

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF BERGEN COUNTY
One Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack, New Jersey

MINUTES OF ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 24, 2020

THESE MINUTES ARE NOT VERBATIM BUT ARE INSTEAD A SYNOPSIS OF WHAT TRANSPIRED AT THE REGULAR MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 24, 2020 – A ZOOM VIRUTAL MEETING OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF BERGEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

PRESENT:

Commissioner Peter Caminiti, Sr.	Terrence Corriston, General Counsel
Commissioner Angelo D’Arminio, Jr.	Lynn Bartlett, Executive Director
Commissioner Junior Hernandez	Vincent Bufis, Field Operations Director
Commissioner Daniel Ortega	Al Restaino III, Accounting Manager
Commissioner Danielle Peterson	Esther Gatria, HR Manager
Commissioner Harvey Sohmer	Julia Orlando, BCHHH Director

ABSENT:

Commissioner Joanne English-Rollieson

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting to order at 5:38pm. Executive Director Lynn Bartlett read the following statement:

Consistent with the Byron M. Baer Open Public Meetings Act: P.L.1975c231 - All meetings of public bodies shall be open to the public at all times. Notice of the virtual meeting schedule of the HABC Board of Commissioners setting forth the date, time and hyperlink information was posted by The Record on April 21, 2020. The same notice was posted on the Authority website and provided to the County Clerk for posting at the County Administration Building on April 17, 2020. The minutes of this regular meeting will be available following the next regularly scheduled meeting.

SWEARING IN

General Counsel Terrence Corriston lead the swearing in of new Commissioner Harvey Sohmer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Executive Director Bartlett led all in the pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Upon roll call Commissioners Caminiti (late), D’Arminio, Hernandez, Ortega, Peterson and Sohmer were all present. Commissioner English-Rollieson was absent

MINUTES

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of the July 2020 meeting of the HABC Board of Commissioners. Motion was made by Commissioners D’Arminio and Peterson and seconded by Commissioner Hernandez; upon roll call the motion carried unanimously.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Caminiti – ABSENT

D’Arminio – YES

English-Rollieson - ABSENT

Hernandez – YES

Ortega – YES

Peterson – YES

Sohmer - ABSTAIN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Director Bartlett began by explaining that it was a very busy summer. She pointed out that the circulated Executive Director report was comprehensive and had a considerable amount of detailed information. Ms. Bartlett asked if there were any questions on the circulated report; there were none. She then provided the following updates to the report:

COVID

Ms. Bartlett explained that the County is working to reopen all Senior Activity Centers and homeless shelter. The County has contracted with Gilbane. Their engineers and industrial hygienist are making recommendations on signage, decals, PPE, sanitizer, partitions, plumbing and HVAC changes necessary to reopen in compliance with State and CDC guidance. The Senior Centers in HABC buildings are Palisades Park (Highlandview Apartments), Bergenfield (Brookside Gardens) and East Rutherford (Boiling Springs). The County would like their contractor to perform the work and for HABC CARES Act funds to cover the expenses.

Ms. Bartlett furthered that the HABC's CARES Act awards have been made via Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program Administrative Fees, therefore all CARES Act expenditures need to tie to program related expenses. Given that all the buildings have HCV project based vouchers (PBV) it was presumed that all building expenses were CARES Act eligible.

(Commissioner Caminiti joined the meeting).

The proposed Senior Center changes to be COVID compliant to re-open are estimated at roughly \$250,000 for the three centers. HABC is presently awaiting word from HUD as to whether this work is CARES Act eligible, Ms. Bartlett explained that she will keep everyone informed as to progress.

Similarly, HABC is working with all the partners toward the HHH progress on re-opening. Issues relative to the fact that clients are in motels and municipalities are responding to calls have been limited but problematic. Presently, social distancing concerns for re-opening remain the primary concern. Reopening date has not yet been established, structural issues are still being addressed as well as stream lined communication with all partners and testing protocols for clients, employees, partners and providers.

Lastly, of the COVID wish list items identified, the temperature scanners for all buildings have been purchased and are presently being installed in buildings. During installation the complimenting policy and procedures are being finalized.

DEVELOPMENT

The HDC Team meet virtually with municipal and American Legion Representatives on the DeBaun house. The historic preservation interest has proposed outreach to the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to see if dismantling is an option. The American Legion members have voted and determined they would like a new meeting space. Everyone agreed that the historic preservation effort, led by Councilwoman Jill McGuire, would reach out to SHPO to advance the discussion and possibility of dismantling and coordinate any meeting efforts relative to that end and the HABC/HDC would work on a proposal for a new meeting space with apartments all to be discussed at a October 5th meeting at the Emerson Senior Center to accommodate Legion members to attend.

Ms. Bartlett asked the Chairman and Commissioners to consider participation in a small ad-hoc committee to work on the acquisition and office relocation project of the authority and development corporation. She explained that she would follow up with the Chairman before the next Board meeting to see if this could be moved forward. All agreed that would be acceptable.

FINANCE

Ms. Bartlett reported that Investors bank, which holds the Section 8 HCV accounts has submitted proposal to amend the present contract. She reported that HABC is mid-way through a 3 year contract with our banking partners. She explained the original proposal and contract terms include 2.85% interest rate and no fees. The entirely unexpected pandemic and consequent market changes have led Investors to proposed amending the contract. Ms. Bartlett reminded all that initially Investors summarily made changes to contract, HABC Counsel addressed, and Investors promptly corrected. Since then Investors has proposed an amendment to the contract capping deposits to receive contracted interest rate and a minimum balance to be maintained for no fees to continue. Ms. Bartlett explained that the proposed amendment has been reviewed and discussed by and with HABC Fee Accountant Bill Katchen, General Counsel Terry Corrison, Accounting Manager Al Restaino III and all found little reason to amend the contract as proposed.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Ms. Bartlett reported that a towing contractor has been contracted for Ramapo Brae Townhomes in Mahwah and the size of all garbage dumpsters has been increased. In the short period of time that the changes have been implemented HABC has seen immediate improvement and response.

Director Bartlett then reported that the HHH 2020 contract is in final stages to be executed.

She also informed everyone that the Authority has installed lock boxes in 13 buildings to aid in receipt of rent checks. Residents will no longer need to mail their rent checks into headquarters, they will be able to walk or drive to the nearest drop box and insert their check. This is in response to many residents being hesitant to go to the post office as well as the natural postal delays in the pandemic.

BOARD MEETING

Ms. Bartlett reported that staff are working on making the October Board of Commissioners meeting hybrid. Commissioners that wish to be present will be able to participate in person in the 4th Floor Learning Center, and any Commissioner wishing to participate virtually will also be able to do so. She informed all that the Learning Center has been secured for HABC Board meetings on the 4th Thursdays for 2021.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Ms. Bartlett reported the continued success with the new payroll service - Paylocity. She explained that advertising, apply and hiring is now being done in this system. Additionally, she reported that Ring Central has been especially successful improving operations. She pointed out that with the new software the Authority is able to address and confirm client allegations of having called several times and having no call back which has been tremendously helpful in the move to telecommuting.

Director Bartlett reported that a full Staff meeting was schedule for the following morning. The purposed of the meeting is to discuss year end operations and expectations.

Lastly, the Director asked all Commissioners to consider possible ideas for virtual ways to gather to recognize employee performance in absence of Holiday Party. She pointed out that it is probably more important than ever to consider and recognize employee efforts in a year of pandemic and all they have done to ensure resident and staff safety all while ensuring successful business continuity.

DISCUSSION

Commissioner Caminiti asked if Board vote was needed regarding a discussion on whether negotiation with Investors Bank is necessary. Ms. Bartlett stated that general consensus would work, unless the Board determines to amend the contract, that would require a vote. Terry Corrison agreed.

Commissioner D'Arminio stated that he finds no reason to renegotiate. Commissioner Caminiti agreed.

Chairman Ortega asked if there would be a multi-year 3 year contract for HHH? Director Bartlett asked if the banking issue should be completed before moving to the HHH contract? Chairman Ortega inquired whether the shelter question is more complicated or longer than banking matter? Ms. Bartlett then explained that the given it is September already the present action being considered by the County is to only renew the contract for the current year. Additionally, electronic correspondence sent from the Department of Human Services earlier in the week stated that though they have asked for the 2021 budget no multi-year contract is being considered presently. Commissioner Ortega thanked her for the response.

He then stated he believes it sets a bad precedent to renegotiate a contract change midway through a contract term. He furthered that Investors Bank was not likely to a negotiate contract change if present terms benefitted them. He additionally offered that Investors is not a small two branch community bank that needs help because the current contract terms are now severely adversely affecting them.

Ms. Bartlett explained that the comments from the Fee Accountant Bill Katchen were similar in that Investors is not a small bank and that they would neither propose nor accept any changes to the contract if the present terms were beneficial to them.

Ms. Bartlett acknowledged the general consensus of the Commissioners to not consider a renegotiation of terms or amendment to the contracted terms and thanked them for the discussion.

ATTORNEY REPORT

Terry Corrison made the Board of Commissioners aware of an issue with another PHA. He explained portability to the Board. 3 households that moved to Clifton that never moved into Clifton but Clifton billed us for the 3 clients for several years. HABC wrote a letter informing them of error once it was discovered asking to resolve the issue and the funding due back to HABC of almost \$200,000.

Morphed into rumor that is fraudulently circulating the HABC double billed a smaller housing authority on the matter. Terry wanted to make clear the issue and errors are Clifton's and that HABC is attempting to resolve responsibly.

Commissioner Peterson exclaimed that is a lot of money! Mr. Corrison agreed.

Commissioner Hernandez asked how long this had gone on? Mr. Corrison explained that one client was almost 10 years. Commissioner Hernandez followed up asking "What is level of investigation?" Terry offered that the HABC is presently trying to resolve directly with Clifton Counsel and if that is unsuccessful the HUD Newark Field Office will assist.

PUBLIC MEETING

Chairman Ortega then requested a motion to open the meeting to the public. Commissioner Peterson made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner D'Arminio motion carried unopposed.

Heather Wei informed all that there were no members of the public participating in the meeting call. Seeing there was no one from the public a motion was made by Commissioner Peterson, seconded by Commissioner Caminiti to close the meeting to the public that carried unopposed.

CONSENT AGENDA

Chairman Ortega asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Motion was made by Commissioner Peterson and seconded by Commissioner Caminiti, to approve Resolutions 2020-66 and 2020-73

A. Resolution 2020-66

Resolution approving the routine expenditures for the HABC for the period of 7/13/20 - 8/21/20.

B. Resolution 2020-67

Resolution approving the routine expenditures for the HDC for the period of 7/13/20 - 8/21/20.

C. Resolution 2020- 68

Resolution approving the routine expenditures for the HABC for the period of 8/21/20 - 9/15/20.

D. Resolution 2020-69

Resolution approving the routine expenditures for the HDC for the period of 8/21/20 – 9/15/20.

E. Resolution 2020-70

Resolution authorizing a contract with D&L Paving Contractors, Inc. for the provision of Asphalt, Concrete & Curbing Repairs, Installation & Resurfacing as needed.

F. Resolutions 2020-71

Nunc Pro Tunc Resolution authorizing the Renewal Agreement with MRI Software LLC to provide computer software services, for a one-year period beginning August 1, 2020, and ending on July 31, 2021

G. Resolutions 2020-72

Resolution authorizing amendment to Cash Management Plan to allow for drop boxes.

H. Resolutions 2020-73

Resolution authorizing and establishing a petty cash account for the Housing, Health, and Human Services Center.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Caminiti – YES

D'Arminio – YES

English-Rollieson - ABSENT

Hernandez – YES

Ortega – YES

Peterson – YES

Sohmer - YES

Chairman Ortega thanked all staff. He acknowledged that no one expected 2020 to be like this but the Board of Commissioners recognizes that everyone is working exceptionally hard and doing the best they can ensuring our residents receive the services they need.

Seeing no further business to discuss Commissioner Caminiti moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:13pm which was unanimously approved.

Prepared by: Lynn Bartlett