

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Somerville Housing Authority (SHA) duly called and held on April 16, 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, April 16, 2026, at 5:00 PM.

The Executive Director Diane L. Cohen called the roll at 5:10 p.m. Upon roll call Commissioners present and absent were as follows:

PRESENT

Joseph Capuano
Eleanor Rances
Adeleine Mannion
James Zamer
Dennis Lemard

ABSENT

Others in Attendance: Adam Garvey, Deputy Director; Arnaldo Velazquez, Director of Finance & Administration; Matt Lincoln, Director of Leased Housing; Ryan Cummiskey, Modernization Coordinator; Charlie O’Leary, Maintenance Supervisor; Shannon Bennett, Director of Resident Services; Avi Samaha, Resident Opportunity Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Coordinator; Emily Eschmann, Executive Secretary.

1. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Commissioner Zamer made a motion to nominate Commissioner Capuano as Chairman. Commissioner Rances seconded the motion.
All in favor: 4-0-1

Commissioner Rances made a motion to nominate Commissioner Zamer as Vice-Chairman. Commissioner Mannion seconded the motion.
All in favor: 4-0-1

Commissioner Zamer made a motion to nominate Commissioner Rances as Treasurer. Commissioner Lemard seconded the motion.
All in favor: 4-0-1

Commissioner Capuano made a motion to nominate Commissioner Lemard as Vice-Treasurer. Commissioner Mannion seconded the motion.
All in favor: 4-0-1

Commissioner Lemard made a motion to approve the 2026 Slate of Officers for the Somerville Housing Authority (SHA). Commissioner Rances seconded the motion.
All in favor: 5-0

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(a) Public Hearing - March 26, 2026

Commissioner Lemard made a motion to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing on March 26, 2026. Commissioner Rances seconded the motion.
All in favor: 5-0

(b) Regular Board Meeting – March 26, 2026

Commissioner Zamer made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting on March 26, 2026. Commissioner Lemard seconded the motion.
All in favor: 5-0

3. COMMUNITY INPUT/RESIDENT COUNCILS

None this month.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

(a) U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Designated Housing Plan (DHP) Approval Letter.

Deputy Director Adam Garvey informed the Board that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved the Designated Housing Plan for federal elderly properties on March 10, 2026. The plan designates 80% of units for households age 62+ and 20% for young/disabled households and extends the plan for two years. Implementation has been coordinated with the Tenant Selection Department.

5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

D. Cohen offered to respond to any questions from the Board regarding the monthly department reports. She reported that a meeting was held with Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH), and that POAH has applied for a Section 108 loan for Phase 2 of the project. She expressed hope that Phase 2 will close by June or July. The project will require demolition of existing buildings and is progressing in a positive direction.

D. Cohen informed the Board that SHA is exploring refinancing options for existing properties to generate additional funding for future development opportunities. She also noted ongoing coordination with the City regarding surplus properties, which may present additional development opportunities, contingent upon maintaining a strong financial position.

D. Cohen reported that Public Safety Consultant Charlie Femino advised that the City Council has finalized a charter amendment to grant SHA officers police powers, and the matter is now advancing to the State House. She noted that she and Bob McWatters attended Legislative Day and met with delegates to discuss this issue. SHA is also preparing for an upcoming Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) audit related to public safety reporting requirements. Approval has been received to deputize current officers while the Authority continues to advance the related petition.

D. Cohen stated that financial reports are still being finalized and will be presented at the next meeting.

A. Garvey reported that a primary concern remains the Department of Labor Standards (DLS) wage rates, particularly as they relate to certain job classifications. He noted that many housing authorities have requested a meeting with DLS to seek clarification. SHA is working with labor counsel and collaborating with the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (MassNAHRO) on this issue. An informal hearing was held on April 6. While the process has been cooperative, several positions received significant rate increases that are currently unaffordable. SHA is working with labor counsel to respond and potentially challenge the proposed rates. This remains an active issue, with hopes for progress toward an industry-wide resolution in the coming month. Efforts are ongoing to stabilize and improve SHA's budget outlook.

In response to a question from Chairman Capuano regarding potential union concerns for Phase 2 of the Clarendon Hill Redevelopment, D. Cohen stated that no issues are anticipated and confirmed that the project will not utilize modular construction.

6. DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (IF NECESSARY)

Addressed in the Executive Director Report.

7. PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATE (IF NECESSARY)

Addressed in the Executive Director Report.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- (a) Section 8 New Construction/Substantial Rehabilitation Compliance Certification for Bryant Manor and Hagan Manor.

A. Garvey reported that the properties were previously state-subsidized under the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC); however, they are no longer classified as such. Because state funds were used to rehabilitate the properties, SHA is required to sign these certifications to demonstrate to the state its commitment to maintaining the same standards.

Commissioner Rances made a motion to approve the Section 8 New Construction/Substantial Rehabilitation Compliance Certification for Bryant Manor and Hagan Manor. Commissioner Lemard seconded the motion.

All in favor: 5-0

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

Director of Operations Andrew Rocha reported on Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant initiatives. A community garden for the Mystic Learning Center (MLC) is underway. Eight trees will be planted at no cost in the rear areas of 10 Memorial Road and 70–90 River Road to enhance landscaping without creating maintenance concerns.

Improvements to the playground are also in progress, with plans to increase safety and aesthetics by replacing concrete surfaces with more suitable materials and installing new equipment and design elements. The splash pad will be retained, with a full grounds assessment scheduled for the spring. Additional efforts include bench painting, masonry and fence repairs, and expanded landscaping with flowers and mulch. Maintenance staff were recognized for their continued efforts in improving and maintaining the grounds.

A. Rocha also noted a need to address the lack and condition of bike racks across the Mystic Development, with plans to install additional racks.

Director of Resident Services Shannon Bennett announced the hiring of Avi Samaha as the the Resident Opportunity Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Coordinator. Avi was the Supportive Living Coordinator for Elder Services at Properzi Manor prior to joining the SHA team. She reported that he has quickly acclimated to the role and has been a strong addition.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Lemard made a motion to adjourn at 5:25 p.m. Commissioner Zamer seconded the motion.

All in favor: 5-0

Diane L. Cohen

Diane L. Cohen
Executive Director

ATTEST

A True Copy

Documents presented during the Somerville Housing Authority Board Meeting on 4/16/2026.

- Agenda
- 2(a) Copy of minutes from the Public Hearing – March 26, 2026
- 2(b) Copy of minutes from the Regular Board Meeting – March 26, 2026
- 4(a) March 11, 2026, HUD response regarding SHA DHP
- Executive Director’s Report
 - Report: Tenant Selection Report – March 2026: Public Housing and Leased Housing Waitlists
 - Report: Vacancy Report March 2026
 - Report: Resident Services
 - Report: Public Safety
 - Report: Work Orders Issued: March 2026
 - Report: SHA Modernization Contract Log – Active Jobs April 2026
- New Business 8(a): Memo: Compliance Certification for Section 8 New Construction / Substantial Rehabilitation - Bryant Manor and Hagan Manor
- New Business 8(a): Section 8 New Construction/Substantial Rehabilitation Compliance Certification for Bryant Manor
- New Business 8(a): Section 8 New Construction/Substantial Rehabilitation Compliance Certification for Hagan Manor