

**MINUTES OF THE HIGHTSTOWN HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS
WEDNESDAY, December 16th 2015 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 Esther Velázquez, Commissioner Carole Nelson, Vice Chair, Commissioner Pascale Emmanuel, Commissioner Christopher Moraitis, Commissioner Yolanda Swiney and Commissioner Brent Rivenburgh.
- **Also Present:** Steve Misiura, Council Liaison
- **Absent:**

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting Minutes of: November 16th, 2015

Motion made by Commissioner Moraitis, seconded by Commissioner Rivenburgh.
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. Keith explained that our proposed resident commissioner, Monique Dubois may not be able to attend tonight due to a medical emergency with her son.

Resolutions:

- **2015-13 To write off 2015 balances as uncollectable.** Keith discussed the balances due from families or individuals that are not collectable for a variety of reasons. Motion forwarded by Commissioner Nelson, Seconded by Commissioner Swiney. Approved by the board.
- **2015-14 To establish meeting dates for 2016** Keith reviewed the meeting dates as discussed at the last meeting. The motion was moved by Commissioner Rivenburgh, seconded by Commissioner Emmanuel, approved by the board.
- **2015-15 To adopt the budget as approved by the NJ DCA** Keith discussed the NJDCA process of approving the budget. We have approved the budget, DCA has approved it, and now we have to approve the approved budget and return it to the DCA for final signature. Motion was moved by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Swiney. Motion was approved by the board.

- **2015-16 to approve the submission of the Federal Budget** Keith discussed the resolution that is needed for Keith to submit the budget to HUD. The Chair will sign the resolution. Keith explained we do not have the “budget tool” from HUD yet, but should be available soon. Commissioner Rivenburgh motioned to approve the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, the motion was approved by the board.

Discussion Items:

- **Keith discussed the filing of a new ACC contract.**
- **Affordable Housing Plan.** Keith discussed the recent legal document that has been filed with the State Courts. Keith has sent it to HUD and it has been forwarded the HUD legal department in New York. Basically we are in waiting mode. Commissioner Swiney asked what happened in the meeting we had with the Borough. Commissioner Eufemia discussed the meeting and the results. The main issue is the Borough is doing most of their work in Executive sessions, keeping most of the parties in the dark. Until the special master comes back with a ruling, we have to wait and see. Commissioner Rivenburgh stated the Borough understands HUD will require a “substantial” contribution” to the Housing Authority in exchange for becoming part of the plan, but first we have to see if the special master will allow the use of the Housing Authority. If it is allowed, then we will have to come up with a number that will satisfy all the parties involved. Commissioner Swiney questioned if any other municipalities are attempting to use their HA’s. Keith responded there are 2 or 3 instances in the State, but that occurred after Hurricane Sandy, and the towns invested significant amounts of money. Keith noted that in his mind the most important outcome of the meeting was the agreement to continue talking and working on the issue. Commissioner Rivenburgh commented that the specific dollar amount can be negotiated, such as reduction in some of the fees the HA currently pays, or reduction in water and sewer fees. Keith mentioned the Borough considering assisting in our long term capitol plans. Commissioner Eufemia would like to expand our scope and use some of this money going forward to rehabilitate Rogers and Academy. Mr. Misiura commented all these ideas are on the table to satisfy the requirements of the State. Builders Remedy lawsuits were discussed and the downside of getting to the point. COAH protects you from this type of court actions. The board discussed COAH, the process and the possible outcomes.
- **Architectural and Engineering Study:** Keith met with our project architect today to discuss developing a 5 year plan to: reroof the entire facility, install limited solar hot water and electric production. Boiler upgrades and replacements, parking lot upgrades. We are considering using pervious paving on the parking areas. This will finish up our quartet of stormwater measures on this site. Commissioner Rivenburgh mentioned we need to be cautious with any solar installation. Need to make sure we completely understand who will be responsible for the panels once they are on the roof. Keith explained the solar aspect is the most complicated of the projects, and will take the most effort to bring to fruition.
- **Staff Salaries:** Keith discussed proposed salary increases for the line staff for 2016. The Borough is giving their employees 2%, Towers Watson suggests 3.1% and the Federal Government is paying 1.8-1.9%. The board discussed and agreed to increase the staff salaries by 3% as of January 1. The board also recommended giving the staff gift cards like they did last year. Full time staff will get a \$250 card, and the part time employees will get \$150. Commissioner Valesques motioned to move the salary increase, seconded by Commissioner Swiney. The motion was approved.

Executive Director Report:

- We are currently at 99% occupancy. We have 1 vacant apartment that has been renovated. The new family will move in over the Christmas holiday.
- Spring time bulbs have been planted in various locations around the property.
- The gutters have all been cleaned and the final cleanup of the property has been done for the year.
- We are 100% compliant with the Community Service requirement as outlined by HUD.
- The 2016 budget that has been approved in Congress is near sequestration levels of funding, Capitol funding is being cut again.
- We have a part time employee out on leave. They had a foot issue that turned into a serious bone infection. They have had surgery and are recovering. We hope they will be able to come back to work by early January.
- Training for the security camera system will be done in the coming week. We have included Detective Miller and Detective Jimenez from the Police department into our training.
- The Borough has been in for 3 days working on our water issues. They are acknowledging they have an issue with water quality and are working on resolving it.
- We have received a copy of the Borough of Hightstown's submission to the State for compliance with their affordable housing obligations. A copy was sent to HUD for their review and response. To date I have not heard from them.
- We have met with our Architect to begin the planning process for the replacement of our boiler systems and roofing on the property. This will be a 5-7 year process which will be funded by capital and operating funds. We will be actively seeking County, State and Federal grants to cover as much of this work as possible.

Financial Update: November, 2015

In review of the financial reports for the months of November 2015, the Hightstown Housing Authority completed the months with positive results. Highlights include:
Income:

- Residential income has come in well above 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.
- Excess utilities are freezer charges for the month.
- Other Operating receipts includes maintenance fees and refunds from our insurance company.
- Laundry income is slightly over budget for the month, an over budget for the year.
- Subsidy income is slightly over budget due to the Federal 2015 budget. We have operated this year under a continuing resolution, and HUD has promised (now that the federal budget year has ended) we will have a final budget number for 2015. HUD has again funded the operating fund for the next 2 months based on estimates from 2015. As of this date we do not have a 2015 ACC (Annual Contributions Contract).

Expenses:

- Administrative and Maintenance salaries are on budget for the month of November, and on track for the year.

- Legal Expenses are under budget for the month but over budget due to review of court filings for the Boroughs affordable housing plans.
- Sundry Administrative is over budget for the year due to the OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) study that was conducted in preparation for our 2015 audit. HUD requires this study every 3 years.
- Audit Fees are under budget for the month, but on budget for this year.
- Electricity is under budget due to the unusually warm temperatures in November.
- Gas continues to be well below budget due to the radiator valve work done last year and our new purchasing agreement.
- Water is well over budget. I have been in touch with the Water department to review one of our meter readings. This past quarter, one of our meters was 50% higher than it has ever recorded. We discovered the problem was in 2 apartments with toilets that were running. One tenant has had a stroke and mild dementia, while the other tenant claims it has been running for months, but it still worked so they did not say anything. Those two toilet cost us over \$2,000 this past quarter. I have asked the water department if they can give us more frequent readings so we can spot problems more quickly.
- Misc. Maintenance supplies are over budget due to apartment turnover and renovations.
- Extermination costs are over budget due to bed bugs being treated in one apartment.
- Grounds maintenance is over budget due to semiannual gutter cleaning and maintenance.
- Maintenance contract costs are over budget due to cycle painting and concrete repair.
- Boiler Contract costs are over budget due to renewal of annual service contract.
- Extraordinary maintenance included the replacement of 2, 125 gallon hot water storage tanks that were leaking.

Announcements: The next meeting is scheduled for January 6th, 2016 at 5:00 pm. Dinner at Fernando's will follow the meeting at 6:00PM

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by a motion made at 8:20PM.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director