

**MINUTES OF THE HIGHTSTOWN HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS
WEDNESDAY, March 15th, 2017 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Call to Order: Allen Keith LePrevost called meeting to order at 7:05 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 Carole Nelson, Commissioner Monique Dujue Wilson, Commissioner Christopher Moraitis, Commissioner Yolanda Swiney and Commissioner Brent Rivenburgh.
- **Also, Present:** Denise Hansen, Council Liaison

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting Minutes of: February 15th, 2017

- Council person Hansen commented feels the meeting went better than the minutes read. She feels the minutes are long. Keith commented the minutes are directly transcribed from the tape. Commissioner Swiney questioned whether things were not correctly stated. Commissioner Moraitis noted that in the past Ms. Hansen has noted that the Commission minutes are “edgy” and pointed. Ms. Hansen noted she does not like the work “Crisis” used to discuss the affordable housing situation in the Borough. She feels the borough is doing everything they can to address the housing situation in town. She is concerned that our minutes are a permanent record in town that will be shared with council and others. Commissioner Swiney questioned whether the minutes can be modified to address these concerns. Keith stated he is uncomfortable modifying the minutes to “sugar coat them to make them sound better”. He feels they should be an accurate reflection of the meeting. Mr. Moraitis feels the minutes are fine as is. Keith asked for a motion to approve, with discussion. Commissioner Moraitis motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Swiney asked Ms. Hansen for clarification as to a specific issue with the minutes. Ms. Hansen mentioned the word “crisis” again. She takes exception to the word “crisis” being used in the official record. Keith responded that those were his words, and living and working in affordable housing every day of the week, he and our office see the need, with 2-300 people on our waiting lists, with the daily phone calls from seniors, and families living in a basement, or entire families living in a bedroom of someone’s home. The borough does not get the phone calls from people crying who live in the area and desperately need an affordable place to live. Ms. Hansen thinks there are two perspectives, as a borough we need to get a “fair” number from the state. She thinks we are talking about two different things. Mr. Rivenburgh suggested language to modify that one sentence to eliminate “Crisis” Commissioner Dujue feels we should not modify the record. She feels that if that was the word used, it should be included. She is concerned with transparency. She agrees there is a crisis in affordable housing, and whether we are dealing with a “plan” or in the reality of affordable housing in our area. Ms. Hansen noted the Borough Minutes are done differently, they are not verbatim, just a general sense of what was said. Keith noted that the minutes may not reflect how the Borough perceives the housing situation at the present time, in the midst of this court case. Commissioner Nelson noted she has a friend that is living in the area in a house where she can’t even afford to run the heater, and she has been on our waiting

list for over 3 years. Ms. Hansen feels these are two separate issues, what the HA is experiencing is different from what the town is dealing with in the courts. The town is trying to build the fund up with the developer, and there are limited options in this small town. Keith asked if the board wants to condense the minutes to bullet points and eliminate the discussion. He will keep the meeting tapes in the event of an OPRA request. Ms. Hansen does not feel that is necessary, she is concerned with the difference of opinion between the borough and the HA. The commissioners all agreed the previous meeting went well and everyone felt good about it. Keith feels an honest set of minutes is always the best policy. He sends the minutes out early so that if anyone has a comment, they have plenty of time to call, or email and discuss.

- It was agreed that everyone feels positive about the meetings and the relationship with the borough. Keith asked if there is a second to approve the minutes. Commissioner Swiney seconded the motion which was 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 from the public were present.

Borough Council liaison:

- Council person Hansen swore in Monique Dujue Wilson as our new commissioner.

Committee Reports: None

Resolutions:

- 2017-3 To modify the By-Laws to allow a new agenda item-Borough Council liaison. The motion was forwarded Commissioner Rivenburgh and seconded by Commissioner Nelson. The motion was approved.

Discussion Items:

- **Strategic Planning:** Keith feels it is important to establish a committee to begin the developing the strategic plan. Currently we are facing potentially very difficult budget times ahead. By the end of the week we will have a better handle on the budgets. We are conservatively looking at probable reductions in funding of up to \$100K in total. Keith feels we need to look at not just the physical planning, but operationally surviving the current administration. Commissioner Rivenburgh questioned whether we should consider a consultant for the process. He is concerned with the starting with Non-Profit and the management of that new entity. Keith is concerned with the cost of a consultant. He does not feel the nonprofit management is an issue, there are several ways to set them up and manage them. Keith feels we would probably set it up as an affiliated agency, with integrated management. Ms. Hansen questioned how the Non-profit would be funded. Keith discussed the various funding mechanisms, including tax credits. The borough could also put forward the funds to start the process. Ms. Hansen noted the Academy and Rogers area are already part of the

Redevelopment plan. Keith mentioned he had a meeting with Project Freedom this past month. We had a good discussion and walked the area. The problem with the Rogers/Academy area is that it is too small to be fundable. We really need to put together a parcel that could handle 50 units. They are very interested in partnering with the HA in developing a project. They would provide expertise in funding and development, we would be the local development partner. Ms. Hansen thinks this is a critical time for the HA to be involved in the rezoning process. She thinks it is important for the HA to attend the planning board meetings to stay involved. Keith discussed the Tax credit rents and the definition of low and moderate incomes. Keith stressed there are very few deep subsidies available, and with the costs estimated at over \$300K per unit, the development process would be very difficult.

- Ms. Hansen questioned what would happen if all our subsidies went away. Keith discussed several scenarios he has run to maintain the property, albeit with different rent structures. He felt the structure of the HA can remain, and we can manage around the loss of funding. Several scenarios were discussed but we will know more as the federal budgets are developed. Keith feels all our discussions are speculations, as we do not even have a final 2017 budget at this time. Commissioner Swiney questioned whether we are still moving forward with our current capitol plans. He discussed the parking lots and boiler projects that are moving forward. We have committed those funds to avoid the potential of recapture. The overlay zone was discussed and how that will help the borough. Commissioner Moraitis wants to move the strategic planning process to the next meeting when the Chair and Vice Chair are present.
- Keith discussed the survey and the results. He is pleased with the results and gives us good feedback from the residents. It's a great way to engage our residents and give Monique some talking points. He feels we should be doing some sort of survey annually. Mr. Moraitis questioned whether our demographic has changed recently, as he has noticed some different kids walking to school. Keith explained some of our kids are of school age now, and other families moving in with school age kids. Monique commented on the parking, and lack of parking in the area. There are a couple cars she has noticed have not moved. Keith explained every car must be in good condition, licensed, registered and insured.

Executive Director Report: Keith discussed the following:

- We are currently at 99% occupancy. We had a sudden move out this month. The family's income dramatically increased and they decided to move instead of paying the increased rent. That apartment is being refurbished and is rented for April 1. We also have a family and a single person moving out on March 31-one into a home they purchased in Roosevelt, and the other to retire in Arizona. That apartments are both being leased to "right size" current families, and then those family units will be renovated and leased.
- We have completed our semiannual waiting list update. We currently have 233 people waiting for apartments. We have closed our waiting lists and are no longer accepting applications. The current anticipated wait time is 3-4 years.

- Our 2016 audit has been scheduled for early April 11-12th. Peter Polcari, our Fee Accountant will be on site to complete our normal quarterly work, and provide any technical information the auditors may need.
- We have hired a specialized testing firm to test the insulation material on the boiler breeches. Each boiler room has large breech (Basically a collector) that the boilers exhaust into before going up the chimney. It was unknown what this insulation material was made of, so we had it tested to avoid problems or delays. The results of the test are: We do not have any trace of asbestos in the breeches!! This is good news from a financial, health and time line perspective.
- Our parking lot engineers are making progress and we should have final drawings and construction estimates this month. I hope to put the project out to bid in March for a May/June construction start. I have been in touch with George Chin and will be coordinating any permits the building department.
- We have had our REAC (Real Estate Assessment Center) inspection on March 3rd. The inspector came and reviewed the entire site, every building from basement to roof, and a random sampling of 21 apartments. They inspect everything from overall condition to general and preventative maintenance and curb appeal. We did well on the inspection, although there are items we are appealing. Our new PHAS score is 90/100, High Performer. I have filed a formal appeal of our physical inspection to contest several findings that I feel are unjust. A copy of the appeal will be available at our meeting. Just 6 years ago, we scored 57/100 and were considered troubled. Today we continue to be considered a “High Performing Housing Agency” Working together we have brought this community back to life and vitality. I am confident the work we have planned over the next several years will leave the Housing Authority in excellent physical condition for generations to come.
- We have purchased a new Dodge Ram Promaster City van for the Housing Authority using the Ford F250 as a trade in. Total cost including all MV fees was \$1606.00
- We have taken delivery of the first batch of radiator covers. The second set has been ordered.
- We have set up a Facebook page for the Housing Authority. By entering into the social media space, we are making information, events, and notices available to our residents, borough officials and the public in real time. The page will be edited and approved in the HA office, and outside comments and posts will be limited. Now published, the address is: <https://www.facebook.com/HightstownHA/> Please check it out and “Like” and “Follow” us on Facebook!
- We have hired a company that specializes in correcting outdoor trip hazards. Always Safe Sidewalks uses a specialized saw to cut uneven sidewalk joints to make the transition smooth and ADA compliant. They provided us with a survey map of every hazard on the site. We have used them before with good results. We have several areas around the campus that have been documented and they corrected them prior to our REAC inspection.

- Our second resident satisfaction survey went out in February and we had 15 surveys completed and returned! The response was typical of what is expected of surveys, and we are pleased with the results. The tally sheet is included in the packet, and the raw surveys are available if you would like to see the submitted pages. The third of 5 surveys went out in the March newsletter, and already we have a very strong response.
- We have been notified the Hightstown Housing Authority is receiving an award and certification by the Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association and the NJ River Friendly association for completing all the requirements for the NJ River Friendly Business program. There will be a luncheon sometime in May presenting the award and celebrating the achievement. Dignitaries from HUD, Congress and Senate will be contacted as well as our local State representatives and local business leaders. For more information on the River Friendly program go to:
<http://www.njriverfriendly.org/>
- We received a second environmental award and certification this past month, this one from the NJ DEP. The New Jersey Sustainable Business registry certifies businesses that demonstrate a wide range of environmental policies and practices. We are the first public housing authority to meet the standards and receive certification. Our press release is on the Facebook page and more information can be found at:
<http://registry.njsbdc.com>

Financial Update: March, 2017

In review of the financial reports for the month of February, 2017, the Hightstown Housing Authority completed the months with positive results.

Income:

- Residential income has come in higher than our 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.
- Laundry income is slightly under budget for the period.
- Subsidy income is slightly under budget due to the lack of final Federal 2017 budget. Adjustments will be made to this account once a final budget is made in Washington.

Expenses:

- Administrative and Maintenance salaries are on budget for the period and the year.
- Staff training is under budget for the year
- Audit is under budget for the period, Auditor is due to come in April.
- Dues and memberships are over budget due to renewal of membership in IREM.
- Sundry Administrative is over budget due to renewal of our accounting software, tenant management software and conference registration.

- Computer supplies are under for the month but over budget due to the purchase of a new machine and the annual “tune-up” and maintenance of our existing systems by ACA computer.
- Misc. Office Expense is under budget.
- Water is under budget, but quarterly bills will arrive this month.
- Electric is under for the period.
- Natural Gas is under budget for the period.
- Maintenance supplies are over budget due to renovations and preparations for REAC.
- Grounds maintenance is slightly over budget due to snow removal and tree trimming.
- Extermination costs are on budget for the year.

January and February have been good months. We have been able to build approximately \$32,000 in excess cash so far, but March is upon us. Our goal is to have break even cash flow at the end of March.

March is always a difficult month for cash flow. We have already scheduled our electronic payment for the annual pension contribution, quarterly water bills, annual insurance renewals begin, and this year it is a 3 pay month.

Announcements: The next meeting is scheduled for April 19th, 2017 at 7:00 pm.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by a motion made at 8:55PM.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director