

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 for a Regular Session [GoToMeeting.com/join/494710773](https://www.gotomeeting.com/join/494710773) or by calling 1-872-240-3212, code 494710773 at 6:30 PM on December 10, 2020, the hour and date duly established for the holding of said meeting.

The meeting was called to order by the Chair Martinez.

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 on December 7, 2020.

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

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

PRESENT

Commissioners:

Ruby Hope, Commissioner  
Raysa Martinez, Chair  
Jason Postelnik, Commissioner  
William Rainwater, Commissioner  
Diane Reh, Commissioner  
Evelyn Sedehi, Commissioner

ABSENT

Commissioners:

Regis Methven, Commissioner

Council Liaison:

Stephany Kim-Chohan

Counsel:

Terrence Corrison, Esq., Breslin & Breslin

Administration:

Donna Brightman, Executive Director  
Runi Sriwardena, Housing Director

Other:

William Katchen, Accountant

Minutes:

A motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held on November 12, 2020 was made by Commissioner Sedehi and seconded by Commissioner Postelnik.

ROLL CALL: Hope Martinez Methven Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
AYES: Hope Martinez Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
NAYS: None  
Abstain: None  
Absent: Methven

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

Public Comment I: none

New Business:

Commissioner Postelnik asked how the new extermination company was doing.

Housing Director Sriwardena answered great and very easy to work with and responsive.

Commissioner Postelnik then asked if we were prepared for the snow.

Housing Director Sriwardena replied that she hired three temps for snow removal and salting.

Commissioner Reh asked if they were covered under our insurance.

Housing Director Sriwardena responded, yes.

Commissioner Hope asked if they were trained.

Housing Director Sriwardena responded that they have maintenance experience and that Joe Thurston and Jeff Marder will oversee them and provide training in using the snow blower.

Communications:

Commissioner Rainwater stated that at the last meeting it was decided that a report would be given on the actions of the HPAHC and Kronman.

Commissioner Rainwater reported that the HPAHC was most likely going to recommend that the board prepay the NJCC loan. He will provide a written report to the board with recommendations.

Commissioner Rainwater reported that Kronman was discussing potential projects and partners and tonight we discussed a possible partnership with Morristown Habitat for Humanity.

Commissioner Sedehi asked if we have seen any decrease in the energy bills since the improvements.

Executive Director Brightman stated that she will provide a report.

Attorney's Report:

Counsel Corrison stated that he wrote the Remote Meeting Procedure Policy (Reso #2020-38.) He stated that the State of NJ published new regulations about how the public was to be handled during remote meetings and concerning how notices were to be posted.

Executive Director Brightman stated that the email was changed to the HPHA email.

Commissioner Rainwater asked who the Sergeant of Arms was.

Counsel Corrison responded the chair and the attorney.

Commissioner Sedehi asked if our agenda is posted.

Housing Director Sriwardena replied, yes.

Accountant's Report:

William Katchen, accountant for HPHA, stated that Executive Director Brightman asked him to join the meeting tonight to discuss the automatic check signing.

Mr. Katchen stated that he reviewed Counsel Corrison's email and that there are no prohibitions against electronic signatures. However, you need to make sure that you have the proper controls in place. The controls are through the bills and should be reviewed by a committee prior to being signed and they should not be mailed out until the BOC approves them. There are some exceptions such as payroll and utilities.

Commissioner Sedehi asked if Section 8 checks can be electronically signed.

Mr. Katchen said it makes the most sense to auto-sign Section 8 checks as we have no authority to withhold them as we have a signed lease. Checks are only held for program violations.

Commissioner Sedehi asked how would we be aware of that.

Commissioner Reh asked if there was a report.

Executive Director Brightman responded that Elizabeth Noll can do a monthly report that tells you how many checks were sent out and how many were held back due to violations.

Commissioner Rainwater asked if a reviewer can also be a signer.

Mr. Katchen replied, yes.

Commissioner Martinez asked if the bills could be reviewed electronically.

Mr. Katchen responded, yes.

Commissioner Rainwater asked if it was against accounting principles to sign checks and then reallocate a percentage of the payment.

Mr. Katchen responded, no, accounts can be reconciled.

After much discussion, Mr. Katchen suggested that the BOC first try the electronic signatures with the Section 8 checks and then they could reconsider the other checks after they have a comfort level.

The BOC agreed to close the office.

Mr. Katchen thanked the BOC and left the meeting.

Executive Director's Report:

Executive Director Brightman reported that we cannot receive the full FHLB payment without submitting an audit. She stated that Mr. Katchen has agreed to do it.

Executive Director Brightman reported that NJHMFA still has not reviewed our program closeout paperwork; it's been about three months.

The BOC asked if anything could be done.

Executive Director Brightman stated, not really, it's because of COVID and staff working from home, etc. that has caused the delay.

Executive Director Brightman stated that the Woodbridge BOC closed the office for Christmas Eve and asked if they would consider following suit.

The Board agreed to close.

Executive Director Brightman reported that due to the rise in COVID cases, she was going back to scaled down office hours at least until the end of the year.

Housing Director's Report:

Commissioner Rainwater asked if we have any issues with rents not being paid due to the eviction moratorium.

Housing Director Sriwardena responded just one tenant at Park Terrace that owes a lot of money and has not paid rent since March.

Counsel Corrison stated the moratorium is in effect until January 25<sup>th</sup> and the courts are back logged.

Housing Director Sriwardena stated that she has sent the tenant several letters.

Counsel Corrison stated that we could do a repayment agreement with her.

Resolutions:

a) Reso #2020-35 – Authorizing the Submission of the HPHA Streamlined Annual Plan for 2021

Motion moved by Commissioner Sedehi and seconded by Commissioner Rainwater to

adopt Resolution #2020-35.

Discussion

Commissioner Postelnik asked if this was on the website

Executive Director Brightman responded, no, and stated that when we were public housing, the plan had to outline how our capital funds would be spent, the plan now only covers Section 8 and there is not too much to report.

Commissioner Martinez stated that we might want to include the window replacement in our narrative.

ROLL CALL: Hope Martinez Methven Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
AYES: Hope Martinez Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
NAYS: None  
Abstain: None  
Absent: Methven

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

b) Reso #2020-36 – Appointment of a Fund and Alternate Fund Commissioner for 2021

Motion moved by Commissioner Sedehi and seconded by Commissioner Hope to adopt Resolution #2020-36.

Discussion

Executive Director Brightman stated that this pertains to the JIF and only covers Park Terrace.

ROLL CALL: Hope Martinez Methven Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
AYES: Hope Martinez Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
NAYS: None  
Abstain: None  
Absent: Methven

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

c) Reso #2020-37 – Adopting Monthly Bill List for November

Motion moved by Commissioner Sedehi and seconded by Commissioner Hope to adopt Resolution #2020-37.

Discussion

Commissioner Hope asked what the NAHRO newsletter was.

Executive Director Brightman responded that it's a housing professional newsletter that provides information on regulations and programs to the authority..

ROLL CALL: Hope Martinez Methven Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
AYES: Hope Martinez Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
NAYS: None  
Abstain: None  
Absent: Methven

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

d) Reso #2020-38 – Reso Adopting a Remote Meeting Procedures Policy

Motion moved by Commissioner Sedehi and seconded by Commissioner Reh to adopt Resolution #2020-38.

Discussion

Commissioner Reh asked Counsel Corrison if this covers texting during meetings as she often sees people doing this.

Counsel Corrison responded that, no, it does not. If 4 or more people are texting at a meeting, it would be a violation.

ROLL CALL: Hope Martinez Methven Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
AYES: Hope Martinez Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
NAYS: None  
Abstain: None  
Absent: Methven

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

e) Reso #2020-39 – Reso Approving Electronic Signatures for the Section 8 Checks

Motion moved by Commissioner Sedehi and seconded by Commissioner Postelnik to adopt Resolution #2020-39.

WHEREAS, the HPHA recently installed a new software program that allows for checks to be created with electronic signatures, eliminating the need to hand sign checks; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Director is recommending that all Section 8 checks be signed electronically.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Board of Commissioners hereby authorizes the Executive Director to institute electronic signatures for the Section 8 checks.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Executive Director should report monthly on the payments generated.

ROLL CALL: Hope Martinez Methven Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
AYES: Hope Martinez Postelnik Rainwater Reh Sedehi  
NAYS: None  
Abstain: None

Absent: Methven

The Chair thereupon declared said motion approved.

Old Business: none

Public Comment II: None

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Commissioner Sedehi and seconded by Commissioner Reh to adjourn at 7:20 PM.

All commissioners present voted in favor.

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Donna Brightman, Exec. Director/Secretary