

**MINUTES OF THE HIGHTSTOWN HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS
WEDNESDAY, April 19th, 2017 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Call to Order: Chairperson James Eufemia called meeting to order at 7:05 P.M.

Open Public Meetings Act Statement: In compliance with Chapter 213 of the Public Laws of 1975, Notice of this Meeting was given by way of the Annual Notice published in the Trenton Times, Princeton Packet and are posted on the calendar at The Hightstown Borough Municipal Building by the Authority and posted in a public place reserved for such announcements in the lobby of the Community Building of the Housing Authority Office.

Roll Call: by Keith LePrevost showed that those present and absent were as follows:

- **Present:** Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director, Commissioner James Eufemia, Chair, Commissioner Carole Nelson, Commissioner Pascale Emmanuel, Commissioner Christopher Moraitis, Commissioner Yolanda Swiney, Commissioner Monique Dujue Wilson.
- **Also, Present:**
- **Absent:** Commissioner Brent Rivenburgh and Denise Hanson, Council Liaison

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting Minutes of: March 15th, 2017

- Commissioner Emmanuel questioned whether the minutes are transcribed word for word. Keith responded they are accurate, but some of the miscellaneous comments are omitted. Commissioner Moraitis commented that the previous minutes may not have reflected the positive feelings between the board and the Borough Council. Commissioner Wilson commented the minute's need to reflect what was discussed. Keith commented that perhaps the board and staff of the HA do see things differently than the Borough, as they are the ones that take the phone calls daily from people desperately seeking an affordable place to live. It's difficult when you have to tell people it will be 3-5 years before we have an apartment. Commissioner Eufemia feels we are here trying to do what's best for the community, Keith agrees we are trying to actually solve the housing problem. The board is pleased the Borough has changed planners. Commissioner Moraitis motioned to approve the minutes of March 15th. This was seconded by Commissioner Emmanuel and approved by the board.

Open Public Meeting: At this time, the public is invited and encouraged to participate in open forum. It is requested by the Chairman of the Board and the Commissioners of the Housing Authority that all comments and opinions be relevant and timely, and be expressed in a manner which contributes to and advances the orderly progress of the meeting and for all concerned. The Chairman or presiding Commissioner may determine that it is necessary to limit the amount of time allotted to speakers from the public.

No members from the public were present.

Resident Council Report: Resident garden meeting, all the residents forgot the meeting, but all have expressed interest. Keith noted that Gene Sarafin has volunteered plants again this year. Commissioner Wilson discussed the children's gardens and recommended "box" gardens for the kids. Keith will construct and install. Another topic is a discussion of how people are moved internally. Commissioner Wilson thinks we need to discuss how internal moves are done and perhaps an overall conversation for the residents. Keith explained we have a policy to do internal

moves 4 times per year, mostly to “right size” families. Sometimes our residents think there is a problem with new people move in before they are moved internally. Keith explained as family size increases or decreases their names are placed on waiting lists. All are notified that it may take 3-4 years before a move may be possible.

Committee Reports: None

Resolutions: None

Discussion Items:

- Keith discussed the Strategic plan, and selecting a committee to work on a 5-year plan, working with the Borough in various ways. The Borough has hired a new planner who recommended a committee to include stakeholders to discuss and modify the affordable housing plan. Keith would like to send a letter to the Council and Planning board volunteering our services to the Borough to help with the plan. Commissioner Nelson recommends we send a letter. Commissioner Moraitis recommended Keith, Commissioner Eufemia and Rivenburgh undertake the process. Keith explained he feels the HA should be counted as part of the plan, and there is a specific process for doing that. He feels a long-term plan is good for the Borough and good for the HA. Commissioner Swiney questioned why the Borough is so opposed to working with the Housing Authority? Keith is not sure, whether it is a personality conflict or possibly the Borough feels they are entitled to the HA units, without any further investment. Perhaps with the new planner on board, we can present our new, more refined plan to either get a “yes or no” from the professionals. Commissioner Moraitis questioned whether the council and planning board truly understand the process, and Keith mentioned with this new planner, perhaps they will have a better chance of understanding. Some of the misunderstandings could have been from the information coming from the previous planner. Fresh eyes on the plan will hopefully bring about positive change and relationships. Keith will draft the letter for Commissioner Eufemia to sign. Hopefully the HA will be able to participate on the committee and provide some options for the town to consider. Keith feels from listening to the planner, he is motivated to actually solve the problem, not just push it down the road. Commissioner Swiney noted that East Brunswick is doing something interesting, buying property and selling it or renting it affordably. Keith noted we could be doing the same with mortgage or down payment assistance. Keith discussed a recent sale of affordable units in the area, where a developer purchased 1000 units at \$144K per unit.
- Surveys. Keith discussed the round 3 survey results. Good response rate with 22 people returning the surveys. One comment was regarding lighting. Keith will address where needed for safety. Commissioner Wilson, questioned the comment, and feels the poor lighting is actually the street lighting. She feels the site lighting is more than adequate.
- Boiler Room renovations. Keith stated the plans are nearly complete. The boiler room will be a great simplification of what we currently have. The 2 new boilers will handle both the heat and hot water. The estimates are coming in on our budget. Commissioner Moraitis questioned whether we should wait and see what comes out of the Borough before we proceed. Keith feels we should move forward, it will be a current renovation that should count and we can come to an agreement with Borough later.
- The parking lot plans are coming in this week. We will be putting them out to bid, and starting this summer. One change that has been made, is the elimination of the stormwater project. Listening to the professionals, they recommended eliminating the drainage under the lots, as we may run into DEP permit issues.

Executive Director Report:

- We are currently at 98% occupancy. We had 2 family's move out on March 31-one into a home they purchased in Roosevelt, and the other to retire in Arizona. That apartments are both being leased to "right size" current families, and then those family units will be renovated and leased. Commissioner Moraitis questioned our wait lists, and how many people we may go through before getting a move in. Keith noted for the most part families are normally the first call, seniors we may need to go through 2,3,4 people before someone is ready and willing to move.
- Our 2016 audit was completed April 11-12th. Peter Polcari, our Fee Accountant was on site to complete our normal quarterly work, and provide any technical information. The only item that is a recommendation would be to increase the security features of our checks. New checks will be ordered.
- Our parking lot engineers are making progress and we should have final drawings and construction estimates this month. I hope to put the project out to bid in March for a May/June construction start. I have been in touch with George Chin and will be coordinating any permits the building department.
- Our Boiler engineers have designs well under way and preliminary estimates are running between \$300-350 thousand dollars for the complete project.
- We filed an appeal of our REAC physical inspection and were basically summarily dismissed. The reviewer felt our photos, documentation and explanations are "objective" and could not be used to modify a score. They will not reinspect items or have a HUD rep look at them. Our final score is 91, High Performer so I recommend we drop the issue.
- We have a local company doing some gutter and soffit repairs around the facility. We also have some siding on one dormer on building 3 that was damaged during a storm that needs to be replaced.
- I appeared at a planning board meeting on Thursday, April 13th. The neighboring property on Church street applied for a couple variances to build a 3-unit apartment house. I am concerned with the parking situation, as the property on Stockton, by the same owner often uses the HA parking lot. It appears they have a lack of parking now, and this new 3-unit home will exacerbate the situation.
- We have taken delivery of the second batch of radiator covers. The third set has been ordered.
- The 4 generators have all been serviced for the year. No major problems were found.
- The Facebook page is gaining popularity, and we are reaching a larger number of people with each post.
- Our third resident satisfaction survey went out in March and we had 22 surveys completed and returned! The response was typical of what is expected of surveys, and we are pleased with the results. The tally sheet is included in the packet, and the raw surveys are available if you would like to see the submitted pages. The fourth of

5 surveys went out in the April newsletter, and already we have a very strong response.

- We have 2 secure “Shred-it” containers on site for our office and our Residents use. If you have stuff to shred, feel free to bring it to the meeting.

Financial Update: April, 2017

In review of the financial reports for the month of March, 2017, the Hightstown Housing Authority completed the months with negative results as anticipated.

Income:

- Residential income has come in higher than our budget due to incomes of our residents, and the diligence of the staff to research and follow up when tenants either increase their work hours or find a new job.
- Laundry income is slightly under budget for the period.
- Subsidy income is under budget due to the lack of final Federal 2017 budget. Adjustments have been made to this budget item now that our 2017 budget has been reviewed. HUD is anticipating funding HA’s at a rate of 85% of their budgeted subsidy levels. Our April subsidy reflects this and brings us into line with our modified budget.

Expenses:

- Administrative and Maintenance salaries are over budget for the period and the year due to the 3 pay month in March.
- Staff training is under budget for the year
- Audit is under budget for the period, Auditor is due to come in April.
- Dues and memberships are over budget due to renewal of membership in IREM.
- Sundry Administrative is over budget for the year due to renewal of our accounting software, tenant management software and conference registration.
- Computer supplies are under for the month but over budget due to the purchase of a new machine and the annual “tune-up” and maintenance of our existing systems by ACA computer.
- Misc. Office Expense is under budget.
- Water is over budget, as quarterly bills arrived this month. Also, we noticed an increase in one building, and after some investigation found 2 toilets that were running constantly.
- Electric is under for the period.
- Natural Gas is under budget for the period.
- Maintenance supplies are over budget for the year due to renovations and preparations for REAC.

- Grounds maintenance is slightly over budget due to snow removal and tree trimming.
- Extermination costs are on budget for the year.
- Extraordinary maintenance is an initial cost for the boiler engineers.

Announcements: The next meeting is scheduled for **May 17th, 2017 at 7:00 pm.**

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by a motion made at 8:45PM.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director