

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE BOROUGH
OF HIGHTSTOWN, NEW JERSEY
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, June 21st, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Vice-Chairperson Brent Rivenburgh called meeting to Order at 7:00PM

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,
Commissioner Terry Parliaros, Commissioner Sean McDonnell, Commissioner
Jameellah Lance, Commissioner Anne Studholme.

Absent: Commissioner Brent Rivenburgh, Commissioner Eva Teller

Also, Present: Liaison Jeet Gulati

Members of the Public: None

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting Minutes of April 19th. The minutes were motioned to be approved by Commissioner Studholme 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:

- Jeet discussed the PILOT and the difficulties he is having. Discussed the stresses we are all facing. Budget and tax bills will be out soon, and he reminded the board that the Borough only makes up 30% of the bill.

Committee Report:

Resident Council Report:

- Jameellah discussed the upcoming picnic for the Seniors has been canceled. The Borough nurse comes out once a month for Blood Pressures and various clinics. She wants to reaffirm the quiet hours starting at 10PM, Keith will follow up with this and the smoking issue.

Resolutions:

- None currently

Discussion Items:

- Keith discussed the bidding process that was just completed. Several contractors have expressed interest in the project, especially since it is a multi-year project. We only received one bid on the project from a company, Whitfield Schneider. The engineer checked out the documentation and the company and approved the bid. At this point, after bidding on the project twice, Whitfield Schneider gave us prices both times and appears eager to start. The project is designed to start on buildings 3,4 and 5 which are smaller, and the contractor will be able to limit the work to 3 smaller projects. This also gives us the ability to oversee their work and make changes as needed.
- Keith discussed the upcoming retirement and the steps that have been taken. We have hired Chelsea Graham for the position. She has a Masters degree in Social Work and is currently working with and well acquainted with a lower income population. We had 18 applications out of which I interviewed 6 people. Many of the candidates had high income experience and were not used to dealing with lower income tenants and housing. Overall, I think she will do well with this position and we look forward to her starting on July 10th.
- Keith reminded the board that the Borough approved a 17% increase in the Water/Sewer rates for '23. This increase, along with others like the almost \$1k increase in health insurance will cut into our cash flow.

Executive Director Report:

- We are currently at 99% Occupancy. We have an elderly person in a family 2-bedroom unit that is currently moving over to a senior one bedroom. This frees up a 2-bedroom unit for a family. The two bedroom will be fully renovated. We have a 3-bedroom unit that is being vacated on June 30th by a tenant and his family moving to the Red Bank area. This unit will be fully renovated and leased to a family on the wait list.
- O&S has completed the design phase of the piping project and conducted a second bid process. We advertised the project much more widely and had a slightly better response. The final bids are coming in on June 20th, so we will have the results. The plans were available in print and online. There were 8 contractors notified, Trenton Times, Star Ledger and all the Packet Publications in NJ and the Construction Journals. The bids and the bidding process will be sent to the attorney for review. Leland considers 2 bids adequate if the Board is OK. I have been in touch with HUD and requested information on updating our Grant proposal, covering any additional cost. HUD indicated that this will be treated as one request, funded over a period of time.
- We advertised the available position. Ads were posted with NAHRO, IREM, on our website, sent to the Borough to be put on their site, the Princeton Packet newspapers and LinkedIn. We advertised the position nationally, but as

discussed, we are in Central NJ, a notoriously expensive place to live. The position was designed so that if we find the right candidate, they will be able to move into the Executive position in a couple years. We received 18 resumes that are on file in my office. Out of the 18 I selected 6 to interview and select from. One person stuck out and a formal offer will be made. This person has great qualifications for the position and is eager to get started. We discussed starting after the 4th of July holiday. We will have an overlap in positions for about a month. I have discussed this with Pete, and he is OK financially.

- The waiting lists remain closed. We are still looking at a 3-5 year wait time for most units. Letters are sent to each person every month and the responses are logged. We will be doing another letter in August and will reevaluate the list at that time.
- The new software is in use and the transition has not been easy. The accountant was in and did a video call with Yardi last week to try and reconcile some of the reports. We are having difficulty duplicating numbers from one report to another. We were not able to come up with an acceptable Rent Roll for May. Pete is coming back this week and will work on it some more. The problem lies in the use of “filters” for each report and developing a set that can be replicated each month. We believe a report has identified that we can use consistently and do the monthly posting. We have made the difficult decision to go to another software platform that is more user friendly than Yardi. This has been a tough choice that we extensively discussed here in the office and with Pete. We have been struggling since March with this, and we feel its time to cut our losses and move on. Yardi made the choice for us. I received a call on 6/16 from the head of the affordable division at Yardi. They have decided to transition all the Breeze users over to their Voyager project. This means another transition, to new software. At this point the decision has been made to move to a new company. PHA-WEB has over 400 housing authorities on their product, Pete is well aware of the software and has 3 other HA’s on the product and PHA-WEB currently manages our website and our email systems. They do 4-5 conversions per month and will make this “effortless” for us. Time will tell, but hopefully at the next meeting we will have good news.
- The landscape company has been in and planted all our summer flowers. We will have one of our maintenance people take care of the watering for the summer. The rains we received were much needed and appreciated. They will be renovating the landscape on building 7 in the fall when the weather changes. The plants have outgrown the area and need to be removed and new, smaller plants installed.

Financial Update: April-May 2023

In review of the financial reports for the month of April-May 2023, the Hightstown Housing Authority completed the month with positive results. The result was enhanced by a larger than expected subsidy payment to balance the year that came in April. During this time, we also had to pay the annual insurance bills that are posted in pre-pays, so they don't show up as regular expenses. This was almost \$40,000.

Income:

- Residential income has come in slightly over budget.
- Excess utility is slightly under budget for the period. Air conditioners have been consistently going in now, so the number will come back into line.
- 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 under budget for the period but over for the year. .
- Laundry income is over budget for the period and the year.
- Operating Subsidy income is over budget for the period. Starting in April we saw the adjusted numbers and final numbers for the year. We should be receiving higher subsidy amounts continuing this year.

Expenses:

- Administrative salaries are under budget for the period. Our next 3-payroll event is in June 2023. We will be over budget in July with the new hire.
- Legal expenses are over budget for the period. We have filed 2 evictions, so the expense is up in April. One tenant paid up in full, the other is being evicted.
- Staff Training is under budget for the period. This will come in line or exceed the budget based on the new person.
- Travel is under budget for the period and the year.
- Telephones are slightly under budget for the period. I will be adding a cell phone to the plan for the new person.
- Sundry Administrative is over budget for the period. This expense included \$1801 dollars advertising the position available and for the underground piping.
- Computer supplies are under budget for the period. We will be looking to upgrade at least 2 computers this year.
- Dues and Memberships are under budget for the period. This will come into line as the year progresses, and most memberships renew early in the year.
- Water and Sewer is well over budget due to the 17% increase the Borough approved. This was unexpected when we created our budgets back in September-October. Fortunately, we will find a way to accommodate the increase.
- Electric is under budget for the period.
- Natural Gas is under budget for the period. We have had cooler than normal temperatures during this period.

- Misc. Office expense is under budget.
- Maintenance salaries are under budget.
- Maintenance materials are under 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 5 units this year. We have flooring and base trim inventoried for the units we are turning over, which comes mostly from the capitol budget.
- Maintenance Contract costs are over budget due to piping repairs in the family laundry room.
- Misc. Maintenance supplies are under budget.
- Maintenance Equipment is under budget. We had a motor failure in the hot water system in building 1. We purchased and replaced the motor and pump that come together as an assembly. The old unit has been sent out to be repaired/refurbished and can be used as a spare. The same pump assembly is used in building 4.
- Extermination Cost is over budget due to a bed-bug situation we are dealing with.
- Security Alarm is under budget for the period, but over for the year. We had to replace 2 exterior cameras and we had 3 interior cameras installed. One in each boiler room so that operation can be monitored.
- Grounds maintenance is slightly over budget. We recently addressed the cap stones on the sitting wall, mulching and now planting all the summer annuals.
- Blue Cross/Blue shield. We experienced a 20% price hike on January 1. Fortunately, a larger increase was budgeted. We will be adding a new employee onto the system.
- Pension Expense. This is our annual payment that is paid on March 31 of each year. It is based on our overall payroll to employees in the pension system. That expense will go up with the new employee.
- Collection Losses-includes all losses encountered during the year that are considered uncollectable.

Next meeting is scheduled for July 19th at 7:00

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

Respectfully Submitted by:

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director