

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE BOROUGH
OF HIGHTSTOWN, NEW JERSEY
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16th, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Chairperson James Eufemia called meeting to Order at 7:00PM

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: showed that those present and absent were as follows:

Present: Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director, Commissioner James Eufemia, Chair, Commissioner Yolanda Swiney (arrived Late), Commissioner Brent Rivenburgh, Commissioner Eva Teller and Commissioner Monique Wilson, Resident

Also, Present: Jeet Gulati (on phone)

Absent: Borough Council Liaison, No public presence

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting Minutes of July 15th, 2020. Commissioner Rivenburgh noticed a missing number in the 2021 budget. Keith noted the mistake and will make corrections. The minutes were motioned to be approved by Commissioner Rivenburgh and seconded by Commissioner Teller. Minutes were unanimously approved.

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 of the public were in attendance.

Borough Council Liaison Report:

- None- It was noted the HA has been without Council representation for almost 1 year.

Resident Council Report:

- Monique discussed the one resident several residents feel need to be evicted. Commissioner Teller questioned what the term “Terrorist Threat” means. Keith discussed the issue that began when we had a bear in Town, and he posed on Facebook with 2 guns. Supposedly he threatened one or more residents with the guns. Keith and Mickey reinforced the fact that HUD makes it very clear there is little we can do unless there is a conviction. It must be based on drugs, violent crime or offences against another. Resident documentation in the office is needed, it does not matter there are police reports. Commissioner Rivenburgh asked if guns and weapons are allowed in Public Housing. Keith responded that the rules are very clear, residents can have guns on site. Commissioner Eufemia reminded the board they must be safely stored as per the law. Commissioner Rivenburgh questioned whether the guns were registered.
- Monique continued to discuss ways to spend the Resident money. She mentioned that some HA’s are installing Wi-Fi for all residents. Keith explained he has been in every apartment and there are multiple large TV’s, routers, and computers. Monique agreed and mentioned she spoke to Sherry and confirmed there are no needs currently.

Resolutions:

- None

Discussion Items:

- **Budget:** Keith began by discussing the enclosed budget. He included an updated version that was not in the packet. There is a 3% staff increase in the budget which was agreeable to the board. The subsidy numbers have been modified to a lower number. Keith and Pete disagree, but we are going with a higher amount that the state will approve.
- **Boiler Project:** Keith discussed the completed project. Everything came out beautiful. Everything has been received except the final training and the manuals. Final payment has not been made at this time, but we will be paying by the end of the month.
- **Cooperation Agreement.** Keith discussed the state of the Cooperation agreement. Garbage was discussed at length. Keith noted the original agreement calls for the HA to receive all services that all other residents receive. This should include recycling, which we currently pay for. Commissioner Eufemia asked why we should not have containers like everyone else. Keith explained that 100 containers would not be manageable. The Borough feels we are only due approximately \$3400 dollars when Recycling cost us over \$6600 dollars. Keith strongly disagrees and the costs were discussing. The overflow problem was discussed, Keith discussed what the HA is doing to deal with the local contractors and homeowners that are using our dumpsters. We have called the Police, without any satisfaction. Commissioner Gulati discussed the legal inuendo the of the agreement. He feels we need to verify the number of households to make sure they are not including the HA and we need to reconfirm the language of the agreement to clarify the Boroughs role. Keith agreed with the Commissioner.

The money being offered is completely inadequate, nowhere in the agreement does it state the Borough can determine what to pay for a service. Commissioner Swiney and Teller questioned why we cannot complete separate from the Borough. The Mayor claimed the HA is nothing but a problem, and he is going to talk to the Council about separating the waste removal and Recycling completely from the Borough. We have set up an attorney escrow account for the PILOT agreement. There will be two checks, one for the Recycling agreement, and the other for the balance of the PILOT. Commissioner Eufemia agrees this keeps us above the law considering the Mayor and Commissioner Eufemia agreed on a PILOT of 7%. A question was raised as to paying the PILOT at all, Commissioner Gulati mentioned the escrow agreement is the best course for us. It avoids all late fees and possible litigation. Commissioner Swiney questioned whether we are always going to be bound by the Borough. Commissioner Rivenburgh reminded her we are still a property in the Borough and affected by all decisions the council makes. Keith mentioned the Borough does have the ability to remove and replace the board, even though it has been almost a year and Commissioner Nelson has not been replaced. Commissioner Teller suggested we invite the Mayor to talk things out, Keith responded they have been invited, but we will try again. Commissioner Gulati asked that we look into the escrow agreement to make sure there are on fees attached. Also, the Borough is supposed to treat our PILOT agreement the same way they handle all other taxes, with the same payments to the schools, county, state, and others. The Borough will not provide that data. The HA will continue to take the high road on all negotiations.

September 2020

- We are currently at 99% occupancy. We have had one elderly tenant die leaving us with a 1 bedroom on the senior side. We have a long list ready to move into that unit.
- We are keeping the waiting list closed until April 1, 2021. There is a long list of applicants that are actively returning their update letters. We will reevaluate the list next winter to see if any units can be advertised.
- We currently have 2 RFP's that are active. The lawn and landscape is a multiyear bid that we open up every 3 years. This is like the last time we bid the process. The second bid is for the Recycling at the Housing Authority. The Borough had the contractor quickly remove all the containers when they changed contractors. They never let anyone know they were making a change, and the previous vender refuses to do business in Hightstown. An RFP has been placed in the marketplace that is due in October. We will be able to review and approve at the October meeting.
- We are looking to upgrade the entire facility's camera system to a new fiber optic system. The current system is all done in copper wiring and has failed in some areas. One large problem is the coating on the wires has been chewed by squirrels. The new wiring is outdoor rated and basically vermin proof. A second

problem is the copper wiring can attract lightening. We have the whole system grounded, but this is not fool proof. The fiber is nonmetallic and will not transmit a lightning strike. Another benefit of the fiber is the overall distance we can cover. We will no longer need range extenders and have long lag times due to distance.

- The boilers for building 7 have been installed. The contractors ordered all the parts ahead of time and stored them in our garage. They moved quickly through the project and will finish later in late August. The project ran smoothly with only minor issues. The HA will now move onto secondary Capital items such as roofing, windows, and doors.
- We have communicated with the attorney regarding the PILOT payment. At this time, we have not heard anything from the Borough. On October 1 we will make two payments to the Attorney, one for \$32,051.20 for the PILOT and a second for \$6,132.80 for the recycling cost.
- The first in person meeting was held at the Housing Authority on August 25th. We have worked out a process with the Borough's public safety coordinator that is safe and effective, allowing us to have this meeting tonight.
- All our legal affairs have been turned over to Leland Hutchinson. We have worked with Leland in the past with great success. Leonard retired after a long career and we wish him well. Leland is fully up to date with all our affairs and the transition has been effortless.
- The novel Coronavirus is on everyone's mind. We discuss it as a staff and are taking a more traditional approach, face coverings whenever outside and around others, wash your hands often, keep your hands away from your face, stay out of crowds and avoid being around anyone who appears sick. As a service industry, we are unable to avoid being at work. We have been working modified shifts, but as of July 6th we will be going back to our regular schedule of 8-4 Monday to Friday. We are maintaining the social distancing and remaining vigilant until told otherwise by the Governor.

Financial Update: July-August 2020

In review of the financial reports for the month of July and August 2020, the Hightstown Housing Authority completed the months with positive results.

Income:

- Residential income has come in slightly under budget for the period and slightly under budget for the year, mostly due to accurate budgeting but minor impacts from the virus resulting in layoffs and late rent payments.
- Excess Utility is slightly under budget for the period and slightly under budget for the year.

- Interest income is well below budget for the period and the year. Interest does not get posted to the account until after the 15th of the following month. We are continuing to monitor interest rates and will renegotiate our savings rate as warranted. One concern is that business savings rates have dropped to .45 percent. I will be shopping around for a better rate.
- Other Operating receipts are slightly over budget for the period.
- Operating Subsidy income is under budget for the year.
- The COVID 19 subsidy is to be used for capital expenses and emergency supplies.

Expenses:

- Administrative and Maintenance salaries are both on budget for the period.
- Legal expense is slightly under budget for the year.
- Staff Training is slightly over budget for the period and the year due to training costs.
- Travel is under budget for the period and the year due to numerous cancellations this year.
- Sundry Administrative is over budget for the period and under budget for the year due to several factors.
- Dues and Memberships are under budget for the period but over budget for the year due to renewals of memberships to National trade organizations.
- Electric is under budget for the period and year.
- Natural Gas is under budget for the period and the year.
- Maintenance materials is over budget for the period and over budget for the year due to apartment renovations being done.
- Maintenance contract cost are over budget for the period, but under budget for the year.
- Plumbing Contract costs are over budget due to drain cleaning emergency.
- Electrical Contract costs are slightly under budget for the period but over budget for the year due to generator additions needed after the new installation and contract for annual servicing.
- Extermination cost is slightly over budget for period and the year due to bed bug treatment in one apartment.

Next meeting is scheduled for October 21st , 2019 at 7:00

The meeting was adjourned by a motion made by Commissioner Swiney.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director