

**MINUTES OF THE HIGHTSTOWN HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS
WEDNESDAY, February 15th, 2017 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Call to Order: Chairperson James Eufemia called meeting to order at 7:00 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 Pascale Emmanuel, Commissioner Christopher Moraitis, and Commissioner Brent Rivenburgh.
- **Also Present:** Denise Hanson, Council Liaison, Monique Wilson
- **Absent:** Commissioner Yolanda Swiney, Commissioner Carole Nelson

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting Minutes of: January 4th, 2017

- Commissioner Moraitis motioned to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Rivenburgh seconded and the minutes were approved as written.

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.

Borough Council Liaison Report:

- Denny Hanson, our Borough Council Liaison distributed a copy of what the Borough's responsibilities are, including the ordinances. There is nothing new here, but what the Council follows to appoint new members. (Copy included) The ordinance comes right off of the NJ State Statute, and that is why the ordinance references the statute. Denny feels the Borough needs to amend their ordinance to include a Resident Commissioner. Denny also distributed a page from the DCA, Best Practices worksheet the Borough files each year. The Borough should be including the HA at least once per year as an agenda item to bring the Council up to date on the state of the HA. Denny feels it is important to have the HA represented at council meetings during the year, to update the Council. Denny recognized that Keith is present at almost every council meeting, but it would be helpful if some commissioners also attended.
- Denny also noted that the lack of communication was possibly due to her illness. She recommended, when looking at the statute that a Borough staff person or council person could serve on the board, and she feels that would increase communication. It has just come to the borough's attention the HA requires a resident commissioner. A discussion between the commissioners regarding the attempt to add a resident commissioner more than a year ago. Keith spoke about the commission, and how the council has always

respected the commissions wishes to fill vacating seats with new members. We should not be alienating members of our community by callously throwing them off our board. Denny stated the Council does not believe the commission has any role in selecting new members, because that is a council role. Keith discussed how Chris and Brent were appointed. Keith also noted the HA sent the Mayor and Council a letter of recommendation for Esther, signed by all the commissioners. The council or mayor never responded or commented until Esther was unceremoniously told “you’re out”. Commissioner Moraitis wants to make sure the new appointments are not retaliatory in any way. He feels the undertones from the Borough are trying to undercut the administration of the HA. Denny does not agree, and does not feel anything the Borough does should be construed as retribution. She feels there are tensions, especially during the meetings this last year over the COAH issues. Lawyers were involved on both sides. Commissioner Rivenburgh feels the Borough should be working with the HA, but boards need to be shaken up, members get stale, and Monique is a perfect solution. The Borough has begun to reach out, they presented the overlay zone which works of the HA and gives us options. Commissioner Emmanuel thinks the Mayor should try and come to our meetings. Commissioner Eufemia commented the HA felt completely left out of the process, you come to us asking for help, but then state you can’t tell us anything about it due to litigation. How can we act without information? Keith explained how we spent more in legal fees last year than we spent in the last several years. And that was purposeful, as he was part of the conversations with the HUD legal teams and he wanted those conversations to be told first hand.

- Keith noted that there were concerns, on how was the town establishing an affordable housing plan without the input of the Housing Authority. He explained the purpose of a municipality having a housing authority is to manage, direct and implement affordable housing. Denny did not feel that was our role, but our role could be used in the future redeveloping within the overlay zone. Keith feels the HA should be part of the conversation in town, the HA can solve some of these issues if empowered to do so. The HA could be a “tool in the toolbox” for the borough to use in solving the affordable housing crisis in town. Denny referred back to the overlay zone, and how the HA can work on that. The Mill project is not being discussed, as there are too many moving parts and nothing is settled. Keith explained it will take 3 years to put a new affordable unit in the ground and occupied. Denny referred back to the HA developing another entity to develop the property. Keith feels we need to have further conversations with the Borough, so that we could develop some confidence with the town before we move forward and spend time and money on a new entity. She feels we need to be going to the Planning board, perhaps the HA should have seat on the Planning board. Council is not the place to take these issues. Commissioner Eufemia requested Denny keep the HA informed on things that are coming up. She feels we would be better served getting a contact directly on the planning board.
- The board discussed the proposed 4plex on Church street. It was suggested the Housing Authority would benefit from having a seat on the planning board. Commissioner Rivenburgh suggested members of the commission frequent the Council and Planning board meetings. He noted Keith attends all the time. Denny feels we need to get on the Planning Board Agenda, with a 5 minute presentations on the HA, and how we can help.

Resident Council Report:

- Monique spoke to the board about the recent surveys and the results. Keith gave the specifics on the survey. Monique is going to be working on the children’s gardens, and developing the resident council.

Committee Reports:

None

Resolutions:

- None

Discussion Items:

- **Strategic Planning** Keith asked the commission to table this discussion, due to time until the next meeting
- **Survey**-discussed above
- **Truck**-Keith discussed the trade in of the truck. After researching 3 dealerships, the best deal is for a Dodge Ram van. It will cost just over \$1,000 plus motor vehicle fees to trade in our truck and purchase the van. The board approved the purchase by voice vote.

Executive Director Report:

- We are currently at 100% occupancy. We do not have anyone moving out at this time. We have completed our semiannual waiting list update. We currently have 233 people waiting for apartments. We have closed our waiting lists and are no longer accepting applications. The current anticipated wait time is 3-4 years.
- We have hired a specialized testing firm to test the insulation material on the boiler breeches. Each boiler room has large breech (Basically a collector) that the boilers exhaust into before going up the chimney. It was unknown what this insulation material was made of, so we had it tested to avoid problems or delays.
- Our parking lot engineers are making progress and we should have preliminary drawings and construction estimates this month. I hope to put the project out to bid in March for a May/June construction start.
- The bulk of the work orders have been completed from our property inspections and follow up inspections. Cycle painting has been done to 7 apartments.
- We have purchased a new Dodge Ram van for the Housing Authority.
- We have ordered the second batch of radiator covers for building 4. Lead paint was detected on the existing radiator covers, and they need to be replaced to eliminate the hazard.
- We have set up a Facebook page for the Housing Authority. This page will be used to advertise events, notices, dates and items of interest. We hope it will be one more tool for the office and Resident council to reach out and communicate with our residents and the surrounding community. Now published, the address is: <https://www.facebook.com/HightstownHA/> Please check it out and “Like” and “Follow” us on Facebook!
- We have hired a company that specializes in correcting outdoor trip hazards. Always Safe Sidewalks uses a specialized saw to cut uneven sidewalk joints to make the transition smooth and ADA compliant. We have used them before with good results. We have several areas around the campus I have documented and they corrected them prior to our REAC inspection.

- Our second resident satisfaction survey went out in January and we had 24 surveys completed and returned! The response was much higher than typically 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 second of 5 surveys went out in the February newsletter, and already we have a very strong response.
- We have been notified by HUD we will be receiving a REAC, (Real Estate Assessment Center) full property inspection on March 3, 2017 starting at 9:00AM. This is an important inspection, as it becomes the basis for all of our PHAS scores for the next 3 years. We have begun the process of going over each building from top to bottom, looking for possible items and correcting them. I will keep you updated on our progress, and most importantly the inspection results.

Financial Update: February, 2017

In review of the financial reports for the month of January, 2017, the Hightstown Housing Authority completed the months with positive results.

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 slightly under budget due to the lack of final Federal 2017 budget. Adjustments will be made to this account once a final budget is made in Washington.

Expenses:

- Administrative and Maintenance salaries are on budget for the period and the year.
- Travel is slightly over budget due to PHADA conference
- Staff training is under budget for the year
- Audit is under budget for the period, Auditor is due to come in late March.
- Dues and memberships are over budget due to renewal of membership in IREM.
- Sundry Administrative is over budget due to renewal of our accounting software, tenant management software and conference registration.
- Computer supplies are 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.
- Electric is under for the period.
- Natural Gas is under budget for the period.

- Maintenance supplies are over budget due to renovations and cycle painting and repair.
- Grounds maintenance is slightly over budget due to snow removal.
- Extermination costs are on budget but over budget for the year due to bed bugs being treated in several apartments and the cost of termite treatment and inspections.
- Boiler contract costs are over budget due to cost of annual service agreement.

The enclosed financials include: Income Statement for the Current Period- January 1 to January 31st, 2017 (VS Budget), Cash Flow and General Ledger-Cash account.

Announcements: The next meeting is scheduled for March 15th, 2017 at 7:00 pm.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by a motion made at 9:20PM.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director