

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE BOROUGH OF
HIGHLAND PARK



The Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Borough of Highland Park met in a Regular Session in the Community Room of the S.J. Kronman Apartments located at 242 South Sixth Avenue, Highland Park, NJ at 6:30 PM on July 12, 2017, the hour and date duly established for the holding of said meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Sedehi.

Runi Sriwardena read the Notice of Compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act P.L. 1975, C.231 which provided that notice of this meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Borough of Highland Park was provided in the following manner:

On December 19, 2016, a copy of the notice of this meeting setting forth the date, time and location of this regular meeting was posted on the Housing Authority's official designated bulletin board located at 242 South Sixth Avenue, Highland Park, NJ, sent to Borough Hall for posting and was faxed to the Home News Tribune and Star Ledger and posted on the website.

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Upon roll call, those present and absent were as follows:

PRESENT

Commissioners:

Regis Methven, Commissioner
Donald Monk, Commissioner
William Rainwater, Commissioner
Diane Reh, Commissioner (left at 7:10 PM)
Evelyn Sedehi, Commissioner

Authority General Counsel:
Terrence Corriston, Esq., Breslin & Breslin
(6:40 PM arrival)

Council Liaison:
Matthew Hersh, Liaison

Administration:

Donna Brightman, Executive Director
Runi Sriwardena, Director of Housing
Mike Yannuzzi, Maintenance Manager (WHA)

ABSENT

Commissioners:

Steve Chudnick, Chairman
Raysa Martinez, Vice Chair

Minutes:

A motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held on June 14, 2017 was made by Commissioner Monk and seconded by Commissioner Rainwater.

ROLL CALL: Chudnick Martinez Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
AYES: Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
NAYS: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Chudnick Martinez

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

Public Comment I

Wanda Zelenski requested that the Authority plant more trees in the back of Kronman for shade such as Dogwoods, Apple or Peach trees.

Commissioner Sedehi said that we'll be sure to put it on our to do list.

Karin Jackson, apt. 3P, and Patricia Roth, apt. 6J, presented a petition that they wrote to Bridges and the Borough Mayor and Council about the termination of Kettly's grant in November.

Patrice Roth stated that she is upset about Kettly leaving as the people in the building depend on her; if their eyesight is bad she reads their mail.

Commissioner Methven commended Ms. Karin Jackson and Ms. Patricia Roth for doing the petitions.

Ms. Jackson stated that Kettly helps people when they are sick, she helps them fill out paperwork.

Commissioner Sedehi said that the BOC has talked about this.

Councilman Hersh said the Council talked about this last night. He explained to the Council about the services Kettly provides to the building. He stated that this is not a Borough expenditure as she is paid through a grant.

Commissioner Sedehi stated that we have not been successful in securing funding for this position.

Ms. Jackson stated that Nicole, at the senior center, services all of Highland Park and Kettly serves just our building.

M.P. asked if writing a letter to Trenton would help.

Executive Director Brightman responded, no, Kettly has a grant funded by the Federal government and explained that this program, ROSS, is especially for public housing authority's and that when we convert to RAD we are no longer public housing and; therefore, not eligible

for ROSS grant services. She further pointed out that the grant is going to end in November and there was no guarantee it would be funded again.

Commissioner Monk asked if there were any other RAD issues like this.

Executive Director Brightman replied, no, just this.

Communications - None

At this time Acting Chair Sedehi asked to move-up the resolutions as Commissioner Reh had to leave early.

Resolutions

- a) Reso #2017-35 – Reso to Urge Representatives from the State of NJ to Support the Legislative Action to Re-authorize and Extend the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

Motion moved by Commissioner Rainwater and seconded by Commissioner Methven to adopt Resolution #2017-35.

Discussion

Executive Director Brightman stated that the JIF asked PHA's to support this resolution.

ROLL CALL:	Chudnick Martinez Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
AYES:	Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
NAYS:	None
Abstain:	None
Absent:	Chudnick Martinez

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

- b) Reso #2017-36 – Reso of the HPHA Approving the Terms of a Property Leasing & Management Agreement with the HPAHC

Motion moved by Commissioner Monk and seconded by Commissioner Reh to adopt Resolution #2017-36.

Discussion

Executive Director Brightman explained this is the agreement for the HPAHC to manage the Section 8 project based voucher program when we convert to RAD.

Counsel Corrison stated that when HUD wrote the regulations for RAD they did not change the HAP. The HAP prohibits the same entity to own and administer the housing assistance contract.

Commissioner Monk asked if there was a term to the contract.

Counsel Corrison directed Commissioner Monk to section 2 – the contract runs concurrent with the term of the HAP contract.

Executive Director Brightman stated that the term is 20 years.

ROLL CALL: Chudnick Martinez Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
AYES: Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
NAYS: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Chudnick Martinez

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

c) Reso #2017-37 - Adopting Monthly Bill List for June 2017

Motion moved by Commissioner Reh and seconded by Commissioner Monk to adopt Resolution #2017-37.

Discussion

Commissioner Methven questioned the time period of the sewer/water bill.

Executive Director Brightman answered that it is quarterly.

Commissioner Rainwater asked if a column could be added to the list adding the frequency of the payment (monthly, quarterly, yearly, etc.)

Commissioner Sedehi asked Ms. Sriwardena to publish the amount in the newsletter to encourage tenants to conserve.

ROLL CALL: Chudnick Martinez Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
AYES: Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
NAYS: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Chudnick Martinez

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

d) Reso #2017-38 – Authorizing the Executive Director to Pay the July/August Invoices for 2017

Motion moved by Commissioner Monk and seconded by Commissioner Rainwater to adopt Resolution #2017-38.

ROLL CALL: Chudnick Martinez Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
AYES: Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
NAYS: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Chudnick Martinez

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

e) Reso #2017-39 – Adopt Budget Reso FY 4/1/17 to 3/31/18

Motion moved by Commissioner Rainwater and seconded by Commissioner Reh to adopt Resolution #2017-39.

Discussion

Commissioner Sedehi commented that the budget adoption seemed late.

Executive Director Brightman said, yes, it is because we did not have all the 1099's from commissioners.

ROLL CALL: Chudnick Martinez Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
AYES: Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
NAYS: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Chudnick Martinez

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

f) Reso #2017-40 – Adopt Smoke-Free Housing Policy Effective 9/1/17

Motion moved by Commissioner Methven and seconded by Commissioner Monk to adopt Resolution #2017-40.

Discussion

Executive Director Brightman explained that HUD passed regulations requiring PHA owned buildings to be smoke-free. She went on to say that the Kronman building has been smoke-free for some time due to the common vent system but tenants at Park Terrace were still allowed to smoke. Therefore, the policy had to be treated as a significant amendment which requires a 30 day tenant notification and comment period. There were no comments received so the policy is passed as is. Housing Director Sriwardena will now call tenants in to sign the policy as a lease addendum.

ROLL CALL: Chudnick Martinez Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
AYES: Methven Monk Rainwater Reh Sedehi
NAYS: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Chudnick Martinez

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

At this time Commissioner Reh left the meeting.

Executive Director's Report

Commissioner Rainwater asked what the issue was with the tub replacement bid.

Executive Director Brightman responded saying the company that came in second is protesting but there is no merit to the protest. Therefore, the bid will be awarded to the lowest priced company.

Commissioner Rainwater asked what was new in the lead paint law.

Executive Director Brightman responded that we have to be notified of any child under the age of 6 that has lead paint poisoning and then if it's in an assisted building (receiving Section 8) we are required to do a risk assessment of the other units in the complex and report the findings to HUD.

Commissioner Rainwater asked if we will now have two PILOTS.

Executive Director Brightman said essentially, yes.

Commissioner Sedehi asked why it had to be redone.

Executive Director Brightman stated that it had the wrong address and number of units.

Executive Director Brightman reported that the insurance payment for the dumpster was received. She handed out an estimate from a private garbage pick-up company. The dumpsters would be supplied by the company and the cost would be \$775.00 per month. She went on to say that additional damage claims could not be filed yet as there was not enough documentation as the damage was done to more than one dumpster. She went on to say that this problem is going to keep reoccurring, and in her opinion, filing insurance claims is not the answer.

Councilman Hersh stated that the Borough has a problem with emptying the dumpsters due to the configuration of the parking lot and placement.

Executive Director Brightman reminded Councilman Hersh that they sought the DPW's input when we redesigned the pick-up area a couple of years ago. She suggested that Councilman Hersh review the private pick-up cost with the Borough. She also suggested that the Borough could make the proper changes to the pick-up area at their cost.

Councilman Hersh said that he would follow-up.

Commissioner Methven stated that in his opinion this is a problem because the workers are in too much of a rush to get it done.

Commissioner Reh informed Councilman Hersh to let her know if he needed assistance from the building & grounds committee.

Maintenance Manager Yannuzzi asked Councilman Hersh if the Borough was considering purchasing front-loaders.

Councilman Hersh replied, no.

Commissioner Reh asked if the PHAS inspection was over.

Executive Director Brightman responded, yes, it went well.

Attorney Report - nothing to report

Accountant Report - nothing to report

Staff Reports:

Housing Director Sriwardena reported that the crosswalk in front of Kronman was painted yellow and the signs were installed.

Commissioner Methven commented that now that the walkway is yellow it seems to have deterred cars from blocking it.

Commissioner Rainwater asked about the budget-to-actual report and why was the operating subsidy \$11,000 short.

Executive Director Brightman responded that it's just a timing issue.

Committee Reports:

Executive Director Brightman directed the Board to the report Commissioner Martinez provided regarding tenant relations. The Committee is recommending that we do not install a computer in the community room for tenant use.

Commissioner Monk stated that he agrees and there is Wi-Fi in the community room now.

Commissioner Sedehi commented that computers are available at the senior center and library.

Commissioner Reh stated that the Building and Grounds committee did not meet due to the PHAS inspection.

Commissioner Monk reported that the RAD Committee met via phone and received an update.

New Business

Housing Director Sriwardena stated that she spoke with Tina Weishaus, Chair of Sustainable Housing Highland Park about the eliminating plastic bags campaign and that they will be attending the tenant cookout on August 1st and the next tenant meeting in September to speak about this issue.

Councilman Hersh said they also have a survey.

Second Public Comment

Juan Ratliff, 219 South Sixth Avenue, stated that the kids are out at 11 PM screaming and hollering and something needs to be done.

Commissioner Methven commented that the Borough has a noise ordinance and he should call the Police.

Councilman Hersh thanked Juan Ratliff for attending the council meeting and bringing the matter to their attention. He asked Mr. Ratliff to call the Police non-emergency line when this occurs.

Mr. Ratliff went on to say that he needed a part for his stove.

Commissioner Sedehi asked if it was working.

Mr. Ratliff responded that it was.

Housing Director Sriwardena stated that the part had to be ordered and was not installed as of yet due to the PHAS inspection.

Lorena Gabor, daughter of Elsa Vivanco, apt 5J, explained that she is here at this meeting as her mother's advocate. She stated that her mother has lived at Kronman for two years and came here as a victim of domestic violence. She explained that she, herself, is a social worker and lives in Denver and is here visiting her mom. The issue is smoke coming through her apartment vents causing her mother serious health issues (problems with her sinuses and eyes.) She stated that the Director (Runi Sriwardena) has offered to move her to another apartment but that will not solve the problem.

Commissioner Sedehi stated that the BOC has worked on the smoking problem.

Ms. Gabor also expressed her concerns regarding the way in which the issues have been addressed by staff and her frustration at the fact that the problem persists.

Ms. Gabor suggested that Board members have microphones at meetings so that those attending could hear them and that an agenda be available to the public.

Board members agreed that the agenda should be available and directed staff to ensure they are available in the future.

Executive Director Brightman indicated that the HPHA was one of the first to establish a no-smoking policy in the building and reviewed the efforts that were made to assist the tenant with her concerns, including investigating other apartments for smoke, trying to determine where any smoke could be originating, offering to relocate the tenant and offering a voucher as a reasonable accommodation. Ms. Brightman indicated that she felt there was nothing more that the HPHA could do to assist Ms. Vivanco at this time.

Raymond Jones, apt. 6D, asked if people get together to save money could we keep Kettly.

Mr. Jones then commented that although the elevators are all new they break down.

Ms. Sriwardena asked that she be informed when this happens.

M.P. said she smells baked goods through her vents.

Mr. Jones requested that a pool table or ping-pong table be put in the community room.

Commissioner Sedehi directed him to bring his suggestion to the Resident Council.

Mr. Jones went on to say that he does not like the office being closed on Fridays and that people are upset.

Commissioner Sedehi stated that the HPHA follows the Borough's summer work schedule.

Mr. Jones expressed his displeasure about having to provide his social security card at recertification.

Commissioner Methven asked him what the big deal was – just provide the office what they need.

Karin Jackson, apt. 3P, commented that she is not afraid to speak up and that we don't need a pool table – what's next beer?

Commissioner Sedehi commented that she has attended the tenant meetings and they are well attended and people speak up and share ideas and concerns.

Mr. Ratliff asked why there are no Park Terrace tenant meetings.

Housing Director Sriwardena responded there are and that they are held quarterly.

Mr. Jones asked for the minutes of the meeting and agendas.

Counsel Corrison responded that he can request them from Ms. Sriwardena.

Mr. Jones stated that he will ask Kettly for them.

Commissioner Monk stated that there should be agendas and that the administration has done a lot for the tenants. He mentioned there is an active resident council and that says a lot. He stated that things are getting better. We have had some frustrating issues, e.g., smoking, Wi-Fi.

Ms. Gabor stated that she felt uncomfortable about speaking up about her mother's issues. She further stated that we should have a staff member that speaks Spanish as her mother is limited in speaking the English language.

Executive Director Brightman responded that the receptionist speaks Spanish.

The mother, Elsa Vivanco, spoke and stated that she can speak English and that she is very sick from the smoking smell coming through her vents. She stated that she cannot use the bathroom due to the smoke smell and asked if she can use the community room bathroom. She wants to stay here but cannot deal with the smoke.

Executive Director Brightman stated that perhaps this is not the type of building you can live in and you might consider taking Section 8 and trying to locate a unit that does not have common vents.

Council Liaison Hersh asked that we communicate with Ms. Vivanco's daughter.

Executive Director Brightman stated that we must obtain the tenants permission to discuss matters with family members.

M.P. stated that the units have windows and if opened they might eliminate the smell of smoke.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Rainwater and seconded by Commissioner Methven to adjourn at 7:50 PM.

All commissioners present voted in favor.

Donna Brightman, Exec. Director/Secretary