

ANNUAL REPORT

An annual review of the Hightstown Housing Authority

2020

**Annual Report of the
Hightstown Housing Authority
February 17, 2021**



This annual report is being presented to the Borough Council 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 1st 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.

Covid 19

No one expected this February to start off with one of the worst Pandemics this country has faced in many, many years. Yes, we had some sick people, some confirmed with the disease, others voluntarily isolating to protect others. After 10 long months of Social Distancing, we hopefully the new administration will use all the tools available so that we are able to begin the process of getting back to the work of caring for our residents.

We have provided our residents with a number of flyers, notes and suggestions on Social Distancing, limiting exposure to others. We feel it has helped to keep our families safe, and the staff healthy during this trying time.

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.

Capital projects

The Hightstown Housing Authority invested most of our Capitol funds as well as a significant amount of its own resources to complete the installation of the third and final boiler plant. Now we have a total of 6 new Cleaver Brooks boilers with a combined output of 5.5 million BTU's. These new boilers will provide years of trouble-free heat and hot water for the residents. Each boiler room is designed with "redundancy" in mind. Each boiler will handle the load but they are designed to automatically switch to the other boiler to equalize the time running and to provide back up to the other boiler To compliment the boilers, we installed new pumping systems and computerized controls that allow the boilers to work at maximum efficiency.



New Cleaver Brooks Boiler



New parallel pumping systems



Computerized Boiler and pump controls



High-tech hot water heat exchanger

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 12th Grade to participate in our Poster Contest. 1st 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.

Resident Council

Our Resident Council normally meets the 3rd 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. Unfortunately, we had to cancel all the Resident council meeting in 2020. Hopefully we will be able to rebuild the great group of residents in 2021.

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 2020 to include over 12 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 7 years old) were completely redone this past year. It’s amazing how things filled the space, making it look like we never touched it!



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

We have 13 residents performing community service at the following organizations

Rise	Trenton Area Soup Kitchen	Better Beginnings
United Methodist Church	St. James EME	First Baptist
Church		
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 143 families waiting for apartments. We are estimating a 3-5 year wait for a unit, especially one-bedroom units (both family and senior citizen). We had several turnovers in 2020 that allowed us to renovate several apartments.

Financials

The Hightstown Housing Authority has developed a strong financial position over the last 10 years. Maintaining 100% occupancy and strict financial controls have allowed us to generate over \$900,000 in cash that has been dedicated to supplementing our Capital Fund which is used to rebuild and maintain the Housing Authority. 2020 continued this trend as demonstrated below.

2020 at a Glance:	Revenues	\$945,982	
	Expenses:		
	Salaries	\$243,613	
	Payroll Expenses	\$ 97,420	
	Utilities	\$191,870	
	Maintenance Exp.	\$100,474	
	Admin Exp.	\$ 78,756	
	Insurance	\$ 45,000	
	PILOT	\$ 39,795	
	COVID	\$ 39,134	
	Extraordinary Maintenance	<u>\$ 51,062</u>	(Boilers)
	Revenue VS Expenses	<u>\$ 58,858</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 2020, the HHA invested from its cash reserves and limited capital funds over \$320,000 dollars into the physical plant and residential units. We contracted an architect to redesign our handicap kitchens around the facility. Three of the kitchens were done on turnover with positive results. We also bid and completed the final boiler room at the Authority. 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. Enhance the Security Camera System.** We installed a new fiber Optic connection between all the cameras and the main system. This has greatly improved the reliability of the system and increased the speed of the cameras response. In 2021 we will be upgrading the main DVR unit to a new fiber optic system that will greatly improve the image quality and response time over the internet.
- 4. Begin the Process of Becoming a HUD Approved Housing Counseling Agency:** Unfortunately, this initiative was put on hold for the duration of 2020. The pandemic has limited all contact with outside persons.
- 5. Continue the Evaluation of Implementing Solar as a Long-Term Investment:** The Board moved forward with an RFP that employs an architect that will develop a program for reroofing the entire Authority as well as installing solar panels in key locations.

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, 2019,2020.
- 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
Vacant
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

