

*These minutes are not verbatim, but a condensed version of what transpired at the Lakewood Housing Authority (LHA) Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting held on **Thursday, November 2nd, 2023 at 6:12 pm.***

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Mr. Stafford-Smith called the meeting to order at 6:12 pm. Teresa Acosta announced that consistent with the Open Public Meetings Law: P.L.1975 c231, which requires that all meetings of public bodies shall be open to the public at all times, both adequate and electronic notice of this meeting was provided to the clerk of the Township of Lakewood, the Ocean County Library, the Asbury Park Press, and the Star-Ledger on December 21, 2022 and was posted on the Authority's official designated public bulletin board at the LHA Administration Building and website.

ROLL CALL

On roll call, attending Commissioners were:

Gregory Stafford-Smith – *Chairperson*
Shabsi Ganzweig – *Vice Chairperson*
Angela Caldwell – *2nd Vice Chairperson (via Zoom)*
Denise Douglas – *Commissioner*
Eli Rennert – *Commissioner*
Bassi Aderet – *Commissioner*

Also attending:

Scott Parsons – *Executive Director*
Terrence Corriston – *Attorney*

Absent were:

Ray Coles – *Township Liaison*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of September 7th, 2023 were reviewed.

A motion was made by Ms. Douglas, seconded by Mr. Ganzweig. All commissioners present were in favor. Minutes were approved.

COMMENTS FROM HOUSING AUTHORITY RESIDENTS - None

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC – None

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT PRESENTED BY RICHARD LARSEN

Mr. Larsen, a Partner with Novogradac & Company, LLP, briefly reported on the LHA Financial Audit, FYE December 31, 2022. He reviewed the three reports conducted and signed off by his firm:

1. The Independent Auditor's Report on LHA Financial Statements. This report addresses whether LHA financial statements present fairly in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The report received, once again, as in past years, an "Unmodified Opinion" which is the highest level of assurance that can be given by an auditor.
2. The Independent Auditor's Report in Accordance with Government Auditing Standards. According to Mr. Larsen, every Governmental Agency regardless of size is required to participate in this type of audit. It consists of two parts:
 - a. Internal control over Financial Reporting, which documents and tests an Agency's internal control structure over financial reporting; documenting and testing its payroll system, cash disbursements process,

cash receipts process, procurement process, etc. No deficiencies or weaknesses in your system were identified; a good outcome, another highest level of assurance an auditor can give.

- b. Compliance with contracts, grant agreements, New Jersey laws, regulations, everything from the filing of payroll taxes to following State of New Jersey procurement law. No instances of non-compliance were found. This is again the highest level of assurance we give.
3. The Independent Auditor's Report in Accordance with the Uniform Guidance and State of New Jersey OMB Circular 15-08. Uniform Guidance is Federal Law enacted by Congress. Any Government Agency that expends more than \$750,000.00 in Federal awards is required to have this audit. The Authority spends upwards of about 15 million dollars of federal awards. This type of audit requires an opinion of the Auditor regarding Agency compliance with provisions of its major Federal programs. The LHA complied in all material respects with the requirements that could have an effect on its major programs. The Housing Choice Voucher Program, which is audited every year, is a complex program to maintain compliance. This year we give the Housing Authority an unmodified opinion on your compliance for the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Mr. Larsen stated that Authority is in accordance with the Administration Plan and there were no findings among the three reports; no required reporting to HUD or the State of New Jersey. In addition, he pointed out that the Authority's financials are strong and the show that the Authority has about fourteen months of operating reserves. He expressed that the Authority is in very good financial shape.

Mr. Stafford-Smith expressed his thanks to Mr. Parsons, Ms. Acosta and the staff at the LHA for their work in order to have a very positive audit report results.

BILLS AND APPROVAL OF SAME

Bills were reviewed. After discussion, a motion to approve was made by Mr. Ganzweig, seconded by Ms. Aderet. All present were in favor. Bills were approved.

CORRESPONDENCE

Email regarding new HOTMA Section 102 & 104 Implementation Guidance. Mr. Parsons mentioned the effective date had been extended until January 2025. As of today there are several unanswered questions due to pending HUD clarification.

Memos from LHA clients

REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mr. Parsons presented the Board with his Executive Directors report which included the following items:

Mr. Parsons updated the Board regarding the recent fire at one of the LuLu Duffy units. The residents of the connecting units were relocated to vacant units at the other buildings. The insurance company will complete a cause of origin investigation along with the fire department. Mr. Ganzweig made a motion to have the LHA give the affected residents of the three units one thousand dollars each to assist with replacing furniture and other personal needs. The motion was seconded by Ms. Aderet. All present were in favor.

Current leasing percentage: The HCV program was 100.7% leased with 101% of the HAP budget expended through November 2023. The RAD PBV program has 7 vacancies as of October 1, with 2 of them becoming vacant effective 10/1/23. Three units are in the process of being leased and four units are in the process of being turned over by maintenance.

Interest Income: There has been another interest rate increase with our bank which resulted in an increase from 1.25% to 3.75% effective 7/1/2023. Other revisions of the overall setup/relationship are currently being negotiated to earn as much interest as possible.

HQS Inspection Fee Income: The LHA has been generating additional income by performing HQS inspections for the Ocean County Board of Social Services, Brick Housing Authority and Berkeley Housing Authority. This revenue source

has been steadily increasing over the past year.

Fair Market Rents/Payment Standards: The 2024 HUD Fair Market Rents were released in September which are approximately 13-15% higher than the 2023 figures. The 2024 payment standards were calculated at 110% of the Fair Market Rents which resulted in approximately a 4% increase over 2023.

HUD/HOTMA Implementation: HUD has pushed back the mandatory implementation effective date until 1/1/2025. HUD has also pushed back the requirement that the HA policies be updated to be in compliance with the HOTMA regulations by January 1, 2024. Once the complete guidance has been published the LHA will begin to train employees on the changes and update policies to be in compliance with HOTMA.

CDBG Grant Update: The window insulation/sealing project at the JJC building was completed.

Ocean Inc Weatherization Grant: The required documentation has been provided to Ocean Inc. and we are now waiting to have an energy audit for the JJC building to be scheduled.

Berkeley Housing Authority: The Berkley Housing Authority would like to extend the bookkeeping services agreement for another year. The BHA has also requested that we provide training services for their new employee.

Mr. Parsons added that he will be looking into an automatic shut off valve for gas ranges which ties into the fire alarm system so if a smoke/CO detector device goes off it will trigger the device to shut the gas off. This type of device could have made the recent fire outcome minimal. Mr. Parsons also discussed the Board the possibility of having the LHA resident buildings smoke free. After a brief discussion, the board recommended sending out a poll to all residents and also discussed possibly arranging smoke cessation programs for residents to take advantage of.

REPORT OF COMMITTEES – None

LHA BUDGET REPORT

The budget report through September 2023 was provided and briefly discussed.

REPORT OF ATTORNEY

Mr. Corrison stated that there had been several non-payment cases in court. Several tenants having significant balances were either assisted by STEPS with additional conditions set regarding continuous on-time payments going forward. A few tenants were locked out due to either not appearing to court or not complying with the arranged payments.

REPORT OF TOWNSHIP LIAISON – None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS - The following new business came before the Board:

A motion was made by Mr. Ganzweig and seconded by Ms. Aderet to approve the following Consent Agenda. On roll call approving, Mr. Stafford-Smith, Mr. Ganzweig, Ms. Caldwell, Mr. Rennert and Ms. Aderet. The following Consent Agenda was approved.

a. Resolutions:

Resolution 5348: Accounting & Auditing Certification

Resolution 5349: Extending Shared Services Agreement LHA & BHA for Bookkeeping Services

Resolution 5350: Approve Shared Services Agreement LHA & BHA for RAD Training

Resolution 5351: Approve Amending the Employee Health Benefits Policy

Resolution 5352: Amending the First-Time Homeownership Program Policy

Resolution 5352 was removed from the consent agenda. After discussion, an amendment was made to Resolution 5352. A motion was made by Mr. Ganzweig and seconded by Ms. Aderet. On roll call approving, Mr. Stafford-Smith, Mr. Ganzweig, Ms. Caldwell, Mr. Rennert and Ms. Aderet. Resolution 5352 was approved.

b. Additions:

Reappointment of Denise Douglas.


ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE BOARD - None

COMMENTS FROM COMMISSIONERS - None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Aderet, seconded by Mr. Rennert. All present voted to adjourn at approximately 7:11 pm.

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Township of Lakewood, County of Ocean, State of New Jersey, as held on Thursday, November 2nd, 2023.



Scott Parsons, Secretary
Executive Director