

IRVINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, March 23, 2022

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE TOWNSHIP
OF IRVINGTON, HELD ON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022, HELD
VIRTUALLY AT 5:01 P.M..

I. OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT/READING OF SUNSHINE LAW

I, Darlene Brown, Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the Township of Irvington and presiding officer at this meeting do hereby state that it is now 5:01 p.m. on March 23, 2022 and we are convening virtually and I do hereby announce publicly that notice of this board meeting has been provided in accordance with the law, that notice of same containing date, time and location was delivered or telephoned to the Irvington Herald or Star Ledger and also filed with the Municipal Clerk of the Township of Irvington and that formal action may be taken if said adequate notice has not been provided.

II. ROLL CALL

MR. BORIN: Commissioner Lockhart?

COMMISSIONER LOCKHART: Present.

MR. BORIN: Commissioner Figueroa?

COMMISSIONER FIGUEROA: Present.

MR. BORIN: Commissioner Francis, III?

COMMISSIONER FRANCIS, III: Present.

MR. BORIN: Commissioner Salaam?

COMMISSIONER SALAAM: (No response). (Came in at 05:04)

MR. BORIN: Commissioner Griffin?

COMMISSIONER GRIFFIN: Here.

MR. BORIN: Vice Chairwoman Beasley?

VICE CHAIRWOMAN BEASLEY: No response) (Came in at 05.04)

MR. BORIN: Chairwoman Brown?

CHAIRWOMAN BROWN: Present.

ALSO PRESENT:

FRANK BORIN, ESQ.
PAUL MATTURRO

MR. BORIN; You have a quorum Madam Chair.

III. SALUTE TO THE FLAG/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. PUBLIC PORTION: No members of the public

V. RESOLUTIONS:

1. 2022-12 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR BOARD MEETING HELD 02/09/22.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Figueroa, seconded by Commissioner Lockhart.

ROLL CALL:

YES: Commissioner Lockhart, Commissioner Figueroa, Commissioner Francis, III, Commissioner Griffin, Chairwoman Brown, Vice Chairwoman Beasley

VI. COMMISSIONERS REMARKS

VICE CHAIRWOMAN BEASLEY: Will hold her remark until Chair gives report.

COMMISSIONER FIGUEROA: Will hold her remarks for the Chair.

COMMISSIONER LOCKHART: Will hold her remarks for the Chair.

COMMISSIONER GRIFFIN: Will hold his remarks for the Chair.

COMMISSIONER FRANCIS, III: Will reserve his remarks for the Chair.

COMMISSIONER SALAAM: No remarks.

VII. MONTHLY REPORTS

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT BY VICE CHAIRWOMAN BEASLEY: She stated they had a very in depth financial meeting. She said they set up a program to get collected monies that are due, quite a bit of collected monies that are outstanding. She said the people that are 3,000 or over or three months that have not paid rent, they're

going to receive a letter stating that after that letter comes a conviction notice. She said they are asking them to call, come into the office and make some type of arrangement of paying that money back and bringing it up to date.

She stated they also have a lot of water bills that are still outstanding because leaks were found in different apartments and buildings that the water constantly leaks all the time. They were able to adjust that.

She said it was a lot of things that would make Irvington Housing better, but it's a process and nothing happens overnight. She said the road they're on right now, they are going to get things straight and people are beginning to move out and they also have apartments and units that will be occupied. She added the process is not going to be as long as it has been, because some of the building managers have been removed and some new ones have come in and they're doing their jobs as they are supposed to be done.

CHAIRWOMAN BROWN: She said she wanted to let the Commissioners know that they are moving a lot of money due to rent collections and water.

She said the finance report that Paul submitted was very, very detailed to where you could really understand it. She said he went over everything and explained everything. She thanked Paul and said he could go ahead with his report.

PAUL MATTURRO: He said he thought they had a very fruitful and productive meeting. He said they do have issues and Mr. Rivera can address those. The major issues are yes, they have to improve the collections. He said after the meeting last night, Mr. Rivera authorized them, with the backing of the Chairwoman and the Finance Committee, to notify the legal firm to start the process this week. He said they sent to the legal firm a listing of all the accounts and they are going to start in Phase I, the first 45 highest value accounts, which were just sent over to him. He stated the 45 highest value accounts are over \$400,000, 45 tenants. He said that is hurting the cash flow desperately and they need to make payroll, do the repairs, to do the fixtures.

He said when he did the original budget, which the Board approved, it was a balanced budget wherein they assumed they were going to collect 90, 95 percent of the rent, but they are only collecting 80 percent. He said they had assumed they would have higher occupancy, but they don't. From a cash flow stand point they need to improve the collections. He said the process they put in place today and last night will certainly help.

He said that another important point was that Mr. Rivera was instrumental in re-negotiating with the town and getting forgiveness of certain debt IHA owed them for past things going back six or seven years. They expect a final letter of agreement to forgive close to \$300,000 in debt owed to the town.

He said it was a very detailed, long meeting that they are going to have every month and he will prepare a detailed report and budget. He said a lot of good questions were raised and a lot of issues resolved.

CHAIRWOMAN BROWN: Said she wanted to thank Mr. Rivera for getting the debt forgiven by the Township.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RAMON RIVERA: He stated they were welcome and hopefully they can continue to reduce the debt and collect the unpaid rent. He said he does appreciate the time, because it's volunteer time from the Chair and the Vice Chair yesterday spending well over an hour to go through the finance report and they now have a plan to encourage the tenants to come and talk about dealing with their past due rent.

Starting with the eviction plans, he said it is a three step process and they are into the third step. The first step was to write to the tenants, which they did early on when he started. They wrote to all the tenants who had rental arrears and they received some responses, but not many. The second step was to again reach out to the tenants, but now with a civil complaint basically to collect a debt. And the third phase is to file eviction notices. They are going to do that with the top 45, which is the first phase and then they're going to the next 45 and continue on. He said that out of the total that they have, they have over \$800,000 in rent that is owed and if they can collect half of that, that will do wonders for the budget and allow them to pay for things to fix up the units, pay the employees and control the debt situation.

He said many of the tenants are on a fixed income, so the money is there to start paying IHA going forward and they are willing to work with tenants on a repayment plans and work with them to help them take advantage of rental assistance programs that are out there.

He said this month they were lucky enough to again work with the Township and they met with Deborah Simpkin's office. She runs INIC in the town of Irvington and they have been allocated funding from the Federal government for rental assistance. Mr. Rivera said they met with three of her staff to talk about how to get the people to come here, work with the managers and Section 8 folks to meet with tenants to help the tenants fill out the paperwork to then take advantage of the rental assistance program on a weekly basis because many of the tenants go home and then they don't see them again. He said they need things like birth certificates, school records. They need to prove that they may have been affected by COVID, but they don't need a test result, they just need to say someone in my house had COVID or they did and therefore it prevented me from paying my rent on time. So the INIC people are going to come in every week and help fill out the rental assistance program.

Mr. Rivera stated they will post the information up in all of the buildings. He added the town has significant funds that can be used and hopefully that with the eviction process will allow them to reduce this debt.

Mr. Rivera stated two other meetings occurred on March 11th., Silver Street, the developer that's working with IHA to rehab Building 81 and 624 came in and did a presentation on the RAD conversion of the two buildings where they explained the process to the tenants, they discussed what the units will look like after their rehab. They addressed questions about whether or not the tenants will be entitled to stay in their units and come back and that answer is yes. And they provided a handout to the tenants. This is part of the requirement that they have in order to file what's called a "CHAP" application in order to do the RAD conversion. They have to meet with the tenants at least two times and this was the second meeting. They did 624 at 10:00 and 81 at 12:00

or 1:00. The meeting was very well attended, the rooms were full for both meetings. He added Commissioner Francis may have joined them for that meeting as well.

The third meeting that occurred, which was a good meeting, was between the Section 8 team and the managers. They did a presentation for all of the residents who live in AMP 1 who are receiving the vouchers to move. Just a presentation on the Section 8 process. Mr. Rivera said that meeting had a good attendance, although he did not go to that meeting, but he has received at least five e-mails from tenants who said it was a really good meeting and they appreciate it. They were explained the process because there are a lot of rumors out there of misinformation.

Mr. Rivera said they are going to do that every two weeks just to try to get information to the tenants who are in AMP 1 about what is really going on with them getting a tenant protection voucher. The tenant protection voucher is what they are getting at AMP 1. That gives them the right to take that voucher, move out of housing either at Irvington or anywhere in the country, but then come back under certain rules and requirements when AMP 1 is rebuilt. They are explaining that process so the tenants understand what their rights are and that is legally what IHA has to do. Mr. Rivera said he is hoping that will lead to the folks starting to move through the process to move you. He said some new realtors have been engaged to assist.

Mr. Rivera stated they have moved a few tenants with the Brantley Brothers Moving Company and the Board approved that resolution to use Brantley Brothers and they are now using them for some residents who are moving.

On March 25th, Mr. Rivera stated they are having a REAC inspection and have been working with the maintenance staff to insure that Building 81 -- so it just going to be Building 81 which is going to be reviewed for REAC this time and will score as high as possible. They are fixing things like doors, locks, any tile floors that have issues. Mr. Rivera stated there was an issue with a tile floor on the sixth and seventh floor which was in disrepair for years and there was an allegation that it had asbestos. It was tested and there is no asbestos in it. Now they are ripping up that floor and will be placing tile down.

Mr. Rivera stated he is pleased with the communication they have been having with the residents and the meetings are helping to get the right information out and he is hopeful that next month they will start to see some positive things.

CHAIRWOMAN BROWN: She said one of the things they discussed yesterday was that they want to draw people to the Housing Authority. She said she suggested that they put how the property is going to look once Silver Street comes in. She said she will wait for Mr. Rivera to speak to Silver Street so it can be put on the web site how it will look once it's completed. She said right now people see a sore eye, but if they go on the web site they will see how the property is going to look once they're done and that will draw people not to move to the Housing Authority now, so that when they finish, they'll be living like the picture that they saw on the web site.

COMMISSIONER LOCKHART: She said like some construction sites have big backdrops on how it's going to look when it's completed. So are we going to put those up

once we start construction, besides putting it up on the website?

RAMON RIVERA: He responded they can do that. He said he knows what she means like when you go buy the construction sites, they have like a big sign "coming soon". Yes, they can do that. He said he's going to get with Silver Street for pictures of what the units might look like to put on the website so people can see that to encourage people to move in.

CHAIRWOMAN BROWN: She asked speaking of the backdrop Commissioner Lockhart mentioned, when can they get that?

RAMON RIVERA: I'll follow up with Silver Street on the request for drawings of what it might look like. He said they may not have concepts that they're ready to share, but he will put the request in and will get back to everyone when they will get those drawings.

CHAIRWOMAN BROWN: She stated she thought it would be nice for them to have and then they all take a picture of everybody in front of it and put it on the website just to enhance the beauty of the Housing Authority.

VIII: RESOLUTIONS:

2. 2022-13 APPROVING THE BILLS LIST FOR FEBRUARY 1 TO FEBRUARY 28, 2022 IN THE AMOUNT OF \$564,807.30.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Francis, III, seconded by Vice Chairwoman Beasley.

ROLL CALL:

YES: Commissioner Lockhart, Commissioner Figueroa, Commissioner Francis, III, Commissioner Salaam, Commissioner Griffin, Vice Chair Beasley, Chairwoman Brown

3. 2022-14 ACCEPTING AND AWARDED EMERGENCY SECURITY SYSTEM REPLACEMENT AT CRESCENT LANE TO CITY FIRE EQUIPMENT COMPANY, INCORPORATED.

Remarks by Mr. Rivera: He said this is a resolution needed to put before the Board because they were updating and changing the term of the resolution. This had been previously approved by the Board, but it wasn't changed, so they needed to bring it back to the Board could review it and vote on it again. They used City Fire Equipment to monitor and service the emergency security system in Crescent Lane and all over the IHA and due to the flooding that occurred, there was damage to the basement where there were security systems. Based on the damage that occurred, they now want to approve this proposal to replace the entire system as it was designed. And, Paul, this is subject to reimbursement through FEMA, based upon the damage by the hurricane, correct?

MR. MATTURRO: He said, to reiterate, the reason they are doing it again, when they originally had the damage they assumed it would be covered because they had a flood insurance policy. On further examination, FEMA said technically the alarm system shouldn't have been in the basement and as such FEMA was not going to reimburse us for that. IHA already had to do it and it is required that IHA have a fire alarm system, a smoke alarm system before the tenants come in. Mr. Matturro said they went out and used regular operating funds to do this, assuming they would be reimbursed and when they didn't get reimbursed by the insurance company, they were certainly going to try to collect it from FEMA. But then they went to HUD and said we would like now to take this money and take it from the capital fund, in which we still have well over a million dollars and use capital fund money as opposed to operating fund money so it could be put into the regular operating account.

He said but to do that, they needed this resolution to be labeled a special emergency resolution, as that is the only way they would accept it. So now the capital fund money can be transferred back into the operating account. It's a little complicated, but that is why you are seeing it twice, it's a technicality.

CHAIRWOMAN BROWN: This is the resolution that needed to be changed, the wording needed to be changed, that HUD asked the wording to be changed?

MR. MATTURRO: He said exactly, a technicality so capital fund money can be used, not operating fund money.

RAMON RIVERA: The prior version of this resolution was passed at last month's meeting under 2022-06.

MR. MATTURRO: He said this is not a new expenditure, it was something we had to do, but it was just a technicality so we're not using operating funds, we're using capital funds.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Figueroa, seconded by Commissioner Francis, III.

ROLL CALL:

YES: Commissioner Lockhart, Commissioner Figueroa, Commissioner Francis, III, Commissioner Salaam, Commissioner Griffin, Vice Chair Beasley, Chairwoman Brown

(MEETING CLOSED BY VOTE OF ALL AYES)

CERTIFICATION

I, JENNIFER WILSON, the assigned transcriber, so hereby certify the foregoing minutes o March 23, 2022, from 05:01 pm to 05:31 pm. digitally recorded and is prepared to the best of my ability.

/s/ Jennifer Wilson

Jennifer Wilson AD/T 623

AUDIOEDGE TRANSCRIPTION
FLORHAM PARK, NEW JERSEY

March 29, 2022

Date