

**MINUTES OF A SCHEDULED MEETING FOR  
THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF BRIDGETON  
HELD ON SEPTEMBER 24, 2015**

A meeting of the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Bridgeton was held on Thursday September 24, 2015, 2015 in the Conference Room at 429 Oakview Heights on West Vine Street in Bridgeton New Jersey.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Santiago at 5:00 PM and upon roll call, those present were: Chairperson Santiago, Vice-Chairperson Thomas, Commissioner Cortes, Commissioner Lugardo-Hemple, Commissioner Williams and Commissioner MacFarland. Also present were Executive Director Joanne Sbrana, Assistant Executive Director James Howell and Attorney Robert Pryor.

A motion was made by Commissioner Lugardo-Hemple to approve the minutes from the July 16, 2015 meeting and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. The minutes were approved unanimously via an oral vote.

**Mill Street Urban Farm**

The Board was addressed by Attorney Howard Melnicove, Marcus Weaver and Ed Bethea who were representatives of Gateway Community Action Agency. They wished to speak of plans for the Mill Street Urban Farm. Currently, Gateway operates an “Urban Farm” on the property that the Mill Street apartments were formerly located upon. This farm was developed through a partnership of the Housing Authority, Gateway and the City of Bridgeton. Two greenhouses at the site grow hydroponic produce which is sold to local businesses and donated to soup kitchens.

Gateway is seeking to extend the life of the existing Memorandum of Understanding that will allow the organization to continue operating on the land for the next 20 years. They would also like to erect a 50’ x 100’ pole barn on a portion of the property. They explained that the barn will be used as storage.

Several questions were asked of the presenters. Executive Director Sbrana wanted to know how they would be allowed to build a structure on the property when it is considered in the flood plain. The presenters explained that they are working with engineers to determine if they will be able to build the barn on a portion of the property.

Commissioner MacFarland wanted to know if Gateway had consulted with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regarding the flood plain. The presenters explained that the barn will be built on a section that falls outside of the flood plain.

Commissioner Lugardo-Hemple wished to know how they could build before the engineer evaluates. The presenters explained that nothing would be built until after the evaluation. The City and BHA will be notified.

Commissioner MacFarland asked if laying a cement floor for the barn makes it a permanent structure. The presenters stated that the structure is not built onto the floor so it is not truly permanent. However, the floor would have to be removed if the building was moved.

Director Sbrana wished to know that since there was no mortgage and no lien, what would happen if Gateway defaulted. It was explained that the structure itself could be treated as collateral and can be taken away.

Director Sbrana inquired if Gateway had income to pay back the loan that would be needed to complete the project. The presenters informed the Board that loan payments would be made from proceeds of produce sales, grants and donations.

It was also inquired of the Gateway representatives if there was potential for Gateway to trade a developable property that they own for the Mill Street site. They indicated that there is potential for this stressing that Gateway would be willing to enter into a partnership with the BHA (and/or City) to complete a project on any developable land.

### **Report of Secretary/Treasurer**

Director Sbrana presented financial reports to the Board. Amp 1 (Maplewood) generated \$78,675 of operating income and cost \$64,548 in expenses for the

month. AMP 2 (Senior Sites) generated \$140,327 in operating income and cost \$136,503 in expenses. AMP 3 (HOPE 6) pulled in \$32,826 through subsidy which was transferred to HOPE 6 with the Authority receiving 10% for administration. Central Office generated \$33,313 and cost \$31,368 in expenses. Section 8 generated \$9,660 and cost \$9,786 in expenses. A motion to accept the financial reports was made by Commissioner Williams and seconded by Commissioner Thomas. The motion was unanimously approved.

The Board was presented with Resolution Number 1515 which authorized the Authority to enter into a contract with the auditing firm of Polcari and Company. The Authority advertised for bids for auditing services and Polcari was the sole respondent. The Authority has used this firm in the past. A motion to accept the resolution was made by Commissioner Thomas which was seconded by Commissioner Lugardo-Hemple. Upon voting, Resolution 1515 unanimously passed.

The Board was presented with Resolution Number 1516 which authorized the disposition of the Onan generator through GovDeals.com. The High Rise is in the process of being fitted with a new emergency backup generator. The former Onan generator will be auctioned off online through the website GovDeals.com. The Authority has successfully used this site in the past to dispose of obsolete equipment. A motion to accept the resolution was made by Commissioner Thomas and seconded by Commissioner MacFarland. Upon voting, Resolution 1516 was passed unanimously.

### **Committee Reports**

There were no Committee Reports.

### **Unfinished Business**

Commissioner Santiago inquired regarding resident Doris O'Neil of the High Rise. O'Neil had previously complained of some issues in her apartment. Those issues are currently in the process of being addressed by maintenance.

Commissioner Cortes inquired about the Community Center at Maplewood Garden and the chances of it being re-opened. Commissioner Williams added that it should not sit idle and the Authority should consider hiring a coordinator. Both

Commissioners wished to see programing located there that would attract children. Director Sbrana noted that Gateway services the children of the neighborhood that Maplewood Garden is a part of. Commissioner Lugardo-Hemple suggested that Board members bring ideas to the next meeting of what could be done at the Community Room.

### **Public Portion**

The Board was addressed by resident Madeline Yearicks and her daughter Lori Sutton. Yearicks is currently in the process of being evicted due to high levels of clutter and poor housekeeping. Sutton spoke of her mother various physical illnesses as well as her depression and felt the eviction was unjust. She and Yearicks also claimed that Yearicks had been sexually harassed by James Howell of the Authority staff. Howell denied the harassment claims.

### **New Business**

There was no new business

With no further business to discuss the public meeting was closed at 6:18 and the Board entered Executive Session.

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Joanne Sbrana, Secretary

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Date