

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 September 9, 2015, the hour and date duly established for the holding of said meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Reh.

Housing Director 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 January 14, 2015, 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:

Morgan Chen, Commissioner
Steve Chudnick, Commissioner
Charlotte Quaintance, Commissioner
Diane Reh, Chairwoman
Raysa Martinez, Commissioner

Council Liaison:

Joshua Fine

Administration:

Donna Brightman, Executive Director
Runi Sriwardena, Housing Director-HP
Mike Yannuzzi, Maintenance Manager-WHA

Authority General Counsel:

Terrence Corrison, Esq., Breslin & Breslin
(6:40 PM)

ABSENT

Commissioners:

Evelyn Sedehi, Commissioner
Amanda Thomas, Vice Chair

Administration:

Kathy Blaha, Housing Director-WHA

Minutes:

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on July 22, 2015 was made by Commissioner Chen and seconded by Commissioner Chudnick.

Discussion:

Chairwoman Reh stated that page 3 needs a correction as she said “TV” not “small appliances.”

ROLL CALL: Chen Chudnick Martinez Quaintance Reh Sedehi Thomas
AYES: Chudnick Martinez Quaintance Reh
NAYS: None
Abstain: Chen
Absent: Sedehi Thomas

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

Public Comment:

Juan Ratliff, family housing, asked what is the HPHA doing about the noise, trash and hanging out in his parking lot. He wants something done about it. He stated that the Authority and Police should work together. He pays rent and he wants it quiet.

Housing Manager Sriwardena responded that Mr. Ratliff was referring to an ongoing legal issue.

Mr. Ratliff stated, no, he was talking about Saturday night.

Executive Director Brightman asked what lot he is referring to.

Mr. Ratliff stated that it is where we park our cars. He had to clean-up glass.

Counsel Corrison asked Housing Manager Sriwardena if she was aware of this.

Housing Manager Sriwardena responded, no.

Counsel Corrison asked Mr. Ratliff to put a report into Ms. Sriwardena about the incident. He stated that if we do not know about a situation, we can't address it.

M.P. asked about the RAD and when the doors and windows would be put in.

Executive Director Brightman stated that she did not have a time frame at this moment and that tenants will receive plenty of notice.

Karin Jackson, 3P, stated that Mr. Ratliff is right as there was a lot of noise this weekend and tenants did call the police, they were up to 1 or 2 AM.

Chairwoman Reh asked if she informed the staff.

Ms. Jackson stated that she did not.

Chairwoman Reh stated that she needs to let them know when something occurs as they are not here on the weekends.

Executive Director Brightman stated that Housing Manager Sriwardena contacts the police for incident reports.

Joshua Fine stated that on October 14, at the senior center, the police will hold an open forum whereby residents can voice their concerns and ask questions.

Mr. Ratliff stated that he doesn't trust the police.

Ms. Jackson stated that now the kids went back to school and it should get better.

Tom Nolan, 3H, stated that he wants his apartment painted and asked how much the painter charges to move furniture?

Chairwoman Reh asked if it was a flat rate.

Housing Director Sriwardena answered that it was.

M.P./Ms. Jackson stated that everyone likes Joe Thurston and that he is at the building early in the morning cleaning the grounds.

Communications:

Chairwoman Reh noted that Commissioner Martinez' appointment resolution was in the packet and thanked her for serving.

HPAHC – IRS letter of exempt status – Commissioner Chen asked if this was a yearly letter.

Counsel Corrison stated that it is not but this grants the corporation exempt status for the duration of its existence.

Chairwoman Reh noted the auditors comment letter and stated that the audit approval is on the resolution agenda.

Executive Director's Report:

Executive Director Brightman spoke about the Medical Alert system and that it was discussed at a tenants' meeting today and they will vote on whether to have call buttons or a medical alert pendant.

A discussion about the pros and cons of the system ensued ending with the decision to go with the tenants' majority choice.

Parker House ended its program due to lack of attendance.

The alarm conversion is almost complete at Park Terrace.

RAD update: Physical needs assessment is complete; consultant is working on the tax credit application. IRS approved the tax exempt status of the HPAHC.

The audit was completed in August – there were no findings.

Attorney's Report:

Counsel Corrison updated the Board on a recent court action whereby a tenant agreed to voluntarily vacate by October 31 due to ongoing disturbances. He said that Ms. Sriwardena and staff were well prepared.

Accountant's Report: no comment

Staff Reports:

Chairwoman Reh stated that Executive Director Brightman and Housing Manager Sriwardena went to Counsel workshop to explain the RAD program which was well received. She thanked Mr. Fine for setting up the meeting.

Chairwoman Reh commented on the tenant BBQ.

Executive Director Brightman handed out the Section 8 report.

Runi Sriwardena's report: no comment

Maintenance report:

Chairwoman Reh commented that it was self-explanatory.

Commissioner Chen asked about the leaking sprinkler head.

Maintenance Manager Yannuzzi stated that Jeff Marder found it; the valve leaked and was replaced.

Section 8 Report: none

Committee Reports: none

RESOLUTIONS

a) Reso #2015- 33 - Adopting Monthly Bill List for August 2015

Motion moved by Commissioner Chudnick and seconded by Commissioner Chen to adopt Resolution #2015-33.

Discussion:

Chairwoman Reh asked if we had FIOS as there are so many phone bills.

Executive Director Brightman stated that we do not have it as yet but they are working on it.

Chairwoman Reh asked about Derby.

Executive Director Brightman stated that it was the purchase of 3/4 PTAC units.

Commissioner Chudnick asked if units were changed upon apartment turnovers.

Executive Director Brightman stated that they are, if needed, but when we get RAD all older units will be changed out for energy efficient units.

Commissioner Chen asked if the unit was both heat and air.

Executive Director Brightman replied yes and two are in each unit.

Commissioner Chudnick asked if the Home Depot was a blanket credit.

Counsel Corrison replied no; they are on the state bid list for contracts.

Commissioner Martinez stated that the gas and electric bills were high and asked about energy improvements.

Executive Director Brightman stated that energy improvements will be done once the RAD closes and will affect water, lighting, window and doors.

ROLL CALL:	Chen	Chudnick	Martinez	Quaintance	Reh	Sedehi	Thomas
AYES:	Chen	Chudnick	Martinez	Quaintance	Reh		
NAYS:	None						
Abstain:	None						
Absent:		Sedehi	Thomas				

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

b) Reso #2015-34 – Elimination of Discretionary Allowances

Motion moved by Commissioner Chen and seconded by Commissioner Chudnick to adopt Resolution #2015-34.

Discussion

Chairwoman Reh asked for an explanation.

Executive Director Brightman stated that due to budgetary constraints the Authority can no longer afford to offer discretionary allowances. We currently offer a storage, child support, alimony and non-elderly/disabled medical allowance deductions. This will no longer be afforded and we will just take the HUD allowed allowances.

Housing Manager Sriwardena clarified that storage allowance was given after payment, not before.

ROLL CALL:	Chen	Chudnick	Martinez	Quaintance	Reh	Sedehi	Thomas
AYES:	Chen	Chudnick	Martinez	Quaintance	Reh		
NAYS:	None						
Abstain:	None						
Absent:		Sedehi	Thomas				

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

c) Reso #2015- 35 – Resolution for Increasing Bid Threshold to \$40,000

Motion moved by Commissioner Chudnick and seconded by Commissioner Chen to adopt Resolution #2015-35.

Discussion

Chairwoman Reh asked what the increase is.

Executive Director Brightman stated that the bid threshold went from \$36,000 to \$40,000.

Counsel Corrison explained only QPA’s can do this, for non-QPA’s the limit is \$17,500. This doesn’t relieve the Authority of getting prices. We must get three prices for all purchases. He stated that Ms. Smolder is a QPA; therefore, we can take advantage of this.

ROLL CALL:	Chen Chudnick Martinez Quaintance Reh Sedehi Thomas
AYES:	Chen Chudnick Martinez Quaintance Reh
NAYS:	None
Abstain:	None
Absent:	Sedehi Thomas

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

Resolutions #2015-36 (Acknowledging the Authority’s Conflict of Interest Policy) and #2015-37 (Update Procurement Policy) were pulled.

d) Reso #2015-36 – Reso Amending the Personnel Policy and Employee Handbook regarding FMLA and FLA

Motion moved by Commissioner Chen and seconded by Commissioner Martinez to adopt Resolution #2015-36.

Discussion

Counsel Corrison stated that the JIF developed the FMLA and FLA policy for housing authorities; however, it is misleading as it leaves out important language that a covered employee must work in an agency that must employ 50 or more employees within a 75 mile radius. The housing authority is a covered employer but the employees are not covered employees due to the fact that there are not 50 employees. This resolution is simply clarifying the law so that employees do not assume they are eligible to take it.

Chairwoman Reh questioned that the employee will not lose any current benefit.

Counsel Corrison stated that this is correct.

This is an issue of eligibility vs. covered employees that were never eligible for the benefit.

ROLL CALL:	Chen Chudnick Martinez Quaintance Reh Sedehi Thomas
AYES:	Chen Chudnick Martinez Quaintance Reh
NAYS:	None
Abstain:	None

Absent: Sedehi Thomas

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

e) Reso #2015-37 – Award Contract for Medical Alert to Life Station

Motion moved by Commissioner Chudnick and seconded by Commissioner Chen to adopt Resolution #2015-37.

Discussion

Executive Director Brightman explained that there are two options for the Life Station alert:

1. The current pull cords in each apartment could be replaced with call buttons.
2. Each tenant would be given a medical pendant.

I am going to prepare a survey to solicit the tenants' opinions and go with the majority rule.

Commissioner Chudnick asked if the above prices were inclusive of the two options.

Commissioner Chen asked if the pendant is only good for the building or does it work outside.

Executive Director Brightman stated that it only works in the building and people may not want to wear them.

Counsel Corrison stated that he met this vendor at a housing authority conference and you do not have to wear it, it works in close proximity.

Commissioners Reh and Morgan stated their preference is for the buttons.

It was agreed to see what option the tenants want.

ROLL CALL: Chen Chudnick Martinez Quaintance Reh Sedehi Thomas
AYES: Chen Chudnick Martinez Quaintance Reh
NAYS: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Sedehi Thomas

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

f) Reso #2015-38 – Reso to Accept the Audit for FYE 3/31/15

Motion moved by Commissioner Chudnick and seconded by Commissioner Martinez to adopt Resolution #2015-38.

ROLL CALL: Chen Chudnick Martinez Quaintance Reh Sedehi Thomas
AYES: Chen Chudnick Martinez Quaintance Reh
NAYS: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Sedehi Thomas

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

g) Reso #2015-39 – Establishing the Payment Standards for HCV Program

Motion moved by Commissioner Chen and seconded by Commissioner Chudnick to adopt Resolution #2015-39.

Discussion

Commissioner Chudnick asked if anything changed.

Executive Director Brightman stated that it did not and this is done every year when FMR's change. Since the FMR's change very little, we are keeping the same payment standard.

ROLL CALL:	Chen	Chudnick	Martinez	Quaintance	Reh	Sedehi	Thomas
AYES:	Chen	Chudnick	Martinez	Quaintance	Reh		
NAYS:	None						
Abstain:	None						
Absent:	Sedehi Thomas						

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

g) Reso #2015-40 – Revision of Flat Rents

Motion moved by Commissioner Chudnick and seconded by Commissioner Chen to adopt Resolution #2015-40.

Discussion

Chairwoman Reh explained that tenants at recertification can choose between paying flat rent or 30% of their income for rent.

ROLL CALL:	Chen	Chudnick	Martinez	Quaintance	Reh	Sedehi	Thomas
AYES:	Chen	Chudnick	Martinez	Quaintance	Reh		
NAYS:	None						
Abstain:	None						
Absent:	Sedehi Thomas						

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

Commissioner Quaintance and Councilman Fine left the meeting at 7:30 PM.

Second Public Comment

M.P. stated that she has an issue with her Verizon land phone line. She believes it is because of the intercom system.

Housing Manager Sriwardena will look into the matter.

Karin Jackson, 3P, stated that she would like a walk-in shower.

Executive Director Brightman stated that we would discuss this when we get the final improvement plan for RAD.

Juan Ratliff, asked when the Park Terrace site would have a tenant meeting.

Housing Manager Sriwardena stated that from this point on tenant meetings will include both sites.

Mr. Ratliff asked about apartment painting.

Housing Manager Sriwardena stated that this takes place every 5 years.

Dee Donnelly, 1H, stated that she was allergic to the flowers outside her window and it was making her sick. Also, she got ill from the treatment Vinny used to kill the bees nest. She stated that she would provide a doctor's note about the flowers and did not wish to do anything about it now but was talking about next year.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Chen and seconded by Commissioner Chudnick to adjourn at 7:50 PM.

All commissioners present voted in favor.

Donna Brightman, Exec. Director/Secretary