

**MINUTES OF THE HIGHTSTOWN HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD OF  
COMMISSIONERS  
WEDNESDAY, September 20th, 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 Carole Nelson, Commissioner Yolanda Swiney, Commissioner Monique Dujue Wilson.
- **Also, Present:** Councilperson Lee Stultz, Robin Byrnes(Resident), Evelyn Brooks(Resident), Shaqirah Amica(Resident)
- **Absent:** Commissioner Christopher Moraitis, Commissioner Pascale Emmanuel.

**Approval of Minutes:** Regular Meeting Minutes of: July 19th, 2017.

Commissioner Nelson motioned to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivenburgh 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.

Resident Evelyn Brooks spoke regarding the pets in the community. She thinks if people have pets they should pick up after them. She also thinks we need more activities for the children. Whether its sports, arts and crafts or other activities. Resident Robin Byrnes commented we have tried to enhance activities for the kids, and stopped for lack of participation.

Robin Byrnes commented on the “no smoking” rule. She feels she pays her rent and should be able to do as she pleases in her apartment. She also spoke about the kids that hang out on the bench and talk loudly and play. She feels we need to have more benches in the courtyard so the kids don’t play under her window. Keith commented the kids like the bench near her apartment because it is not in the courtyard where their parents can see and hear them. They are teenagers, and when you mix 2 teenage girls with 2 or 3 teenage boys, they are going to act up and carry on. Evelyn believes we need stronger parents to monitor their kids and teach them respect. She does not see a lot of respect from the children. Keith commented to Robin that the smoking rules are now Federal law, we just adopted the rules before we were forced to change.

Commissioner Eufemia commented that if the kids are causing a disturbance on the benches, the resident can always call or talk to one of the police officers who will talk to them. Commissioner Wilson disagrees with the notion the kids want to be out of earshot of their parents, they are just being kids and enjoy hanging out on that bench.

Shaqirah mentioned we have a lot of kids of all ages, and we all need to cooperate and get along together. This is not an adult community where kids are not allowed.

**Resident Council Report:**

Monique thanked the residents present who are now part of the Resident Council. They had a good meeting this week that started with a discussion of what everyone likes about Hightstown and our community. They then discussed the history and where the community was years ago. Monique wants the council to be open and have honest conversations with the staff and each other. Rumors are not helpful and don't make our community a better place. They talked about the two resolutions on the agenda and have provided input for the board. Commissioner Nelson invited all the members of the Resident Council to the Women's Club events.

**Borough Council Liaison Report:**

Lee Stultz introduced himself to the board and the residents. He did not have a formal report, but looks forward to getting to know us and the business of the Housing Authority.

**Committee Reports:**

Keith provided an update and detailed explanation of the need to update our VAWA forms. VAWA is the Violence against Women's Act which is an important document that protects residents, both men and women from domestic violence, stalking, harassment or other harm. Keith went on to discuss the budget process, and Commissioner Rivenburgh added he has reviewed the budget and does not see anything that needs adjusting.

**Resolutions:**

**Resolution 2017-8-VAWA update Forms.** Keith described the VAWA act and the ramifications of the act on our housing. He described the protections provided, and the challenges we face with some aspects of the rule. One concern is the provision of "Emergency Housing" to protect a tenant. We are a small community and do not have the ability to move someone to another development. He discussed the use of Women's space and Mercer County protective services as an avenue for us to comply. The resolution was approved by Roll Call Vote.

**Resolution 2017-9- Updating the Tenant Handbook** Keith discussed the tenant handbook and discussed the specific changes and why they were made. The one area that the Resident Council focused on is the BBQ Grills and the challenges associated with them. It was suggested the Borough should consider in the reworking of Dawes Park, a BBQ and picnic area in the park. Commissioner Eufemia feels that would help the utilization of that park. Councilperson Stultz mentioned that there is currently a plan for Dawes Park, and that may be viable. Commissioner Eufemia asked that the resolution be brought to the table, and were there any other items in the Handbook to discuss. Keith mentioned the Resident Council is concerned with the use of pools, and Keith should trust them to monitor and watch their children. Shaqirah mentioned that after the last big picnic there were several pools, and it was well monitored. Keith stated that if the Residents have a planned event, and they want to set up a water slide or a sprinkler for the kids to play, that would be fine and we can arrange that. Commissioner Rivenburgh agree that due to liability issues, pools are a real issue. Commissioner Eufemia stopped the discussion, he feels if the Residents want to have an event, like the last one, that is fine, we can plan on that and work with it. The motion was approved by a roll call vote.

**Discussion Items:**

**Deerfield/Westerlea-**Keith discussed the meeting that was held recently with our committee, two planning board members, two council members, the owners of Deerfield, the borough planner and Borough engineer and our mutual attorney. The owner is very open to hearing from the town and helping the town meet its affordable housing commitments. Commissioner Eufemia commented the owner is doing a good job renovating the units. Keith discussed the conversations he has had with the owner to address the concerns with the town, including Westerlea Avenue, which is

considered a “Gateway” to the High School. The owner owns a large portfolio of hotels, resorts, and multifamily properties around the country. Keith described the process so far. The owner wants to create a project where the town lets him know what they want and what they will approve on his site. He wants to create a plan that benefits everyone with the minimum of back and forth. In exchange, he will fund the redevelopment of the Rogers and Academy street redevelopment zone. Commissioner Eufemia explained why we are involved in the first place. We share a mutual attorney, and Leonard respects Keith’s background in affordable housing. The engineers will have to work the details out, including water, sewer and traffic issues. Council person Stultz commented he has noticed the difference over the recent years, it has gotten much quieter, so whatever he is doing is working. He also mentioned the engineer needs to look at water and sewer capacity on that end of town. Landscaping could be enhanced to make the buildings much more appealing. Lee hopes the town does more development like this. It is absolutely the right process, working collectively to create something everyone wants. We still need to go through a process like the Mill developer did. Commissioner Eufemia feels the biggest question is going to be height of the buildings. Whether the town will go 4 or 5 stories is questionable. Councilperson Stultz believes increasing the density, and in turn the number of people in town is positive, for our businesses, events and the property values in town. Development like this is contagious, Council has been contacted by 4 different developers regarding the Lakefront project.

**Fire Escapes:** Keith discussed the fire escapes and the repainting of the fire escapes. Keith noted they are all covered in lead based paints. We will need to take special precautions when that work is being done. The project will cost more than double what we have budgeted, and will need to be done over several years.

Additional Notes: Keith discussed the importance of everyone being present at the next meeting to pass the State Budget. On the 26<sup>th</sup> we are being presented with our River Friendly award, and everyone is welcome to attend. We are starting a Big Brothers/Big Sisters program along with the Mercer County coordinator. Finally, we have 2 members whose terms are expiring and I would like to draft a letter to the Mayor and Council requesting the terms being renewed for another term. We have a good level of expertise on the board now, and the board works well together.

**Executive Director Report:**

- We are currently at 100% occupancy.
- We received our final subsidy determination this month and fortunately it is somewhat higher than anticipated.
- We have ordered the final batch of radiator covers that are scheduled to be delivered this month.
- Our semiannual waiting list update letters have gone out and returned. Our wait lists have been updated and we now have 222 families waiting for apartments. We will not be opening our wait lists or be accepting applications until after the next update in January.
- Our paving project has been completed.
- I met with the Mayor to discuss the requested parking spaces in front of Building 6. We agreed the town will provide 2 spaces in front of the building for short term

- parking for our residents and their guests. This is a good compromise for the HA and the town, and will solve the issues with short term parking.
- I attended several meetings in Washington early in September, including one meeting with HUD regarding the restructuring of small housing agencies. It appears HUD is willing to discuss and consider all ideas, and I am hopeful we will begin to see some changes in our programs in the coming year.
  - I have met with Leonard Coates regarding the Deerfield/Westerlea project and the Rogers/Academy overlay zone. We arranged a meeting with the affordable housing group from the town and a retainer was posted with the Borough so that their planner can get involved. The meeting was very positive and I believe we will be moving forward with some sort of project.
  - I attended the Planning Board meeting on August 14<sup>th</sup> regarding the development on Church Street. I voiced concerns with the storm water management plan and the parking. The developer is addressing these issues to our satisfaction.
  - Our VAWA (Violence against Woman's Act) policies and forms have all been updated in compliance with the HUD notice. I have also updated our ACOP (Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plan) to reflect the changes.
  - We had all the fire escapes tested for lead based paints. They all tested positive for lead. This means we will need to have special precautions in the preparations for painting. The lead report will be made available to contractors when the fire escape bid packages are prepared and published.
  - The annual boiler maintenance has been scheduled. We will be replacing one leaking hot water tank in boiler room #1.
  - All of the porches, balconies and stairs have been cleaned and power washed.
  - Annual cycle painting has been started.

### **Financial Update: July-August, 2017**

In review of the financial reports for the month of July and August, 2017, the Hightstown Housing Authority completed the months with positive results as anticipated. The largest expense this period was the quarterly water bills.

Income:

- Residential income has come in slightly over budget for the period.
- Excess utility is slightly over budget, bringing us into line for the year.
- Other income is over budget due to sale of plans and specification for renovation projects.
- Laundry income is slightly under budget for the period.
- Subsidy income is over budget due to the final acceptance of our 2017 budget. Adjustments have been made which will boost our subsidy income by around \$1500 per month.

Expenses:

- Administrative and Maintenance salaries are under budget for the period and on track for the year.
- Legal expense is on budget for the period.
- Staff training is on budget for the year.
- Audit is under budget for the period but on budget for the year.
- Misc. Office Expense is under budget.
- Water is slightly under budget, but will come into line the end of this month.
- Electric is over for the period but under budget for the year.
- Natural Gas is under budget for the period.
- Maintenance supplies are over budget for the year due to renovations of 2 apartments.
- Exterminating costs are under budget for the period, and coming into line for the year.
- Grounds maintenance is over budget due to planting of annual flowers, mulching the entire property and cleaning the gutters on the entire property.

**Announcements:** The next meeting is scheduled for October 18<sup>th</sup> , 2015 at 7:00 pm.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned by a motion made at 8:50PM.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director