

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 October 11, 2017, the hour and date duly established for the holding of said meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Martinez.

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:

Raysa Martinez, Vice Chair
Regis Methven, Commissioner
Donald Monk, Commissioner
Diane Reh, Commissioner
Evelyn Sedehi, Commissioner

Authority General Counsel:
Terrence Corriston, Esq., Breslin & Breslin

Council Liaison:
Matthew Hersh, Liaison (6:42 PM)

Administration:

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

ABSENT

Commissioners:

Steve Chudnick, Chairman
William Rainwater, Commissioner

Minutes:

A motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held on September 13, 2017 was made by Commissioner Monk and seconded by Commissioner Reh.

Discussion

Commissioner Sedehi asked if the application information was put on the Highland Park Facebook page.

Commissioner Monk replied, yes, and said he would report later in the meeting.

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

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

Public Comment I - None

Communications – None

Commissioner Sedehi circulated a get well card for Lauren Adams.

Executive Director's Report:

Commissioner Sedehi asked how Kettly was hired part-time.

Executive Director Brightman explained that Woodbridge actually hired her for 30 hours per week, four days a week, two of which belong to Woodbridge and two for Highland Park. Highland Park's share of Kettly's salary will come from the shared services agreement. There is funding available due to Kathy Blaha's retirement. She went on to say that Woodbridge was happy to see that a social worker was being hired to assist with tenant issues.

Commissioner Sedehi asked if Kettly was pleased with the offer.

Executive Director Brightman responded that she was.

Commissioner Monk reported that he received information from Executive Director Brightman regarding record retention and policy and that he and Chairman Chudnick are going to meet and make recommendations to the Board.

Commissioner Monk went on further to report that Executive Director Brightman had sent him the phone provider information and that he had a conversation with Christine Smolder at

Woodbridge to see if Highland Park could transfer its service to voice over IP. The matter is still being researched.

Executive Director Brightman interjected that we need to be careful as some services still need land lines such as the elevators.

Commissioner Monk stated that he hopes to come back with recommendations in November.

The Board members thanked Commissioner Monk for his efforts in the two matters.

Commissioner Reh asked if he was going to model the record retention policy after the Borough's.

Counsel Corrison stated that a Borough and a Housing Authority do not have the same requirements as the Authority is governed by HUD requirements.

RAD Report:

Executive Director Brightman stated that as you may recall from the last meeting I had just found the missing lot information. However, although the title company was willing to insure the title, both the bank and HUD were not willing to accept it. Currently, the court is researching its records to see if they still have the docket paperwork and they need four weeks to do so. If it cannot be found, we must then go forward and condemn the three properties again to obtain clear title.

She stated that there is also an issue with the JIF as it seems they cannot offer the insurance as promised, so she is obtaining insurance quotes from other sources.

Commissioner Reh asked that, in light of all this, is it still worthwhile to pursue the RAD conversion.

Executive Director Brightman responded, yes.

Counsel Corrison stated that the project's federal budget is slated to fund public housing at a 25 year low. In light of that, the RAD is still the best option.

Attorney Report - nothing to report

Accountant Report - nothing to report

Staff Reports:

Housing Director's Report:

Commissioner Monk stated that he followed-up with Ms. Sriwardena and he put the application information on the Borough Facebook page.

Housing Director Sriwardena stated that as soon as a one bedroom is vacant, she will host the open house.

Commissioner Martinez referred to the letter Ms. Sriwardena had sent out to the tenants that did not attend the tenant meeting and asked if Sustainable Highland Park could be engaged to help us with the recycling issue in the building.

Commissioner Methven commented that it's like fighting a losing battle and pointed out that the company the Borough had contracted with to pick-up the recycling is a problem as well as they do not allow the recyclables to be put in plastic bags. This is a problem for tenants as they have nothing to bring their garbage down in.

Counsel Corrison asked if there were recycling containers in addition to the dumpsters.

Commissioner Reh stated that tenants could have a container in their unit for recycling.

Commissioner Martinez made a suggestion that at the next tenant meeting they be asked what their issues were with recycling so we could get a better understanding of the impediments.

Commissioner Sedehi stated that in her opinion Sustainable Highland Park is doing a great job in encouraging people to use canvas bags instead of plastic.

Commissioner Martinez also asked Housing Director Sriwardena to reach out to Sustainable Highland Park for suggestions to assist with the recycling problem.

Committee Reports:

Commissioner Reh stated that she and Commissioner Methven were scheduled to have a facilities meeting to review the property but it rained and was rescheduled.

Resolutions

a) Reso #2017-49 – Adopting the Monthly Bill List

Motion moved by Commissioner Sedehi and seconded by Commissioner Methven to adopt Resolution #2017-49.

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

Absent: Chudnick Rainwater

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

b) Reso #2017-50 – Resolution to Amend the Borough of Highland Park’s Personnel Policy

THIS RESOLUTION WAS PULLED

c) Reso #2017-50 – Adopting Collection Agency – Transworld Systems, Inc.

Motion moved by Commissioner Sedehi and seconded by Commissioner Reh to adopt Resolution #2017-50.

Discussion

Commissioner Sedehi asked how the rate of collection is.

Executive Director Brightman stated that it’s okay and stated that we want to be good stewards of government money so it behooves us to have a collection agency to recoup money owed to the Authority.

Commissioner Martinez commented that she has heard horror stories about how collection agencies approach people and she hopes that this company conducts itself in an ethical way.

Executive Director Brightman stated that we have used them for many years and have not had any issues pertaining to unethical conduct.

Commissioner Monk stated that he trusts that we share as little information as possible with them as not to cross any lines with releasing information that is not public.

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

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

New Business

Housing Director Sriwardena stated that just today she received a letter from the senior center next door stating that we cannot use their parking lot, otherwise cars will be towed.

Councilman Hersh stated that he had no knowledge of this.

Counsel Corrison asked when it was effective.

Housing Director Sriwardena answered, immediately.

Councilman Hersh stated that he doesn’t know what prompted this action and he will look into it and get back to Runi and the Board.

Second Public Comment

Stella de la Cruz, apt. #2S, stated that she parks at the senior center because she is handicapped and cannot walk far and doesn't have a parking space.

Commissioner Methven asked about putting a handicapped space in the front of the building.

Commissioner Martinez asked that the administration prepare a parking report for the Board so that they could have the facts before commenting on the situation.

Housing Director Sriwardena stated that she will do that.

Karin Jackson, Apt. 3P, showed the Board her large plastic bag that she purchased for 99 cents that she uses for recycling.

Commissioner Martinez suggested that she share that information with the tenants at a meeting.

Ms. Jackson also stated that we have a number of dead shrubs around the building and they should be removed.

Commissioner Methven stated that it's because the Borough pushes the snow with ice melt in that area and it kills the bushes.

Housing Director Sriwardena stated that she will talk to the landscaper.

M.P. stated that she asked the Borough to send Housing Manager Sriwardena information on recycling so she can put it in the newsletter. Tenants need to be informed that if it's recyclable, it will have a triangle symbol on it. She asked when the windows were being installed.

Executive Director Brightman answered, most likely in the spring.

Juan Ratliff, 219 South Sixth Ave., suggested that we give guest parking tags to tenants for their guests.

Raymond Jones, apt. #6D, stated that the Wi-Fi does not always work and it's not the signal, it's the network.

Commissioner Reh stated that she had no problem signing on.

Commissioner Monk stated that it could be due to many issues.

Commissioner Sedehi suggested calling Cablevision.

Commissioner Monk stated that he would like to check further.

Dee Donnelly, apt. # 1H, asked what Kettly's hours would be.

Executive Director Brightman stated that they will be Thursdays and Fridays, seven hours a day and that it would be best to schedule an appointment ahead of time.

Raymond Jones, requested a key to the community room bathroom for people who are watching TV.

Housing Director Sriwardena stated that the tenants are not abiding by the rules for using the community room. She agreed to leave the bathroom open.

Mr. Jones stated that he had a problem with his recertification and was not given a copy of his lease.

Counsel Corrison stated that tenants should have a copy of their lease.

Commissioner Martinez reminded Mr. Jones that we do not discuss private issues in an open forum.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Sedehi and seconded by Commissioner Reh to adjourn at 7:50 PM.

All commissioners present voted in favor.

Donna Brightman, Exec. Director/Secretary