

# ANNUAL REPORT

An annual review of the Highstow Housing Authority

2019

**Annual Report of the  
Hightstown Housing Authority  
February 17, 2020**



This annual report is being presented to the Borough Council in open session to inform the Council and general public of the highlights, activities and plans developed by the Executive Director and dedicated Board of Commissioners.

## **Description and History**

The Hightstown Housing Authority (HHA) was originally established in the mid 1950's with the intent of redeveloping the blighted area of town bordered by Rogers Avenue, Mercer and Academy Streets. In 3 phases and separate grants, the 100 housing units were built, and the remaining property was deeded to the Post Office, with portions sold to what is now the 1<sup>st</sup> Constitution Bank. The Housing Authority (HA) property and housing units are strictly controlled by HUD through deed restrictions, a Declaration of Trust, a Use Agreement and an annual ACC (Annual Contributions Contract). We also have a Cooperation Agreement with the Borough. All these documents control what we are able to do with the property and how we are required to operate.

## **Importance of Our Board of Commissioners**

Unlike most boards and commissions in the Borough, the HHA Board has a legal and fiduciary responsibility to the Borough, the State of New Jersey and the Federal Government. The Board is liable for the operations and can be sued for their actions or lack thereof. Our commissioners are required to have state mandated training at Rutgers. In addition, the HHA makes continuing education and conferences available at the HHA expense. The Commission has selected new members based on expertise that is needed by our business. We currently have on our board representatives with experience in law enforcement, finance, insurance, banking, legal, social services, and education. Having expertise in these fields is beneficial to managing a social-service based real estate business.

## Raingardens!

Years ago, the Hightstown Housing Authority created the first Stormwater demonstration site in Hightstown. Known as “green infrastructure” we are currently able to capture over 50% of the stormwater associated with the site in various structures we have developed over the site. Raingardens, pollinator gardens, rain barrels, dry wells and disbursement beds and trenches.

We are pleased how all these methods work, and how easy they are to maintain. We redid the raingarden in 2019 to move some plants that outgrew their space and add some new plantings. We are always encouraging new and old business’s to install green infrastructure to help save our town from flooding.



## In Hightstown We See Housing as a Basic Need

Every major source will confirm, Food, Water and Shelter are the 3 basic needs for human survival. Our hope is the newly selected “affordable housing administrator” in Hightstown holds the same values and helps to promote affordable housing in our town.

What are the chances of a person holding down a full-time job, or a child graduating from High School without a roof over their heads? Housing is a critical element, but its so much more. Properly housed, our residents have access to clean drinking and bathing water, ability to cook and prepare food, enjoy the security of closing their door at night and sleeping peacefully. We as the Hightstown Housing Authority have developed a community where neighbors become friends, caring for one another, caring for the children and the elderly. By having this stability, we enable people to achieve a level of self-worth by allowing them to develop their own feelings of self-esteem.

Our children are our future!

## Hightstown Housing Authority Easter Baskets and Egg

The Resident Council Getting Ready – Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>



Are you ready? Get Set, Go!



Thank you to all who make our events possible – Rise, The Baptist Church, Michael Byrne, Robin Byrne, Simone Carolina, Margaret Corretjer, Jim Grbac, Evelyn Harvey, Jameellah Lance, Dorothy Lipick, Ronald Johnson, Heaven Petters and Monique Dujue Wilson. Let's not forget Charlie and Bill who keep the grounds so nice. Volunteering of your time and effort is always greatly appreciated!

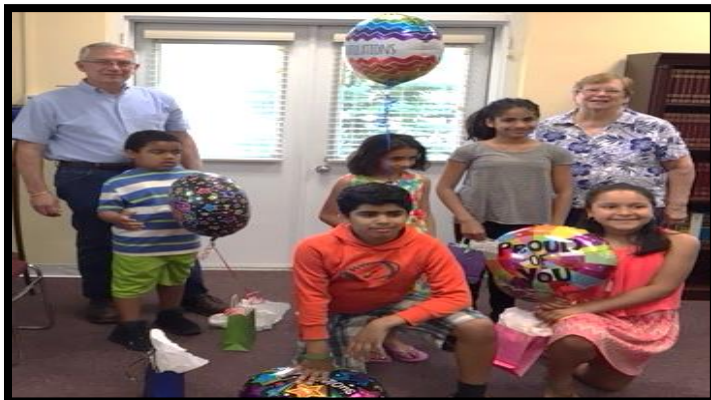
## Game Day

A few of the members of The Hightstown Women's Club, which includes Board Member, Carole Nelson invite our Residents to Game Day held in our Community Room. It is a chance for our Residents to enjoy one another's company, play a little BINGO. win prizes and enjoy a snack, dessert and sometimes a home cooked meal. Game Day is normally held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the Month at 1 pm from September to May.



## HHA & NAHRO “What Home Means to Me” Poster Contest

NAHRO invites Housing Authorities to participate in their yearly poster contest. In March we ask our Resident Students, Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade to participate in our Poster Contest. 1<sup>st</sup> Place Winners in each age category (Elementary, Middle School and High School) are summited to NAHRO Regional Competition, and the winners from Regionals are summited to the National Competition. Our Students show their artistic flair and do a wonderful job each year.



## **A Visit from Our Little Neighbors**

The Little Beavers from the First United Methodist Church Daycare stopped by on Halloween for a treat.



## **Resident Council**

Our Resident Council normally meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 2 pm in our Community Room. We encourage all our Residents to participate. The Council gives the Residents the opportunity to express their ideas and concerns and give us feedback on the projects going on here at the HHA.





## Our Gardens

The Board and Staff of the Hightstown Housing Authority are dedicated to providing quality housing and service to our residents, both inside their apartments and outside on the grounds. We have expanded our “Resident Garden” program in 2019 to include over 14 participating families including 6 planting boxes specifically for the kids. Our “pollinator gardens” designed to attract bees, birds and other insects that assist in pollination are in their third full season and the plants are maturing nicely. The colorful signage helps everyone understand the purpose of the gardens and provides a bit of fun education. The original rain gardens, (yes, now 6 years old) were completely redone this year. We trimmed, pruned and moved several plants that were outgrowing the space. We added several new plants and the garden did wonderfully this year.



## Demographics

Age and ethnicity: The HHA is currently serving 200 residents of which 116 are female and 84 males. We have 49 senior citizens and 12 younger persons that are permanently disabled. We currently have 56 children under the age of 18. We are an ethnically diverse community, with 103 Caucasian residents, 88 African American residents and 9 Asian residents. 57 of our residents are listed as Hispanic.

## Employment and Community Service

The Housing Authority has policies in place that promote work and self-sufficiency. Each resident who is 18 or older and is not a full-time student, senior citizen, family caregiver or disabled must be employed and work at least 30 hours per week. If none of these are applicable, they must perform community service. Community service is a benefit to the local community by volunteering at local non-profits.

We currently have 63 residents working at the businesses listed below. Many of our residents do not have cars, but rather rely on bikes, cabs or walking to work. As you can see, many of the employers below are within walking distance of our community.

## Workforce Housing: Employers Served

Meadow Lakes Hospital	Shop Rite	E.W. School District	Princeton
State of NJ Keepers	Walmart	Merwick	Comfort
Home Health Aids Housing	Target	4 Seasons Deli	Hightstown
Amazon CVS	Temp Agency Bank of America	Better Beginnings Local Construction	Wawa Home
Depot Hilton Brands	Jiffy Lube	Victoria Textiles	Lifetime
US Post Office Fitness	RISE	Morgan's Grill	Retro
NJ Turnpike Grill	Staples	Home Depot	Morgan's
Local Dry Cleaner Village	Forsegate CC	Dollar Tree	Monroe

**We have 13 residents performing community service at the following organizations**

RISE	Trenton Area Soup Kitchen	Better Beginnings
United Methodist Church Church	St. James EME	First Baptist
HHA Resident Council		

**Wait Lists and Wait List Management**

The Hightstown Housing Authority actively monitors and twice per year updates the waiting lists to make sure everyone on the list is still interested. In 2019 we opened our wait lists for 4 months for all apartment types. We currently have 202 families waiting for apartments. We are estimating a 3-5 year wait for a unit, especially one-bedroom units (both family and senior citizen).

**Financials**

The Hightstown Housing Authority has developed a strong financial position over the last 5 years. Maintaining 100% occupancy and strict financial controls have allowed us to generate over \$500,000 in cash that has been dedicated to supplementing our Capital Fund which is used to rebuild and maintain the Housing Authority. 2019 continued this trend as demonstrated below.

<b>2019 at a Glance:</b>	Revenues	\$948,940	
	Expenses:		
	Salaries	\$241,549	
	Payroll Expenses	\$ 99,300	
	Utilities	\$171,335	
	Maintenance Exp.	\$ 86,047	
	Admin Exp.	\$ 78,323	
	Insurance	\$ 45,000	
	PILOT	\$ 39,795	
	Extraordinary Maintenance	<u>\$175,849</u>	(Boilers)
	Revenue VS Expenses	<u>\$ 11,742</u>	(Unaudited)

We are pleased with our performance given the amount of cash we spent this year on capital improvements. We were very fortunate this year to benefit from the increase federal subsidy and resident incomes.

## The Trend in Public Housing

In our opinion, Public Housing and publicly subsidized housing will be going through a transition to a private housing model. This has been underway for several years and will continue to evolve over the next 10 years. The Federal Government no longer has the will or the financial resources to properly fund these vital programs. The Tax Credit Program is one of the models to help fund development without long-term capital and operating support. The RAD (Rental Assistance Demonstration Program) is another model that is currently being tested and shows promise. This helps fund operations and long-term capital. In the future we believe affordable housing will become an issue that must be solved and funded locally.

### Planning for The Future

1. **Investing in Infrastructure:** In 2019, the HHA invested from its cash reserves and limited capital funds over \$245,000 dollars into the physical plant and residential units. We contracted an architect to redesign our handicap kitchens around the facility. We also bid the reconstruction of our final boiler room. Construction will begin in 2020. We continued with our normal capital activities such as appliance replacement, storm water drainage systems, landscape improvements and removal of unused impervious surfaces.
2. **RAD conversion:** The HHA has decided to forego the RAD conversion at this point due to the extraordinary cost of the Phase 2 conversion. HUD has made it financially impossible for the HHA to convert at this time, but we are always hopeful.
3. **Explore Developing a Section 32 Program:** PHA's have the ability to develop homeownership programs tailored to meet the goals of their specific locality and resident population. Under this program, the HHA could possibly:
  - a. Provide subsidy to public housing or other low-income families in the form of down payment or closing cost assistance, subsidize or subordinate mortgages or offer below market financing.
  - b. Acquire existing housing stock to be renovated and sold to income eligible families.
  - c. Provide a lease-purchase option to eligible families.
4. **Begin the Process of Becoming a HUD Approved Housing Counseling Agency:** This is a longer-term prospect that could enable the HHA to provide a variety of financial tools and services to prospective home buyers and tenants. This could also provide another new revenue stream for the HHA.

- 5. Continue the Evaluation of Implementing Solar as a Long-Term Investment:** Within the next 10 years the HA will need to begin the process of installing new roofing materials. At that time the board will consider installing solar panels and/or solar roofing materials to supplement the traditional electrical grid. With the new State-Wide push for “Community Solar” projects that benefit lower-income residents, we are encouraged that we will be able to move forward with new partnerships that will benefit the greater Hightstown area.



**Our special thanks in 2019 to Carole Nelson who has served the board of commissioners for over 16 years in various roles. Carole has retired to Georgia with her family and will be missed by almost every organization in Hightstown.**

## **Memberships, Affiliations and Certifications**

**The HHA holds memberships to the following national and regional organizations:**

- PHADA - Public Housing Authority Directors Association. The ED is a principal member of their Small PHA Committee.
- NAHRO - National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials.
- NJNAHRO - NJ division of the above.
- NJNAHRA - NJ division of National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Authorities
- IREM - Institute of Real Estate Management
- AHAB - Affordable Housing Accreditation Board

### **Executive Director's Accreditations:**

- **ARM** (Accredited Residential Manager)
- **CPM** (Certified Property Manager) designations from the Institute of Real Estate Management
- **AHM** (Assisted Housing Manager) from the National Leased Housing Association
- **PHM** (Public Housing Management) from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials.

### **Awards and Honorariums**

- High Performance Housing Authority as awarded by HUD for operational, financial and physical plant excellence. 2013,2014,2015,2016,2017,2018, 2019.
- New Jersey Sustainable Business Designation
- River Friendly Business - Stony Brook Millstone Watershed
- NAHRO Award of Merit for Sustainability Efforts and Education
- Accredited Agency by the Affordable Housing Accreditation Board

**Our Board of Commissioners:**

James Eufemia, Chairperson

Yolanda Swiney, Vice Chairperson

Pascale Duvert Emmanuel

Carole Nelson- Retired at the end of 2019. We wish her well in her future endeavors.

Brent Rivenburgh

Monique Dujue Wilson

Eva Teller.

**Our Staff:**

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director

Cheryl Cavanaugh, Certification Specialist

Lynmarie Newman, Administrative Assistant

Charles Schilling, Maintenance

William Miller, Maintenance

