Yes, we go through the waiting list every year. To see if people are still interested, if they have changed their address, phone number or email address. We supply a stamped self-address envelope and ask them to send the information.

6. Public comment

- None

7. Adjourn

- The motion to adjourn was made by Lisa Arends and seconded by A. Whalon-Ramos at 10:54 am. Next meeting will be April 17, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
 Lisa M. Lindia
 Recording Secretary