

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE BOROUGH
OF HIGHTSTOWN, NEW JERSEY
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, September 21, 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 Jeet Gulati, Commissioner Brent Rivenburgh, Commissioner Sean McDonnell, Commissioner Terry Parliaros.

Also, Present: Mayor Larry Quattrone, Fred Raffetto, Leland Hutchinson

Absent: Commissioner Eva Teller, Commissioner Jameeliah Lance

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

Borough Council Liaison Report:

- None- The mayor stated he will wait until the discussion section to speak.

Resident Council Report:

- None

Resolutions:

- 2022-1 To approve the 2023 State of NJ Budget.
 - Keith discussed the Budget as constructed and the Board reviewed. We are fortunate to be receiving 100% proration from HUD this last year and they are predicting the same for next year. The resolution was approved by a roll call vote.

- 2022-7 To approve the 2021 Audit as presented.
 - Keith reviewed the audit that was performed by Giampolo and Associates,

Discussion Items:

- **Fred Raffetto** spoke addressing the crosswalk. He Stated that after long deliberations, it was determined that the crosswalk that was installed on the Housing Authority property was not done properly, and the housing Authority should be held liable for the cost of studying and replacing the crosswalk.
- **Keith spoke**, mentioning this took everyone by surprise as this is over a 6-year-old project. Over 6 years ago we put out to public bid engineering services to redo all the parking lots and sidewalks including the handicap ramps. It was mentioned we also have one existing crosswalk on Rogers Avenue that needs to be addressed. We designed the projects with the consultation of the Borough engineer, Construction official, public works director and Borough Council. The mayor stated that just because it was done years ago, doesn't make it right. Keith questioned the Borough engineers' measurements and dimensions, with the Mayor and Fred stating they can't answer because they are not engineers. Commissioner Rivenburgh questioned whether the proposed study would prove anything. Fred responded "no". Keith questioned whether this project was publicly bid, or should we just accept Carmella's number. Fred explained this is a professional service that does not need to be bid. Keith stated that when the project was built it met all the current standards. Fred responded that it doesn't meet the standard now, so it needs to be changed. Fred confirmed that the council may be studying all the crosswalks, but this one is the problem we are discussing. The mayor claimed the problem is this is a midblock crosswalk, and the Borough does not have a ordinance covering it. Keith claims the work done by Carmella's office on our site is shoddy at best, and the numbers she is quoting are not reliable. The mayor says he can't respond as he is not an engineer. Commissioner Eufemia spoke questioning if the study is done, and found that the crosswalk is non-compliant, will the Housing Authority be forced to pay? Commissioner Rivenburgh responded the Borough has offered to split the cost of the study. Fred confirmed the Boroughs position the Housing Authority should be responsible for the cost. Commissioner Gulati questioned whether the Borough was charged by the engineer to come out and review the plans and sidewalks, Fred answered yes. Keith stated it is going to be difficult going back on an old 6-year-old project, on a whim by a questionable engineer and spending more money. Commissioner Rivenburgh is upset we were taken advantage of 6 years ago. Keith disagreed, our engineers were here on site and the work was done as designed and approved. Keith feels Carmela's office should be discussing this with the Housing Authority Engineer-professional to professional instead of taking advantage of laymen. Keith suggested the simplest resolution is to just close the crosswalk, pour new curbs and permanently close it. Leland Hutchinson agrees, he stated he doesn't believe the

Borough is concerned with having a crosswalk. To avoid a long legal battle, let the borough close it permanently. The Housing Authority has already made reasonable accommodations for our handicapped and senior tenants that need the crosswalk. Keith stated this resolution will take time, given the Borough will replace the curbing and the Housing Authority will repair the sidewalks. This will require having engineers design the project and concrete contractors bid on the work. Leland stressed the Borough needs to discuss, and the mayor seems to feel the council will go along with the decision. Commissioner Eufemia stated this is the best way to solve problems, face to face, not over a computer screen or the phone. The mayor agreed.

- Leland Hutchinson opened the discussion on the Cooperation Agreement. The Mayor and Fred said they won't discuss the issue tonight and quickly left the meeting.
- Leland stated that there is no way this study is the only cost, given the history, this would just be the start of her fees. There is little chance she would find everything acceptable, and this study would lead to another. Commissioner Eufemia agreed, stating the \$3,000 would be \$15,000 by the time she got done with her studies. We just need to make sure we thoroughly document everything we do when it comes to the Borough. Leland states we need to wait for the borough to delineate the project before we contact them again, giving them a chance to discuss. Leland stated with the PILOT agreement at this point we should wait for a change in leadership, we may have a better chance of having a productive discussion. At this point they are not concerned with the extra money, they know its in escrow and are not in any hurry to reach a resolution.

Executive Director Report:

- We are currently at 99% Occupancy. We currently have 1 studio apartment that has been totally renovated and we are interviewing for a new tenant. 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 possible funding. The engineers were in and reviewed all the crawlspaces and have put together a comprehensive cost estimate for the project. At this point we are asking for approximately \$1.4 million dollars. The discussions with the Washington reps from HUD suggested we break the project down into smaller increments. This was done by boiler room, as the utilities are all supplied from them. I have been encouraged by calls from Washington looking at the project and by the speed it is being reviewed. We had a follow up meeting on 5/11 to discuss the project with the HUD representatives. We had a meeting on 6/9 to discuss the project. Another meeting has been set up for 6/16 with the HUD supervisors that oversee the funding process. Update: The package was slightly

modified so that the HUD funders from Washington were comfortable the project falls into their guidelines. Everything has been resubmitted. Another meeting was held on 08/02/2022 with the regional office seeking information on money spent to date. This information was provided to the office that day. As of an E-mail on 9/13, we have been granted \$650,00 for year one with the expectation of applying for funding for future phases.

- We had another underground water leak behind building 1. It is another 2" hot water line that needed to be excavated and repaired.
- The Lawn and Landscape has been advertised and we are expecting the final bids to be in our office on October 7th, when they will be opened.
- The Borough closed the cross walk on Rogers Avenue by our office. The Borough's engineering firm reviewed the plans that were prepared by another engineering firm that was obtained using the public bidding system, but never contacted them with any questions or concerns. We were not notified as to the Borough's plans.
- 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. We are planning in the '23 Capital fund to repaint the exterior of the buildings and all the porches.
- We had our annual Audit on July 19th. The Auditors collected most information ahead of time so that they can minimize the time in our office. A copy of the completed Audit has been submitted to all the appropriate agencies and to our Board members.
- Pete and I have been working on the 2023 budget. A draft copy of the budget is included for your review. We will take all your comments and submit a final budget to the State of NJ in October. The Federal operating budget for 2023 has already been approved and submitted.
- All boiler rooms have been cleaned and repainted. After removing the old hot water boilers, the floors were cleaned, and power washed.
- 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.
- 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: July-August 2022

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

Income:

- Residential income has come in slightly 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 is over budget for the period.(very hot summer)
- 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 under budget for the period. This is part of the balancing from the estimated payments received earlier this year. From the subsidy calculations in the budget, it appears we may be receiving a slightly lower subsidy this year, which is based on our resident rents. We are still exceeding our budgeted amount due to HUD paying 100% of the prorated amount. Normally they have been paying a percentage, as low as 81%,

Expenses:

- Administrative salaries are over budget for the period. This is mainly due to the 3 pay month that occurred in July. We will have another 3 pay event in December.
- 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.
- 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 under budget for the period.
- Water is over budget for the year. Bills arrived and were paid in July
- Electric is over budget for the period. It was a very warm summer, and the residents have been using air conditioning. This cost is 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. 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 October 19th at 7:00

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

Respectfully Submitted by:

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director