

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE BOROUGH
OF HIGHTSTOWN, NEW JERSEY
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, October 21, 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(phone), Commissioner Eva Teller(phone), Commissioner Jeet Gulati and Commissioner Monique Wilson, Resident(phone)

Also, Present:

Absent: Commissioner Brent Rivenburgh, Borough Council Liaison

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting Minutes of September 16, 2020. The minutes were motioned to be approved by Commissioner Teller and seconded by Commissioner Gulati. 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 Housing Authority has been without a Council Liaison for more than 1 year. The mayor and or Council have been invited to the meeting without response. Keith noted the Housing Authority has been on the agenda 2 times now without us ever being noticed. Commissioner Eufemia feels we need to be RICE noticed whenever we are discussed. Commissioner Teller and Swiney feel we need to send a letter to the Borough requesting we be invited any time we are being discussed. Commissioner Eufemia feels we should have our attorney draft a letter to the Borough. Commissioner Swiney thinks the board needs to meet with the Mayor. Keith explained that 2 commissioners can meet the Mayor without need for public notice. Commissioner Swiney thinks Commissioner Teller and Commissioner Gulati would be best. Commissioner Gulati thinks we should meet him at one of his regular Thursday evening office hours. Keith feels this will make positive progress and we will hold off on the attorney letter until after they meet.

Committee Report:

- None

Resident Council Report:

- None

Resolutions:

- 2020-8 To approve submission of the NJ State Budget. The budget was approved by a roll call vote.

Discussion Items:

- **Building 7** The boilers are done! We have signed the last check for the contractor and will be holding the check until the final manuals are in hand. The next major item we should be looking at are windows, doors, and roofing. Even now with all our boilers are done, we still carry a large cash balance. Commissioner Eufemia agrees we need to address the roofs, and when adding solar we need to make sure the substrate is adequate.
- **Recycling:** Recycling is out to bid again. The bid is on our site, the borough site and advertised in all the area papers. (Monique entered the meeting)
- **PILOT Agreement:** Keith thanked Jeet and Eva for volunteering to meet with the Mayor. He is confident this will move the process along.

Executive Director Report:

- We are currently at 99% occupancy. We have moved an elderly person from a 2-bedroom unit on the family side to the available one-bedroom unit on the senior side. We have a long list of people waiting for the 2-bedroom unit.
- We are keeping the waiting list closed until April 1, 2021. There is a long list of applicants that have returned their update letters. We will reevaluate the list next winter to see if any units can be advertised.
- We currently have 1 RFP that is active. The bid is for the Recycling at the Housing Authority. This is a re-bid due to low turnout on the first bid. 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 vendor refuses to do business in Hightstown. An RFP has been placed in the marketplace that is due in November. We will be able to review and approve at the November meeting.
- We have upgraded the entire facility's camera system to a new fiber optic system. The current system was all done in copper wiring and has failed in some areas. One large problem was the coating on the wires has been chewed by squirrels. The new wiring is outdoor rated and basically vermin proof. A second problem was the copper wiring can attract lightning. 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. Keith discussed the 2 cameras that were upgraded to be able to be able to read license plates. The Mayor encouraged us to call the Police and report illegal dumping. We spent several hundred dollars on signage for each dumpster and surprisingly, we never have more than 2/3 to ¾ of a dumpster when they are emptied.
- The boilers for building 7 have been installed. We approved one change order for \$3,000 to modify the wiring for our sump pumps. The existing lines were in the way and needed to be moved. The project ran smoothly with only minor issues. The HA will now move onto secondary Capital items such as roofing, windows, and doors.

- At HUD's recommendation we have foregone the traditional October full building inspections this year. We are systematically changing smoke detector batteries in all the units and addressing some work orders when the tenants are not home. Air conditioners are being removed each afternoon by appointment. One concern is that we will not be able to address the work order items that many tenants do not notice or report to the office. Hopefully in the Spring we will be able to conduct our regular inspections. Keith talked about one of the Senior residents that is Self-Quarantining due to exposure from his physical therapy office. Commissioner Gulati questioned our smoke alarm system and how it works. Keith discussed the system.
- PILOT payments have been made to the Attorney Trust account. We have not heard anything from the Borough. The Council has had 2 executive sessions where the HA was on the agenda. No one was invited from the HA or the attorney to discuss the matter. Keith is hopeful Jeet and Eva will be able to come to a resolution with the Mayor so those funds can be released.
- I have been asked to be a national reviewer for the Affordable Housing Accreditation Board. I attended (via Zoom) a board meeting this morning in Columbus Georgia, observing their work, and reviewing policies they are putting forward. This is an ongoing process throughout the year as my time permits. It will provide valuable insight into larger and smaller HA's, how they are run, managed and care for their residents.
- The novel Coronavirus is on everyone's mind. We have had discussions as a staff regarding safety. Now is the time we are all re-doubling our efforts to stay safe. 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 were working modified shifts, but as of July 6th we have been 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. Commissioner Wilson questioned whether we should be buying masks for all our residents. Keith explained that there is free will and it is very difficult to get resident to do what we feel is the right thing. Commissioner Wilson feels we need to be doing more in the laundry rooms, on the door, how many inside the laundry at one time. Plus, we could be helping kids as they are going back to school. Keith wants to wait for the next stimulus bill before we spend any more money. Commissioner Wilson agrees. Commissioner Eufemia feels we should continue stockpiling supplies in the office, and we will discuss further purchases.

Financial Update: September 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. Keith discussed how October is a difficult month, between the Water and Sewer, PILOT payments and payment to the Contractor this month will be down. Commissioner Wilson thinks we need to address the exterior doors and especially flooring. She thinks we need to address the Family side. Many residents complain about the floors. Keith explained how that at one time the HA installed an industrial grade storm door which was not the best choice. Commissioner Teller thinks the windows need to be addressed. Her Aunt lives on the Senior side and she had a lot of trouble opening a window. Keith agrees and we will begin to address.

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. We have moved our savings to a local bank where the return is slightly higher. Our statements will be coordinated making posting and recording more accurate.
- Other Operating receipts are slightly over budget for the period.
- Laundry income is over budget for the period and the year.
- Operating Subsidy income is under budget for the period and 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 under budget for the period and the year.
- Travel is well under budget for the period and the year due to numerous cancellations this year.
- Sundry Administrative is over budget for the period and the year due to several factors, mainly due to software licensing costs incurred in January.
- Dues and Memberships are over budget for the period and over budget for the year due to renewals of memberships to National trade organizations.
- Electric is under budget for the period and year.
- Water is over budget for the period and the 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. Money is spent at HD Facilities and Home Depot for materials.
- 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 and mouse treatment under several buildings.
- Boiler contract costs are over budget due to renewal of service contractor for the boiler systems.
- Extraordinary maintenance is used for all costs that are outside the CFP funding and will be capitalized at the end of the year.

Next meeting is scheduled for November 18th, 2020 at 7:00

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

Respectfully Submitted by:

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director