

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE HIGHTSTOWN HOUSING
AUTHORITY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WEDNESDAY, July 16th 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 Esther Velázquez, Commissioner James Eufemia, Chair, Commissioner Robert Hung, Commissioner Christopher Moraitis, Commissioner Brent Rivenburgh and Commissioner Yolanda Swiney.
- **Also Present:** Seth Kurs, Council Liaison, Residents, Pat Albanese, Bill Moody, Charles Holland, Chester Diaz, Susanne Ames, and Susan Brooks.
- **Absent:**

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting Minutes of the April, May, June meeting. Keith asked to table the minutes due to an error in reporting the Well Baby Clinic discussion. Commissioner Hung motioned to table the minutes which was seconded by Commissioner Moraitis. The motion was approved. The minutes will be presented at the September Meeting.

Committee Reports: None

Resolutions:

- **Resolution 2014-4 to approve the “Uncollectable Tenant Accounts Policy”.** The members discussed the policy and why this has come up. Keith discussed the conversation he has had and that the lack of this policy was a finding at another housing authority. Keith discussed this with Peter Polcari, our accountant. Commissioner Hung motioned to approve the resolution which was seconded by Commissioner Rivenburgh. The motion passed.
- **Resolution 2014-5 to approve the 2013 Audit.** A motion to approve the 2013 that was forwarded by Commissioner Hung and seconded by Commissioner Moraitis. The motion was approved.

Commissioner Velázquez asked that the public comment portion of the meeting be moved up in the agenda so that we have plenty of time for the residents. Commissioner Swiney does not feel we should change the order of the meeting. She feels it is important for the residents to hear the business portion of the meeting before the public comment session. Without further objection the public comment session was introduced.

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.

Commissioner Eufemia asked that there be no further comments from the public regarding the hot water in the laundry rooms. The commissioners will be discussing the issue this evening and will consider it at that point.

Susanne Ames feels we need to pave the gravel parking lot. She is concerned for resident cars being damaged from flying rocks and it is also difficult to walk on. Keith explained the difficulties in paving a parking lot in today's world, plus the Borough owns the lot. We lease the lot. Pat Albanese is also concerned with the lot and the speed people travel in that lot.

Susanne Ames also feels she should have one of her 3 air conditioner for free because she is disabled. Keith explained the policy, and how previous administrations may not have equally applied the rules, Keith is just trying to equally apply the rules and policies to all residents.

Commissioner Eufemia closed the Public portion of the meeting.

Discussion: Hot Water in the laundry rooms.

Commissioner Velázquez started by stating she has changed her longstanding opinion on the laundry rooms. She feels we should have hot water in the laundry rooms for our residents. Commissioner Eufemia also has changed his mind and agrees we should change this policy. Keith expressed concern with changing the policy before all of the data is available on the cost savings. Commissioners Rivenburgh, Hung and Moraitis agree we should wait until we have the data. They noted the utilization of the laundry is up, so residents are not boycotting the laundry or going elsewhere. Commissioner Eufemia feels we need to change now. He does not feel the cost savings are worth the argument. Seth Kurs (Council) interjected he feels we should leave the policy intact. He has considered and researched the topic and thinks we should stay as is. Commissioner Swiney feels we should just change the policy to make the residents happy. Commissioner Hung feels we should bring it to a vote. Commissioner Eufemia worded the motion- "To reinstall the hot water to the washing machines in the laundry facilities at the Hightstown Housing Authority." Commissioner Velázquez seconded the motion. Commissioner Moraitis consented to the motion with the thought we should reexamine the costs at the end of the year and consider raising the price of the laundry to a reasonable amount to compensate for the cost of hot water. All voted in favor with the exception of Commissioner Rivenburgh.

Executive Directors Report:

- We are currently at 98% occupancy. We had a death and a move out this past month. We are currently waiting for the attorney to straighten out the estate so we can get into the one unit, and the other unit is being renovated for a new family.
- We have been working with our parents and children this summer to reduce the littering on the property and damage to the plantings. On mornings when we have excessive litter or damage, we have been identifying children in the courtyard using our security cameras. A friendly note is put in the resident's door asking them to work with us to reduce the litter and damage to the plants. So far, we are seeing positive results. The amount of litter is reduced and the damage to the plants has stopped.

- Landscape and drainage projects are scheduled to start later this month behind building 6 and the front of building 3. This will reduce flooding in the crawlspaces of those buildings.
- I have met with the Health officer and the administrator of East Windsor Township regarding the baby clinic. As a group we concluded the cost of renovating the Well Baby clinic space was too high and the 3 municipalities would not be willing to pay an increased rent. The Hightstown Administrator would not attend for unknown reasons. The lease for the clinic space terminates on December 31, and the clinic will be relocated to a new space. At that time we can begin refurbishing our community space.
- We have cleaned out and mulched the area between our parking lot and the post office fence. This has always been an overgrown mess that was difficult to maintain.
- I have sent our Disaster plan to Jim Sidelinger who is the Borough of Hightstown's head of the Office of Emergency Management for review and comment. I will report when I hear back from him.
- The new resident community gardens have been installed by building 1. 4 residents have planted their gardens and are taking care of them. Gene Sarafin donated all the plants.
- The HUD safety and security grant has been submitted. We applied for \$75,000 to upgrade our camera systems.
- I made a formal request to HUD to allow us to lock our utility consumption at 2012 levels. This is allowed for budgeting purposes in HA's that use an ESCO to accomplish their energy upgrades. I have made the argument with HUD that we accomplished more than the ESCO proposed, at little cost to the HA or HUD utilizing grants and other state, county and local programs. HUD allows the additional funding to cover debt service to pay the ESCO. I would like to use the additional funding for current capital needs and to establish an R&R (Reserves for Replacement) account for long term capital projects such as roofing and boilers. Our HUD financial representative responded favorably and asked me to submit our budget with those assumptions. This will provide a financial incentive of \$40-\$50 thousand dollars per year to the HA for capital projects. I will keep everyone up to date as our budget are submitted into the federal system this fall.

Financial Update: June, 2014

In review of the financial reports for the month of June, 2014, the Hightstown Housing Authority completed the months with positive results. Our utility costs continue to be below budgeted levels thanks to the work done over the past year. Highlights include:

Income:

- Residential income has come in slightly below budget due to incomes of new residents.
- Laundry income is on budget for the year.
- Subsidy income is above budget due to the Federal 2014 budget.

Expenses:

- Salaries are below our budgeted levels.
- Staff training is over budget for the year due to registrations for a Rutgers courses.
- Sundry Administrative is over budget due to the cost of an emergency room visit and follow up for a part time employee that went to the emergency room. He was attacked by a previous tenant and her boyfriend late one evening. He was responding to a commotion in the courtyard.
- Audit is over budget due to the annualization of the expense.
- Water is under budget, with the quarterly that arrived at the end of June, we have recorded the lowest consumption on record with 104,600 cubic feet of water verses a 5 year average of 152,000 cubic feet for the same quarter. The last 3 quarters have demonstrated similar results. We will continue to monitor our consumption and compliance.
- Gas is slightly over budget for the month due to chilly weather early in June.
- Electric is under budget for the year. Our KWH usage has been reduced by 28% which is relating to the dollar savings of similar percentage. This is substantially due to the LED lighting upgrades, Laundry upgrades, and boiler controls.
- Boiler contract costs are over budget and will stabilize over the coming months. We have completed most of the major work on our boiler plants and now will be completing smaller projects designed to improve efficiency and reliability.
- Electrical Contract costs are over budget due to the installation of new lighting.
- Grounds maintenance is over budget due to seasonal plantings, mulching, tree trimming and lawn repair work.
- Pension expense is over budget due to annual payment into the pension system.

Announcements: The next meeting is scheduled for September 17th, 2014 at 7:00 pm.

The Meeting was moved to Executive Session at 9:15PM

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by a motion made at 9:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director