

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE BOROUGH
OF HIGHTSTOWN, NEW JERSEY
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, October 19th, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Chairperson James Eufemia called meeting to Order at 7:05PM

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: showed that those present and absent were as follows:

Present: Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director, Commissioner James Eufemia, Chair, Commissioner Brent Rivenburgh, Commissioner Eva Teller, Commissioner Terry Parliaros, Commissioner Jameeliah Lance

Also, Present: Larry Quattrone, Jasmine McCall

Absent: Commissioner Jeet Gulati, Commissioner Sean McDonnell

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting Minutes of September 20th . The minutes were motioned to be approved by Commissioner Rivenburgh and seconded by Commissioner Teller. Minutes were unanimously 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.

Jasmine realized she was at the Commissioner meeting when she meant to attend the Resident Council meeting. She excused herself from the meeting.

Resident Council Report:

- Jameeliah discussed the clothesline that was removed when we were working on the roof. Keith commented the clothesline is done, on both sides of the property. Keith mentioned that that area was planned to be removed, but if Daisy is going to use the clothesline, she is more than welcome.
- Jameeliah discussed the sidewalks, especially in front of building 1. A resident was showing her what he considers a trip hazard. Keith explained we had a company in and look at all the sidewalks around the property. They looked at all the sidewalks and prioritized certain areas. We addressed large areas in front of building 4 and the 4-3 walkway area this past year. Money is budgeted in 2023 for more sidewalk replacement so we will take a look at that area. Keith noted that the sidewalks in front of building 1 is very thick, so more expensive to replace.

Discussion:

Keith discussed the 2023 Budget that has been submitted to the State. He explained how in 2023 it is anticipated there will be 0 proration. Therefore we are over budget in 2022. Keith mentioned we will be voting on the final budget in December. This was the first year the budget was done 100% online, which has made it easier on the State and us. Chairman Eufemia looked over the submission and thanked Keith and Pete for their hard work.

Borough Council Liaison Report:

- Mayor Larry Quattrone mentioned he brought the sidewalk issue up to the council and they feel the Housing Authority should be responsible for any change or repair. He is here as the liaison, not the mayor. The council feels the sidewalk issue is all the Housing Authority's problem, not theirs. Keith explained that we disagree, and that the work will not be done immediately. Keith explained that we replaced what existed at the time. We only made it ADA compliant when it was done 6 years ago. It was approved by the Borough Engineer, Building department and public works. Keith questioned why, 6 years later the town is coming after the HA. Chairman Eufemia discussed the agreement that was made with the attorneys at the last meeting. The mayor explained the council believes the curb and sidewalk were in good shape at the time, and the HA changed it. Chairman Eufemia asked how many of the council members were even on council at the time, and when did they look at the sidewalk to make that determination. He feels the HA is being punished, after spending well over \$1 million dollars over the last year improving the HA and making it the beautiful destination. Has the council even looked at the HA to see what is here. Commissioner Rivenburgh questioned whether seeing the council in person would be of value. Chairman Eufemia feels seeing them in person would have value. Keith again reiterated that when the project was done, almost a generation ago the engineer looked at all the sidewalks for ADA compliance. The crosswalk on Rogers was non compliant and the HA agreed that it needed to be redone. Keith had the Borough engineer, building inspector and public works review the project. They added cheek walls, changed pitches of the sidewalks and changed signage. Now, that the Borough has had issues in other locations, they are looking to take advantage of the HA. Keith recommended the Borough engineer speak with the HA's engineer about the sidewalk, which she has not done. Keith feels if they were to talk-engineer to engineer, progress could be made. The mayor claims the DOT wants it changed. Keith discussed the DOT has never reached out regarding the crosswalk, and besides, it's a borough road and the DOT would follow the Borough's lead.
- The mayor then discussed the letter he received and does not understand why we separated out the recycling cost. Keith explained this is the same letter that was sent to the mayor and attorney over the last 3 years. He explained the letter, and the HA desire to discuss the issue with the Council. The mayor angrily said to Keith not to criticize the council. Keith explained again that he was not disparaging the council, merely wanted to speak to them. We received a curt letter from the Borough attorney stating the Council does not have time to listen to them. The mayor then invited the HA to appear in front of the council. Chairman Eufemia said he would prefer to meet the council in person. The mayor

blamed the Department of Health for not meeting personally. The discussion went back to the crosswalk. The mayor angrily dismissed himself from the meeting. He said he will bring it up to the council at the next meeting.

- The Commissioner members discussed the broken relationship with the Borough. Commissioner Teller is concerned as a member of the community. Chairman Eufemia explained how many towns give the Housing Authority's PILOT back to them to support affordable housing. Peddie's payment has gone down by almost \$7 thousand dollars while our payment has doubled. The HA has received a nasty letter from the Borough attorney stating that if we did not pay the PILOT immediately, the taxes of every resident would need to be raised. General discussion was held regarding the upcoming elections and the candidates.

Resolutions:

- Chairman Eufemia questioned the landscape cost. He feels it is exorbitant and whether we would be able to do the work in house. Keith explained the years ago, while at Meadow Lakes we made the switch from in house, where we spent thousands of dollars on equipment and up to 12 additional staff to maintain the lawns. We would need to hire at least one person to work full time and spend 20-30 thousand dollars in equipment cost to have the lawns and landscape done.
- Resolution 2022-8 To approve the 2023-2024 landscape bid. The bid was approved by roll call vote.

Committee Report:

None

Executive Director Report:

- We are currently at 99% Occupancy. We currently have 1 studio apartment available where an elderly tenant died. When the family finishes cleaning out the unit it will be totally renovated. As of this moment, we have one notice to move for October-November. The tenant is buying a home.
- We submitted a comprehensive package of materials to HUD for review and funding. A total of \$499,350.00 has been deposited into our account for phase 1 of the work. An engineering RFP has been prepared and reviewed and is going out to bid this week.
- The Lawn and Landscape has been advertised and the final bids have been received. We only received one bid, from Growing Concerns. It has an increase over our current cost, but within our budget. The bid is in your package.
- Most of the masonry repairs on the porches and balconies have been done. We are allowing the new masonry to fully cure before it is prime painted. Prime painting of the patched areas will occur as the weather allows.

- We have been notified of our annual REAC inspection will take place in January. This is following the new HUD protocol, so we don't know what to expect. I have asked for more information on the inspection and will share it with you as I receive it.
- The 2023 Budget that was approved has been submitted to the State and approved. It will be on the December agenda for final approval.
- The wait list for all apartment units is now closed until further notice. We send letters to every person on the wait list every 6 months asking for an update. If we notice the waiting lists beginning to decline, we will open that list.
- I asked Pete to detail the PILOT payment that is due to the Borough. Payment was made to the Borough and the attorney trust account in October.
- I just received notice that the SS COLA for 2023 will be 8.7%. We budgeted 3% for all the employees and we need to consider how we are going to deal with this at year end.
- Covid safety is still our priority. The outside lobby is now open to our residents, and currently holding outside meetings. We are watching the new variant that is spreading quickly. Adjustments will be made as we watch things progress. We are still not allowing outside people into the offices. The staff has all had the virus except Sherry. We are requiring both the positive and negative test results from each person, especially the negative test before they return to work.

Financial Update: September 2022

In review of the financial reports for the months of September 2022, the Hightstown Housing Authority completed the month with positive results.

Income:

- Residential income has come in well over budget for the period. This is mainly due to strong resident incomes and diligence by our office keeping up with our residents.
- Excess utility continues to be over budget for the period.(very hot summer-extending into the fall)
- Interest income is below budget for the period. Interest rates are rising as the FED tries to deal with inflation. We will keep monitoring the rates and adjust as needed.
- Other Operating receipts are over budget for the period. Dividends from our insurance policies are posted here.
- Laundry income is slightly over budget for the period.
- Operating Subsidy income is over budget for the period. This is part of the balancing from the estimated payments received earlier this year. We received our final budget for the year and HUD is going to be paying us the full prorated

amount of subsidy. This amount will continue to exceed budget for the rest of the year.

Expenses:

- Administrative salaries are under budget for the period. We will have another 3 pay event in December that will run over budget, but within our budgeted limits.
- Legal expense is over budget for the period. Discussions with the Borough as well as a couple legal actions against tenants drove this cost up.
- Staff Training is under budget for the period but within budgeted limits for the year.
- Travel is under budget for the period and the year. I am not attending the September conference this year.
- Sundry Administrative is slightly under budget for the period.
- Computer supplies is under budget for the period. Any upgrades will be done in the fall of this year.
- Telephone is under budget
- Dues and Memberships are slightly over budget for the period.
- Water is over budget for the year. Bills arrived and were paid in September.
- Electric is under budget for the period. We only received one of the two electric bills, so this cost may be higher in October. This cost is also offset by the excess utility fees.
- Natural Gas is slightly under budget for the period. The weather is moderating, and so are the bills.
- Maintenance salaries are under budget for the period.
- Maintenance materials is slightly over budget for the period. As we are tuning over units, we are changing all the switches, outlets, base trim, and lighting. Fortunately, we have turned over 10 units this year.
- Grounds maintenance is under budget. We decided to not install the chrysanthemums this year and allow the existing summer flower remain until frost. This category remains over budget, and hopefully some of the costs will be capitalized at the end of the year.
- Extraordinary maintenance is used for all costs that are outside the CFP funding and will be capitalized at the end of the year. Some of these costs are planned and approved items including the Architectural fees and roofing costs and various plumbing repairs. We will have to wait until year end to see how much of this cost the accounts wants to capitalize and depreciate.

Next meeting is scheduled for November 16th at 7:00

The meeting was adjourned by a motion made by Commissioner Eufemia and seconded by Commissioner Teller.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director