

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

**MINUTES OF ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING OF APRIL 2, 2020**

THESE MINUTES ARE NOT VERBATIM BUT ARE INSTEAD A SYNOPSIS OF WHAT TRANSPIRED AT THE REGULAR MEETING OF APRIL 2, 2020 – A ZOOM VIRUTAL MEETING - OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF BERGEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

PRESENT: Commissioner Peter Caminiti, Sr.  
Commissioner Angelo D’Arminio, Jr.  
Commissioner Joanne English-Rollieson  
Commissioner Junior Hernandez  
Commissioner Daniel Ortega  
Commissioner Danielle Peterson

Lynn Bartlett, Executive Director  
Vincent Bufis, Field Operations Manager  
Kevin McCann, Director of Finance  
Esther Gatria, HR Manager  
Julia Orlando, BCHHH Director  
Terrence Corrison, General Counsel

ABSENT: NONE

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting to order at 3:40pm. Executive Director Lynn Bartlett read the following statement:

Consistent with the Bryon 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 this re-scheduled meeting was sent with sufficient notice to The Bergen Record, was posted on the Authority website and was provided to the County Clerk for posting at the County Administration Building on March 28, 2020. The notice sets forth the date, time, hyperlink and call-in information for this virtual meeting. The minutes of this meeting will be available following the next regularly scheduled meeting.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairman Ortega led all in the pledge of allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**MINUTES**

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of the February 2020 meeting of the HABC Board of Commissioners. Motion was made by Commissioner English-Rollieson and seconded by Commissioner D’Arminio; motion carried unanimously.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

Caminiti – YES\*  
D’Arminio – YES  
English-Rollieson – YES  
Hernandez – YES

Ortega – YES

\* Commissioner Caminiti made note that though he was not at the April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting he did read the meeting minutes and approved them.

Absent: Peterson

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Ms. Bartlett pointed out that she had previously circulated an extensive and detailed Executive Director report outlining all the activities taken administratively to comply with the New Jersey Executive Orders and Federal directives relative to the outbreak of COVID19. She pointed out that the report addresses all efforts of the Authority's various departments on a week by week basis that were implemented to combat and address the outbreak of the virus or to limit and reduce exposure for staff and residents.

Ms. Bartlett then reported that HABC Director of Finance, Kevin McCann, had accepted a position with the Long Branch Housing Authority and tendered his resignation providing two-week notice with his last day as April 10. Ms. Bartlett praised Mr. McCann, stating that he is the nicest guy, who would give you the shirt off his back, do anything for you or help you. She pointed out that he is beloved by staff and will certainly be missed, and that everyone wished him well. Ms. Bartlett then explained that this is the reason for the late addition of resolution 2020-31 to the consent agenda. Further explaining the action adds financial services under HABC's Nan McKay quality control contract.

Ms. Bartlett highlighted staff that that have been outstanding transitioning HABC to a fully operational remote working environment. She pointed out that the HABC is ahead of many other PHAs nationally in both its efforts and responses to the crisis; that the Authority even though transitioned, has paid vendors on time, paid Authority and Development Corporation bills on time, made rental assistance payments on time and continues to house the homeless. She explained that the infrastructure improvements in recent years have laid solid foundation for being able to transition so successfully. She acknowledged that none of this would have been possible without the work of Joe D'Angelo and Heather Wei of the HABC IT/Communications Department. Ms. Bartlett explained that they had Assisted Housing, Finance and Purchasing staff up and running from home within two working days. She further explained staff are able to process and finalize rental assistance recertifications, process requisitions and purchase orders, and make payments to landlords and vendors remotely. Further, office staff are able to access office voicemail and return calls through HABC software Ring Central. This allows staff to return calls to participants while protecting their home and personal contact information. All this remote capability was made possible only through Joe and Heather's work.

Ms. Bartlett praised their efforts and commitment, emphasizing that HABC would not be operating at this new normal without them. They have been unbelievably outstanding.

Ms. Bartlett shared additional praise for Labor Counsel, Joe Wenzel, of Friend & Wenzel. She explained that his counsel has been exceptionally assistive to Esther, Vinny and herself. He has provided direction on issues ranging from employee fears regarding exposure and reticence to come to work, as well as documentation requests from sick employees.

Director Bartlett then reported that there have been confirmed cases of COVID19 in HABC owned buildings. Brookside Gardens -Bergenfield, Ridgecrest - Ridgewood, The Manor – Northvale, and Boiling Springs - East Rutherford all have had confirmed cases. She explained that HABC maintenance staff have been re-purposed and reutilized to a heightened cleaning and disinfecting protocol only. In this way, maintenance assistants have been provided cleaning logs and are required to clean buildings multiple times a day to combat spread or introduction of the virus in buildings. In addition to cleaning, Maintenance staff address

only emergency work orders as they come in. Residents have done exceptional as well supplementing the Authority efforts. They too have adhered to the new maintenance protocols. Consequentially, there has been a significant reduction in work order requests and the number of emergency work orders.

Ms. Bartlett reported, as confirmed cases in are reported in buildings the Authority informs all building residents via CallMax. Beside informing residents, visitors to the building are also informed with posted notices at all entrances. This is to make everyone aware and to adhere to CDC recommendations for personal cleaning and hygiene as well as lockdown/quarantine requirements. With very little exception, residents are predominantly adhering to lockdown. HABC has taken additional precautionary measures to limited hours of laundry rooms. This allows staff greater time to clean and disinfect. We also have limited the number of residents in the laundry room at one time, removed all common area furniture to limit gatherings and contracted with an outside third party to perform full deep disinfection and cleansing of buildings with positive cases.

Field Operations Director Vincent Bufis and Executive Director Bartlett continue to answer calls and inquiries of children of residents regarding HABC COVID19 responses and visiting standards for buildings. HABC has asked all residents to limit their visitors to necessary supportive services only.

Ms. Bartlett receives a daily report on homeless shelter operational status. She explained that the homeless shelter is not accepting new referrals to shelter and has begun redirecting ill homeless clients to motel stays paid for with Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds. The reason for the redirect is to provide adequate quarantine for the sick guest and safeguard the health of everyone in shelter – guests and staff alike. Motel guests are returned to shelter once they are well.

Ms. Bartlett reported that BCHHH Director Julia Orlando has worked with the Bergen County Board of Social Services to utilize Emergency Assistance (EA) funds for motel stays for eligible homeless guests. Ms. Orlando has been exceptionally successful directing BCHHH staff efforts to housing homeless guests. Through these combined efforts homeless shelter staff have been exceptional; they have significantly reduced the number of homeless guests in shelter by more than half.

In an effort to reduce exposure for all staff and objectively create parity throughout the Authority, all employees have been directed to punch in and out only for hours they have worked. Ms. Bartlett pointed out that April 1 is the start of a new fiscal and budget year, where the budget has been established and approved for salaries for the full year. As such, HABC will continue to pay employees for full day's work. Administratively, a new payroll code allows the Authority to add the necessary balance of hours and track the expense. By doing so, the Authority reduces all employee's potential exposure and tracks expenses for reporting to both insurance and FEMA for possible reimbursement.

There were some technical difficulties in the virtual meeting which caused a slight delay while Ms. Bartlett muted all participants except Commissioners to reduce an echo, then she asked if Commissioners had any questions.

Commissioner English-Rollieson inquired what happens after 2 weeks? Ms. Bartlett presumed the question was regarding the Authority announcement to temporarily suspend office operations for two weeks. She explained that the original closure announcement would be updated to "indefinitely" based on recent information circulated from the Governors office. Ms. Bartlett took a moment to remind everyone that HABC was still open and working, there are just no office hours.

Commissioner D'Arminio asked for clarification on the newest addition to the consent agenda? Ms. Bartlett pointed out resolution 2020-31 was a late addition to the circulated consent agenda. The resolution adds

financial consulting services to the contract already in place between HABC and Nan McKay Associates (NMA). Commissioner D'Arminio followed up asking if HABC will now, or in future, fill the Director of Finance position? Ms. Bartlett confirmed that HABC would eventually look to fill the position.

Commissioner D'Arminio also asked for clarification on the quality control consulting contract with NMA, inquiring what it is for? Ms. Bartlett explained that program quality control review is required under the regulations and that HABC presently contracts with a third party to perform this regulatory requirement. She further explained that the review requires the Authority monitor its own files for quality control and assurance that income and rent calculations are being done properly, limit and correct errors, and standardizes procedures for the department. Mr. Corrison added that Nan McKay is a well-known industry consultant providing services for housing authorities nationally.

Mr. Corrison inquired whether Commissioner Ortega and Commissioner Caminiti were muted. Both responded that they were on the call and chose to mute to limit background noise.

Commissioner Hernandez asked regarding emergency calls and how they are being handled, specifically stress, trauma, counseling – how is it being handled? Commissioner Hernandez asked if there was a hotline? Ms. Bartlett asked if the question was regarding tenants, participants or staff? Commissioner Hernandez clarified that he was asking regarding both. Ms. Bartlett responded that there is no emergency hotline. She explained that participants are still able to reach their assisted housing specialists, and that the Department has posted Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on the Authority's social media and website explaining program adjustments and providing information on program issues most likely to be asked by participants. She explained that tenant residents can still access their Zone office or put requests through the 24/7 Emergency hotline. She also pointed out that the HABC main office is still operative - retrieving voicemail, forwarding calls and calling constituents back.

Answering the question relative to staff, Ms. Bartlett explained that Human Resources Manager, Esther Gatria, has been providing daily information and support to employees as well as outreach and wellness calls to staff that are sick. She explained that Esther presented a Family First Corona Virus Act Town Hall meeting for Managers and addressed proper ways to address staff and sick time issues.

Ms. Bartlett furthered, Heather Wei of the IT/Communications Department provides updates through email and the employee emergency alert system on wellness information and mental health supports. Ms. Wei has also provided links for information the Authority has received relative to mental health supports for employees from our Insurer and federal partners.

Commissioner English-Rollieson asked how the Authority is addressing rent adjustments for tenants experiencing income losses. Terry Corrison acknowledged the fact that many participants will experience income losses and that interim adjustments will be made with anticipated tenant portion reductions. He pointed out that tenant/landlord courts have stayed evictions for non-payment for 60 days with an expectation that this may be increased. He stated that landlords receiving a portion of the rent via housing assistance payments are encouraged to work with good tenants, though there is no method in place at this juncture to make up for tenant portion of the rent.

Ms. Bartlett asked if there were any other questions. Seeing there were none, before she moved on to the next agenda item, she stated she wanted to go on record recognizing HABC staff. She pointed out that since Commissioners don't work with staff daily it's not possible for them to see the hours and dedication of committed staff; they don't see what staff do or know the hours they have put in. She explained words fall short of expressing their commitment to the responsibilities the Authority has. They have been

remarkable! She furthered, no one is unaware that the highest priority is to keep tenants and staff safe, and that staff have been truly amazing in this capacity.

Commissioner English-Rollieson and D'Arminio both thanked staff. Commissioner Hernandez stated that he is very proud of how everyone has stepped up. Commissioner D'Arminio asked if there was a plan in place for situations like this or whether this was something that staff got done in the last few weeks? Ms. Bartlett stated that for the most part it was an effort that was pulled together in the last few weeks, addressing issues and problem solving in real time. D'Arminio complimented all, stating that they have done one hell of a job, and that it really is something else. Ms. Bartlett agreed, stating that the adaptability and support of one another has been extraordinary.

Chairman Ortega stated that he was not surprised, remarking that the staff is always doing a fantastic job – every employee. He said it shows, plan or not, all the efforts put into place the past few years really show in a situation like this - from everybody, from every department.

### **ATTORNEY REPORT**

Terry Corrison complimented Ms. Bartlett remarking that efforts like these start with leadership; he acknowledged her leadership and said it has been amazing to watch and be a part of.

Mr. Corrison then reported evictions have been staid for 60 days. Most tenants eventually pay so he does believe that Authority will not be in a bad position once this crisis is over.

He stated that HDC resale closings are still moving forward; they are being done by mail.

He also made recommendation to publicize a new meeting schedule with virtual meeting schedule, explaining that this should normally be done by resolution but given the circumstances and the expectation that this will be the new normal for the next several months the Board could address with a motion later in the meeting, and this will cover the Authority going forward.

### **PUBLIC MEETING**

Chairman Ortega then requested a motion to open the meeting to the public.

Commissioner English-Rollieson asked how the public portion of the meeting would work virtually? Ms. Bartlett explained that there was an additional participant to the meeting that she would un-mute incase they had any comments to share. She also explained that this portion of the meeting would work the same as in person – the meeting would be open to the public to comment if they wished to, if there were no one to comment the meeting would be closed to the public and proceed.

Motion was offered by Commissioner D'Arminio, seconded by Commissioner Caminiti and carried unanimously.

A member of the public signed is as TekWiz responded through Zoom chat. They explained that their microphone is not working. Transcription of the chat follows:

16:17:04        From TekWiz : Hi! Sorry my mic isn't working, but I enjoyed the meeting  
16:17:10        From TekWiz : You are all doing a great job  
16:18:06        From TekWiz : TekWiz  
16:18:15        From TekWiz : Yeah not a hacker lol  
16:18:21        From TekWiz : I get section 8  
16:18:27        From TekWiz : So I saw it on Twitter

16:18:32 From TekWiz : Decided to join  
 16:18:38 From TekWiz : First time I am using zoom  
 16:18:41 From TekWiz : It's great  
 16:18:51 From TekWiz : You're all very welcome  
 16:19:06 From TekWiz : My name is Jerry  
 16:19:28 From esthergatria : Thanks Jerry!  
 16:19:33 From TekWiz : Yvw!  
 16:25:22 From TekWiz : Zoom is becoming super popular and have been quickly fixing all sorts of privacy and security issues. Hundreds of millions of users daily due to the covid-19  
 16:25:43 From esthergatria : Thank you!  
 16:26:01 From TekWiz : Thanks to you all!  
 16:26:14 From TekWiz : Take care!  
 16:27:12 From TekWiz : Thanks!

There were no other members of the public that wished to address the board. A motion was made by Commissioner D'Arminio, seconded by Commissioner English-Rollieson and unanimously approved to close the meeting to the public.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Chairman Ortega asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda, resolutions 2020-21 through 2020-31. Motion was made by Commissioner D'Arminio and seconded by Commissioner English-Rollieson.

- A. Resolution 2020-22**  
Resolution approving the routine expenditures for the HABC for the period of 2/14/19-3/19/19
- B. Resolution 2020-23**  
Resolution approving the routine expenditures for the HDC for the period of 2/14/19-3/19/19
- C. Resolution 2020- 24**  
Resolution authorizing the execution of a shared service agreement with the County of Bergen to administer the BCHHH for 2019
- D. Resolution 2020-25**  
Resolution approving a contract extension for the CCTV replacement project in Ramapo Brae
- E. Resolution 2020-26**  
Resolution approving an interior design service contract for Franklin Heights Apartments
- F. Resolution 2020-27**  
Resolution authorizing a contract for payroll processing services
- G. Resolution 2020-28**  
Resolution authorizing a contract for radon testing services
- H. Resolution 2020-29**  
Resolution approving a contract for special counsel for the DeSimone Court ADA improvements project
- I. Resolution 2020-30**  
Resolution approving supplemental list of professionals and qualified consultants
- J. Resolution 2020-31**  
Resolution approving contract modification #2 with Nan McKay Associates for additional quality control services.

ROLL CALL VOTE:  
 Caminiti - YES  
 D'Arminio – YES  
 English-Rollieson – YES

Hernandez – YES

Ortega – YES

Absent: Peterson

Chairman Ortega then asked for a motion to amend the public meeting notice to accommodate for remote virtual Board meetings until further notice, as necessary. Motion was moved by Commissioner D’Arminio, seconded by Commissioner Caminiti.

The discussion following the motion addressed questions on whether the meetings would continue through Zoom, if there were other the software to utilize to hold the meeting, and if at some point it is decided to utilize another means than Zoom will we need to amend the notice. Terry Corriston reminded all that the notice needs to provide how the public can access the meeting.

Discussion was specific to Zoom meeting scheduling, the possibility of recurring meetings, and actions necessary to ensure that the public has the opportunity to participate.

Ms. Bartlett stated that she would work with IT to ensure all meeting requirements were met. Upon Roll call the motion passed unanimously.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Caminiti - YES

D’Arminio – YES

English-Rollieson – YES

Hernandez – YES

Ortega – YES

Absent: Peterson

Chairman Ortega then thanked staff for wonderful job they are doing making sure that everyone is safe, that needs are met and making sure that everyone is informed. He hoped that everyone continues to stay safe.

Commissioners English-Rollieson and D’Arminio then commented that they both liked the Zoom platform, and Lynn thanked everyone for their patience with her learning curve with this new platform. She stated that she’s new to hosting a Zoom meeting and was grateful for their patience.

There was no further or new business to discuss, Commissioner D’Arminio moved to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner English- Rollieson seconded. The meeting unanimously adjourned at 4:26pm

Prepared by: Lynn Bartlett