

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Somerville Housing Authority (SHA) duly called and held on May 21, 2026.

---

The Regular Meeting of the Somerville Housing Authority was held in-person at the Mystic Activity Center at 530 Mystic Avenue, Somerville on Thursday, May 21, 2026, at 5:00 PM.

The Executive Director Diane L. Cohen called the roll at 5:11 p.m. Upon roll call Commissioners present and absent were as follows:

**PRESENT**

Joseph Capuano

Eleanor Rances

James Zamer

Dennis Lemard

**ABSENT**

Adeleine Mannion

Others in Attendance: Adam Garvey, Deputy Director; Arnaldo Velazquez, Director of Finance & Administration; Matt Lincoln, Director of Leased Housing; Brian Langton, Director of Modernization; Joe Whalen, Director of Maintenance; Joe Macaluso, Development Consultant; Charlie Femino, Public Safety Consultant; Shannon Bennett, Director of Resident Services; Lisa Taylor, Director of Admissions, Occupancy & Compliance; Kezia Baxter, Housing Manager; Julia Sapienza, Leased Housing Coordinator; Fatima DeChaves, Brady Towers Resident; Ana DaCruz, Mystic Tenant Association; Emily Eschmann, Executive Secretary.

---

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**(a) Regular Board Meeting – April 16, 2026**

Commissioner Lemard made a motion to approve the minutes of Regular Board Meeting held on April 16, 2026. Commissioner Zamer seconded the motion.

All in favor: 4-0

**(b) Meeting of SHA Support Corporation – April 16, 2026**

Commissioner Lemard made a motion to approve the minutes of the SHA Support Corporation meeting held on April 16, 2026. Commissioner Zamer seconded the motion.

All in favor: 4-0

## 2. COMMUNITY INPUT/RESIDENT COUNCILS

None this month.

## 3. COMMUNICATIONS

Executive Director Diane Cohen stated that notice was received from the City of Somerville regarding National Night Out, and that Public Safety Consultant Charlie Femino will be sharing the information with tenant associations.

D. Cohen also informed the Board that SHA is eligible for approximately \$29 million in CY 2026 Section 8 renewal funding.

## 4. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

D. Cohen offered to respond to any questions from the Board regarding the monthly department reports. She stated that financial reports will be presented later in the agenda.

D. Cohen highlighted the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program and its many successes despite scrutiny from the current Administration. She stated that there is hope that funding and support for the program will continue and noted that U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) New England Regional Administrator Michael Banks has been in contact about the importance of nonprofit partnerships and continued support for self-sufficiency initiatives.

## 5. DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (IF NECESSARY)

Development Consultant Joe Macaluso provided an update on the Clarendon redevelopment project. He stated that the project is expected to close on a Section 108 loan with the City of Somerville at the end of June. The City is proposing to provide approximately \$10 million in grant funding, which would be secured against future grant allocations, and approval is expected soon. J. Macaluso noted that some demolition and infrastructure work will begin following the June closing. A second closing for construction financing is anticipated in the first quarter of 2027. He emphasized that the project has not been delayed, but rather that the financing approach has shifted.

J. Macaluso also discussed a new initiative involving the Capen Court property, where the tax credit compliance period has expired and existing loans and bonds are now being paid off. He explained that Rockport Mortgage is offering favorable financing terms, and SHA is

exploring a cash-out refinancing strategy to leverage equity from the property in order to help fund the acquisition of additional properties.

## 6. PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATE (IF NECESSARY)

C. Femino reported that a recent audit of the criminal justice information system identified only minor deficiencies.

He also stated that he spoke with Councilor Jesse Clingan regarding youth activity around the Mystic area during the summer months. He stated that Somerville Police Department will have officers from Thursday through Saturday nights walk the area and patrol the property with SHA Public Safety Officers. This will provide a presence promoting safety. He stated that not all evening shifts will be covered because they are overtime shifts, that sometimes can go unfilled.

## 7. NEW BUSINESS

### (a) Contract with Oakridge Construction, Inc. for Bryant Manor Parking Lot Improvement Project.

Director of Modernization Brian Langton stated that the parking lot has been deteriorating for some time. He stated that five bids were received. After vetting the lowest bidder, he recommended signing a contract with Oakridge Construction, Inc.

Commissioner Rances motion and second to enter a contract with Oakridge Construction, Inc to complete SHA Job #2507 Bryant Manor Parking Lot Improvements Project for the sum of \$100,900.00. Commissioner Lemard seconded the motion  
All in favor: 4-0

### (b) Contract with Oakridge Construction, Inc. for Hagan Manor Parking Lot Improvement Project

B. Langton stated that the lowest qualified bid was selected for the Hagan Manor parking lot project. He noted that the parking lot is in very poor condition and the work will include removing the existing surface, installing a new base, and completing new striping.

Commissioner Zamer made a motion to enter a contract with Oakridge Construction, Inc to complete SHA Job #2510 Hagan Manor Parking Lot Improvements Project for the sum of \$100,900.00. Commissioner Lemard seconded the motion.  
All in favor: 4-0

- (c) Proposed Changes to SHA's Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) effective May 21, 2026.

Leased Housing Director Matt Lincoln stated that there were a minor changes to the ACOP and Admin Plan, though none were substantial. He explained that the revisions were primarily housekeeping items related to Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA), including updated guidance and citations.

Commissioner Rances made a motion to approve the proposed Changes to SHA's Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) effective May 21, 2026.

Commissioner Lemard seconded the motion.

All in favor: 4-0

- (d) Proposed Changes to SHA's Section 8 Administrative Plan effective May 21, 2026.

Lemard mad a motion to approve the proposed Changes to SHA's Section 8 Administrative Plan effective May 21, 2026. Commissioner Zamer seconded the motion.

All in favor: 4-0

- (e) Audit Services contract with EFPR Group, CPAs, PLLC.

Deputy Director Adam Garvey stated that each year the agency is required to complete an independent audit, noting that housing authorities typically retain the same auditor for many years. He stated that the agency has been working to improve its procurement process and formed an evaluation committee consisting of himself, Arnaldo Velazquez, and Emily Eschmann. He stated that both proposals reviewed were highly advantageous, and the committee recommended the incumbent firm. However, after opening the price proposals, the committee could not justify the pricing difference. The selected contract will cost approximately \$30,000 less per year, resulting in an estimated savings of \$150,000 to the agency over the contract term.

Chairman Capuano says: Commissioner Rances made a motion to approve a contract between SHA and EFPR Group, CPAs, PLLC for auditing services, including the annual IPA and AUP, for the fiscal years ending March 31, 2026, 2027, and 2028, in the amount of \$161,675, with two optional renewal years at SHA's discretion for the fiscal years ending March 31, 2029, and 2030, in the amounts of \$54,725 for year four and \$62,150 for year five. Commissioner Lemard seconded the motion.

All in favor: 4-0

- (f) Fiscal Year End 3/31/2026 Executive Office of Housing & Livable Communities (EOHLC) unaudited year-end financial schedules and supplemental reports.

Director of Finance and Administration Arnaldo Velazquez reported on the State financials, noting current reserve levels are nearing or below minimum. He stated that the agency's target should be approximately \$1.5 million at minimum. Reserves had to be used to cover costs related to the Clarendon project. He explained that the funds will be reimbursed by EOHLC, as the agency advances money on a quarterly basis and repays amounts owed once year-end submissions are completed.

He reviewed the Top 5 certifications, stating that salaries are all in line, including those of four directors and one plumber. He also discussed the lead law certification, which board members will sign at the end of the meeting, confirming compliance with lead laws.

Regarding the financial statements, Arnaldo stated that the board will certify that it reviewed the unaudited financials. He added that the federal financials will be presented to the board next month as that due date extends to June 15.

Commissioner Zamer made a motion to approve the Fiscal Year End 3/31/2026 EOHLC unaudited year-end financial schedules and supplemental reports. Commissioner Lemard seconded the motion.

All in favor: 4-0

- (g) Promissory note for the advance of \$350,000 from the Somerville Housing Authority to the SHA Waterworks II development.

A. Velazquez stated that SHA will loan \$350,000 to Waterworks II. The loan will have the same terms as previous promissory notes.

Commissioner Rances a motion to approve a promissory note for the advance of \$350,000 from the Somerville Housing Authority to SHA Waterworks II development. Commissioner Lemard seconded the motion.

All in favor: 4-0

- (h) Permanent status of Kezia Baxter, Housing Manager.

Director of Admissions, Occupancy and Compliance Lisa Taylor stated that Housing Manager Kezia Baxter has been managing the federal family development and a small state portfolio. She stated that Kezia is doing an amazing job.

Commissioner Rances made a motion to approve the permanent status of Kezia Baxter, Housing Manager. Commissioner Lemard seconded the motion.

All in favor: 4-0

- (i) Contract of Executive Director, Diane L. Cohen. (ROLL CALL)  
A. Velazquez stated that EOHLC disputed 2 allocation percentages on D. Cohen's contract. He has since made the minor adjustments and will submit to EOHLC for approval of Diane's updated contract.

Commissioner Lemard made a motion to approve the Executive Director Contract with Diane L. Cohen to be SHA's full-time Executive Director for a five (5) year term, with the effective date ending March 31, 2031, paid at \$236,198 per annual, as presented, subject to EOHLC approval. Commissioner Zamer seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Chairman. Capuano	Yes
Comm. Mannion	Absent
Comm. Rances	Yes
Comm. Lemard	Yes
Comm. Zamer	Yes

- (j) SHA Section 8 Management Assessment Program Submission FY 2026.  
M. Lincoln stated that the Section 8 program undergoes an internal audit annually to review adjusted income calculations. He stated that he conducts the audit and that the results have been improving. He added that the agency hopes to receive high performer status.

Commissioner Zamer made a motion to approve the SHA Section 8 Management Assessment Program Submission FY 2026. Commissioner Lemard seconded the motion.

All in favor: 4-0

8. OPEN SESSION for topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting.
9. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Lemard made a motion to adjourn at 5:36 p.m. Commissioner Zamer seconded the motion.

All in favor: 4-0

*Diane L. Cohen*

---

Diane L. Cohen  
Executive Director

ATTEST  
A True Copy

Documents presented during the Somerville Housing Authority Board Meeting on 5/21/2026.

- Agenda
- 2(a) Copy of minutes from the Regular Board Meeting – April 16, 2026
- 2(b) Copy of minutes from the SHA Support Corporation Meeting – April 16, 2026
- Executive Director’s Report
  - Report: Tenant Selection Report – April 2026: Public Housing and Leased Housing Waitlists
  - Report: Vacancy Report April 2026
  - Report: Leased Housing
  - Report: Resident Services
  - Report: Public Safety
  - Report: Work Orders Issued: April 2026
  - Report: SHA Modernization Contract Log – Active Jobs May 2026
- New Business 7(a): Memo: Bryant Manor Parking Lot Improvements Construction Contract SHA #2507
- New Business 7(a): GCG Associates Memo: Bryant Manor Parking Lot Improvements Project (SHA #2507) Bid Recommendation
- New Business 7(b): Hagan Manor Parking Lot Improvements Construction Contract SHA #2510
- New Business 7(b): GCG Associates Memo: Hagan Manor Parking Lot Improvements Project (SHA #2510) Bid Recommendation
- New Business 7(c) & 7(d): Memo: Proposed Changes to Somerville Housing Authority Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) and Section 8 Administrative Plan
- New Business 7(c) & 7(d): Exhibit 1: Proposed Changes to SHA Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy
- New Business 7(c) & 7(d): Exhibit 2: Proposed Changes to SHA Section 8 Administrative Plan
- New Business 7(e): Memo: Single Audit Contract Award Recommendation
- New Business 7(f): Certification of Compliance with Notification Procedures for Federal and State Lead Paint Laws
- New Business 7(f): Certification of Top 5 Compensation Form
- New Business 7(f): Top 5 Compensation Form Fiscal Year: 2026
- New Business 7(f): Financial Statements for FY ending 3/31/2026
- New Business 7(h): Memo: Permanent Hire Recommendation: Kezia Baxter, Housing Manager
- New Business 7(i): CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SOMERVILLE HOUSING AUTHORITY
- New Business 7(j): Memo: SHA Section 8 Management Assessment Program Submission FY 2026
- New Business 7(j): SEMAP CERTIFICATION