

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF BERGEN COUNTY
One Bergen County Plaza – 4th Floor Learning Center
Hackensack, New Jersey

MINUTES OF MEETING OF DECEMBER 19, 2019

THESE MINUTES ARE NOT VERBATIM BUT ARE INSTEAD A SYNOPSIS OF WHAT TRANSPIRED AT THE REGULAR MEETING OF DECEMBER 19, 2019 OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF BERGEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

PRESENT: Commissioner Peter Caminiti, Sr.
 Commissioner Junior Hernandez
 Commissioner Daniel Ortega
 Commissioner Steven Weinstein (via telephone)

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

ABSENT: Commissioner Joanne English-Rollieson
 Commissioner Danielle Peterson

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 6:08pm and HABC 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 the regular meeting was provided to The Bergen Record and posted on the Authority website on December 31, 2018 and was provided to the County Clerk for posting at the County Administration Building, at which time the date time and place were set forth. The minutes of the regular 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, Hernandez, Ortega, and Weinstein were present. Commissioner Weinstein was stuck in traffic and available by telephone for the meeting. Commissioners English-Rollieson and Peterson were absent.

MINUTES

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of the November meeting of the HABC Board of Commissioners. Motion was made by Commissioner Caminiti and seconded by Commissioner Hernandez; motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

Chairman Ortega asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda, resolutions 2019-81 through 2019-90. Motion was made by Commissioner Hernandez and seconded by Commissioner Caminiti.

A. Resolution 2019-81

Resolution approving the routine expenditures for the HABC for the period of 11/14/19 – 12/12/19

B. Resolution 2019-82

Resolution approving the routine expenditures for the HDC for the period of 11/14/19 – 12/12/19

C. Resolution 2019-83

Resolution approving the HABC and HDC audit, comments and corrective action plan for the FYE 03/31/2019

D. Resolution 2019-84

Resolution authorizing the assignment of HAP of 45 PBV at the Heritage to a new owner

E. Resolution 2019-85

Resolution approving the HABC PHA 5 year and annual plan for the Authority

F. Resolution 2019-86

Resolution authorizing the write off of uncollected debt for the HABC and HDC

G. Resolution 2019-87

Resolution approving the 2020 HABC JIF Fund Commissioner.

H. Resolution 2019-88

Resolution authorizing the purchase of a truck for routine property management and maintenance operations of the authority

I. Resolution 2019-89

Resolution authorizing two year landscaping contracts for various properties with a one year option

J. Resolution 2019-90

Resolution approving the 2020 Holiday Schedule

ROLL CALL VOTE: (4)

Caminiti – YES

Hernandez - YES

Ortega – YES

Weinstein – YES

Absent: English-Rollieson, Peterson (2)

PUBLIC COMMENT

Motion was offered by Commissioner Caminiti and seconded by Commissioner Hernandez to open the meeting to the public.

Michael Kasparian of Upper Saddle River and MDR Development addressed the Board of Commissioners. He explained that he has questions regarding a housing plan in the Borough of Saddle River where he is an intervener in the Saddle River Affordable Housing litigation working alongside The Fair Share Housing Center to try to settle with the town in regards to their housing plan. He further explained that he has a property that he has presented to the town for their affordable housing needs for development; municipal officials have suggested that they have better options. He explained that through no fault of HABC/HDC, the Borough of Saddle River introduced into their fair share and affordable housing plan a site that is HDC owned and that .6 acres of the site could be zoned to fit an additional 25 units of housing.

Mr. Kasparian further stated that the Borough has stated in the Fair Share litigation negotiations that they have suggested that the Borough has been talking to the Authority about developing the site. Mr. Kasparian then read from a letter in his possession “the Borough proposes to address the third round RDP by re-zoning the Housing Authority of Bergen County’s Borough Line road site .. the Borough is presently in discussion with the Housing Authority regarding this increased number of units on this property.” Mr. Kasparian pointed out that the Borough inserted the Authority into their plan and the plan was adopted by the Borough and submitted to the court in November 2019.

Mr. Kasparian explained that he is aware that the HABC has received an Open Public Meetings Act (OPRA) request from Fair Share Housing purposed to determine the veracity of the discussion between the municipality and the Authority regarding the future development of its site. He then stated his questions, inquiring the truthfulness of the Borough’s statement, are their discussions going on, is this property being considered for 25 units?

Chairman Ortega then directed the questions to HABC Counsel Terry Corriston or Executive Director Lynn Bartlett.

Terry Corriston responded inquiring if Mr. Kasparian was asking relative to only the Housing Authority of Bergen County or the Authority and its non-profit real estate development arm, the Housing Development Corporation of Bergen County (HDC). He wanted to clarify that there are two entities. Mr. Corriston then asked Ms. Bartlett if she could clarify for either or both entities.

Ms. Bartlett explained that the first she had heard proposal of the new development on the HABC site was the OPRA request. Subsequent to the OPRA, the Borough reached out the HDC Director of Development John Biale to have a discussion regarding the project. The furthest it has gone right now is for Mr. Biale to explain HDC process, which is to meet with the Borough first and have a discussion regarding what is being proposed and where, identify funding sources that are available as well as any municipal financing resources, then move before the HDC Board for authorization of an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to undertake feasibility and pre-development to determine if the project is actually viable. Ms. Bartlett explained that to date none of these steps have been taken and that the Borough did contact Mr. Biale to ask for a meeting which was scheduled for early January. Mr. Biale stated it was schedule for January 7th.

Mr. Kasparian inquired if that was it? Ms. Bartlett confirmed and also stated that there were no agreements, no MOUs, no signed letters, no promissory, no contracted professionals. Mr. Kasparian stated there was just a conversation – Ms. Bartlett responded that she did not even have that, she stated she’s had an email to request a meeting. Mr. Biale expounded by saying that he’d had a phone call from the Borough Planner asking for a meeting with a follow up email.

Mr. Kasparian then stated his questions had been answered and that he had no additional questions.

Chairman Ortega then asked Mr. Kasparian to leave his contact information for the purpose of providing update should it be necessary, to which he politely obliged.

PRESENTATIONS

Ms. Bartlett's introduced Cynthia Mazersky, Director of Making It Home, a non-profit affiliate of the Bergen Volunteer Center. Making It Home's mission is to provide furnishings for homeless households moving into permanent home ownership. Ms. Bartlett recalled for the Boards benefit the furnished apartments for the Emerson Veteran Housing Ribbon cutting explaining that Ms. Mazersky coordinated that herculean effort.

Ms. Mazersky explained that her purpose before the Board is to solicit assistance in identifying contacts or suggestions to help meet the needs of their operational budget which is approximately \$150,000 per year. She explained that as an affiliate of the Bergen Volunteer Center she is unable to solicit any of the Volunteer Center funding resources or donors.

Ms. Mazersky explained that Making It Home is a public private partnership serving Bergen County only. Collecting gently used furniture that non-profit directly collects, warehouses and delivers to formerly homeless families leaving the emergency shelter system into vacant apartments. Her all volunteer operation utilizes warehouse space, trucks, and movers to assist in furnishing homes for the homeless. Most recently assisting a household of a single mother, preteen son and twin infants furnishing their completely vacant apartment for their move in just before Christmas.

Chairman Ortega asked if she is looking for monetary contributions only or monetary and in-kind donations. She stated she is happy with in-kind donations in the form of furniture but at present the operation is in need of cash contributions.

Commissioner Caminiti if the operation is registered with the IRS. Ms. Mazersky explained that Making It Home is a 501c3. He followed up by asking if there are paid employees. She stated that there is one whom is paid with a very small stipend and that she does this completely as volunteer.

Commissioner Hernandez asked if the HABC as a public housing agency was able to donate. Chairman Ortega and Director Bartlett both explained that it is not possible, all funds are federal and are subject to the laws governing the funds.

Ms. Mazersky then thanked the Board profusely for their time.

Ms. Bartlett then introduced Rich Larsen of Novogradac to introduce the HABC FYE 2019 Audit. Ms. Bartlett explained that though there are four audits, in order to be compliant with local regulations governing public housing authorities, the HABC audit would be presented and the remaining audits would be discussed at the January meeting of the Authority.

Mr. Larsen confirmed that the audit is for the fiscal year ended March 30, 2019, that has been filed with HUD and is fully compliant. There are three audits in the report that have been given an unmodified opinion on the Authority's Financial Statements, HCV Compliance and Internal Controls.

He explained there were noted tenant file issues in the audit, though they do not rise to the level of any kind of material weakness to modify the opinion. Financially speaking the Authority's liquidity position is very strong, there are 8 months of reserves (operating reserves in cash). HUD's recommendation is 6-8mo

of reserve so the HABC is in great position. Mr. Larsen clarified that though the HABC has good reserves the deficit identified under the unrestricted position relates to the unfunded pension liability on the books as required by recent changes to State law.

Ms. Bartlett further explained that the tenant file issue highlighted by Mr. Larsen and identified in the audit report as being addressed by the Corrective Action Plan that is included in the Authority resolution accepting and approving the audit. The resolution was included in the previously circulated board packet and is available for immediate review electronically on their meeting tablets.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Ms. Bartlett informed the Board that a rather severe outbreak of influenza and a gastrointestinal virus has plagued the homeless shelter. Consequently, there is a restriction on new admissions – unless living on the street, along with limitations on outside guests, visits and tours, as well as Code Blue management. Additionally, there is a temporary moratorium on all hospital referrals.

A County of Bergen vendor has been contracted to be onsite at the shelter to provide decontamination of the full premises with the hope of further limiting the spread of illness.

Commissioner Caminiti inquired what is done for guests during flu season? Ms. Bartlett explained that we cannot require mandatory flu immunization, but it is made available on site at no cost for those that choose to be immunized. Ms. Orlando further explained that it is believed to be a greater problem this year than any past year is that in the past the hospitals would keep those referred with the flu longer, until they were better. This year the hospital would release and return homeless guests ill, with fever and other contagious symptoms after been seen. The difficulty is confining and restricting individuals in a shelter environment which by its nature is communal. Once it starts, unless you're able to isolate, it is difficult to contain.

Commissioner Caminiti explained that HUMC is a receiving hospital for contagious diseases, they went through an extensive renovation creating a separate ER and entrance for those with contagious illnesses. Ms. Orlando explained that the change in hospital administration, the loss of former relationships has certainly effected operations.

ATTORNEY REPORT

There was nothing of note for Mr. Corrison to report.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hernandez, seconded by Commissioner Caminiti to adjourn the meeting at 6:30pm that was unanimously welcome.

Prepared by: Lynn Bartlett