

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE BOROUGH
OF HIGHTSTOWN, NEW JERSEY
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, December 13, 2023 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 Anne Studholme, Commissioner Jameellah Lance, Commissioner Sean McDonnell

Also, Present: Jeet Gulati, Council Liaison

Absent: Commissioner Brent Rivenburgh, Commissioner Terry Parliaros, Commissioner Eva Teller.

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting Minutes of November 15th. The minutes were motioned to be approved by Commissioner Studholme and seconded by Commissioner Lance. Minutes were unanimously approved.

The minute's showed Jeet Gulati was present in November. He was not. This was corrected.

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.

Resident Council Report:

- Chelsea reported the Resident Council met and discussed the following items:
 - Discussed the holiday bags for the Kids and Seniors. Very disappointed they only received one donation. Mary Schilling is making up the bags and one volunteer from each building will distribute them on 12/20.
- Discussions started about Valentines day. The council is only making gift bags for the seniors due to the lack of donations.

- Bikes and scooters being left around the campus were discussed as well as the debris left behind by the kids. Notices will be sent out to all the buildings.
- Debris on the porches and steps was discussed. Chelsea explained the men can not power wash in the cold weather. It is uncomfortable for them and potentially slippery for the residents. Notices will be sent out to all buildings.

Borough Council Liaison Report:

- Jeet Gulati and Commissioner Eufemia discussed the ongoing conversations the HA is having with the Borough. The Borough still feels that the money is Federal money and not affecting the tenants in any way, so the HA should pay it. Keith strongly rejected the idea, once again discussing the large sums of money the HA has invested in energy saving devices and solutions that have decreased our energy usage by over 30 percent. Although this reduces our Federal subsidies, it increases the comfort and sustainability of the HA for the Residents. This reduction, as well as the diligence of the HA in keeping up with the Residents and their incomes has doubled the PILOT over the last several years. The Borough has reduced the services it provides to the HA, which could be considered a violation of the unsigned cooperation agreement the Borough keeps referring to . Discussions between the HA and the Borough will continue.

Committee Report:

- None

Resolutions:

- **2023-09 To Adopt the 2024 State of NJ Budget.**
 - The fully approved Budget package was approved by the Board.
- **2023-10 To adopt the Parental Leave Policy.**
 - The Board reviewed the enclosed policy and Keith discussed the need for the policy and how it would be added to the employee manual. Our attorney has reviewed the policy and made sure it complies with the State of NJ policy. The Board approved the policy as written.

Discussion Items:

- Keith reviewed the proposed meeting dates for 2024 and asked the Board members to look at them and make suggestions before the next meeting.

Executive Director Report:

- We are currently at 99% Occupancy. We currently have a one-bedroom unit that is being renovated. We have right sized several units already this year, and Chelsea is interviewing people for the unit. After several months in a rehab one of our tenants is returning. He had a stroke which left him severely impaired.

We are working with the family to make whatever modifications are needed to accommodate him.

- The infrastructure piping project has begun. The contractors have moved a storage and office trailer on site and are delivering a dumpster. They have begun installing pipe hangers in building 3 crawlspace in preparation of core drilling the firewalls and installing pipe. I am pushing to have a schedule of work to be performed, the engineer is working with the contractor to complete. We have just received the proposed schedule for 12/8/23. The work on buildings 3,4,5 will last much of 2024. I want to communicate this to the engineers in Washington and Newark so that they are on board with what we are doing. Also I need that information when I am talking to the funders so that we can secure the balance of the money. The engineers assured me of the full funding for all phases of the project, but we are waiting for the money to be available before we award the full contract. .
- The waiting lists remain closed. We are looking to open the list in January through the end of March to build up our lists.
- The annual Federal budget has been submitted to HUD. This mirrored the state budget, which is in the packet tonight for final adoption, but placed in the federal system. Everything is now done online, in the “Portal”. It is an easier process, as the system will flag anything that may be in error, or they feel is in error.
- We are adding a new policy to the employee manual that will cover maternity and family leave. This is needed as we have encountered a situation where we need to install a policy. I have spoken to Leland, and he has reviewed the policy to ensure compliance with any applicable laws. I have attached the policy and resolution for your review and approval. The resolution on the policy will take effect in January.

Financial Update: November 2023

In review of the financial reports for the month of November 2023, the Hightstown Housing Authority completed the month with negative results. This is the first month in the new system, so the reports are different, and I am still exploring and reviewing each to make sure they are the best (and most understandable).

Income:

- Residential income has come in over budget. This is due to the new tenants having strong incomes and past-due balances are being collected. Budget numbers have been raised in the 2024 budget.
- Excess utility is under budget for the period. This is a budget issue that will be resolved.

- Interest income is over budget for the period. We are now getting current rates on our accounts.
- Other Operating receipts is under budget for the period and over for the year. This is due to the insurance dividends that were received and various repairs that were made.
- Laundry income is slightly under budget for the period but slightly under for 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. Before any prorations we should be expecting about \$25.5 thousand each month in 2024. It is questionable the amounts going forward until the Government settles on a budget. They have provided an amount for January and February that is below our budgets.

Expenses:

- Administrative salaries are under budget for the period. The difference will be made up in the 3 pay month of December.
- Legal expenses are slightly over budget for the period, and slightly over for the year. We are seeking more evictions and legal action to reinforce collections.
- Travel is under budget for the period and the year.
- Telephones are under budget for the period. Having all the staff on one network is helpful and makes communications much easier. We are over budget for the year due to the fact one phone had to be purchased outright to finance the other 3.
- Sundry Administrative is over budget for the period. Pete reclassified some expenses during the transition period. The major item is the cost of the software and license for support. This was almost \$3750 dollars.
- Computer supplies are under budget for the period. We will be looking to upgrade at least 2 more computers this year when we install the new tenant management software. This has not been done but will most likely happen in January.
- Dues and Memberships are over budget for the period. This is due to increasing the membership in certain organizations, plus annual IREM dues being paid.
- Misc. Maintenance supplies are under budget.
- Water and Sewer experienced a 17% increase this year that is unbudgeted. The next bill is October 1 and we will deal with the increase. The new rates are included in our 2024 budget. The current amount is for the replacement of the digital heads that needed to be replaced.
- Electric is over budget for the period, but within budget considering the excess utility. The expense is in the new system. (\$7856.71)

- Natural Gas is under budget for the period. We have had cooler than normal temperatures during this period, but the new systems are working well.
- Maintenance salaries are under budget. December is 3 pay month.
- Maintenance materials are 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. We have flooring and base trim inventoried for the units we are turning over, which comes mostly from the capitol budget.
- Electrical contract cost is over budget due to the replacement of 12 building light fixtures.
- Extermination Cost is over budget due to a bed-bug situation we are dealing with.
- Ground maintenance is on budget. This will come in slightly over budget for the year.
- Blue Cross/Blue shield. We experienced a 20% price hike on January 1. Fortunately, a larger increase was budgeted, but the expense is still larger than budgeted. We added a new employee that increased the costs, but they are budgeted in 2024.
- Collection Losses-includes all losses encountered during the year that are considered uncollectable.

Next meeting is scheduled for January 17th at 5:00PM followed by Dinner at Fernando's.

The meeting was adjourned by a motion made by Commissioner Eufemia.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Allen Keith LePrevost, Executive Director