

Hudson Housing Authority Board of Commissioners
Minutes of Regular Meeting
April 14, 2021

In attendance: Chairperson Revonda Smith, Vice Chairperson Clair Cousin, Treasurer Rebecca Wolff, Marie Balle, Rebecca Borrer, Executive Director Tim Mattice, Counsel Michael Bruno
Absent: Edrick Brown, Robert Davis

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Smith at 6:07 p.m. It was conducted both live and remotely via Zoom teleconferencing.

Minutes

Ms. Borrer made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2021 meeting, which was seconded by Ms. Wolff and approved unanimously.

Accounts Payable

Ms. Balle made a motion to approve accounts payable for March 2021. Ms. Cousin offered a second and the measure passed unanimously. Ms. Borrer thanked Mr. Mattice for providing greater itemization.

Bridge Loan Resolutions

The board considered a resolution (#510) recommending that the 41 North Second Street Housing Development Fund Company Inc. board (HDFC) authorize a 36-month Line of Credit Bridge Loan of up to \$950,000 from M&T Bank. Ms. Balle asked if the money deposited would go into a new account or an account set up by the HHA board some time ago. Mr. Mattice said an account had to be set up with M&T Bank to start the process. There will be regular monthly accounting of the account.

Ms. Borrer asked for clarification between the boards of HHA and HDFC. Mr. Mattice explained that they were two separate entities and the HHA controlled both. The HHA is the sole member of that entity. The HDFC owns all the assets of the HHA and the HHA controls the management arm of the Housing Authority. "This makes sure that both entities agree to borrowing," he said. Both boards have the same members.

Ms. Borrer asked if the funds would go toward substantial renovation of Bliss Tower and the Low-Rise. Mr. Mattice said the funds would allow the agency to operate until funding was secured for substantial renovations or new construction. He referred to it as "interim financing." Ms. Borrer did not feel the wording encapsulated that. Mr. Mattice said the language was intentionally vague. Mr. Mattice added that M&T extended the term to 36 months, "which gives us a large safety net if things get bottlenecked and the process slows down." Closing fees were waived so there was a bit of money saved. Only legal fees will be incurred with the agreement. "M&T has done a lot to accommodate this board," Ms. Balle said.

Ms. Cousin made a motion to approve the resolution, which was seconded by Ms. Borrer and approved unanimously.

On a motion by Ms. Cousin and second by Ms. Wolff, the board, acting as the HDFC board, unanimously approved a resolution (#511) authorizing the bridge loan.

Resident Commissioner Election

Mr. Brown decided to step away from the board because he did not have enough time to dedicate to the position. A special election will be required to fill the remainder of the term, which expires in December. The election will be in June. All residents will be notified. Petitions and instructions will be available. Mr. Mattice said both resident commissioner seats expired in December and another election would be held. Terms are for two years.

Ms. Cousin asked about the nominating process. Mr. Mattice said anyone in Bliss of Columbia Apartments in good standing had to get 25 signatures of residents on a petition and have it notarized to get their name on the ballot. Ms. Cousin asked if it would be a conflict for board members to assist. Mr. Mattice saw no reason why there would be. Ms. Cousin reminded Mr. Mattice that the number of required for elected local government positions was lowered. He said the board could decide to reduce the number. Ms. Cousin recommended that the board reduce the number of required signatures from 25 to 10 due to COVID-19. Ms. Wolff offered a second and the measure passed unanimously.

Conservation Advisory Council

Hilary Hillman of the Conservation Advisory Council appeared at the invitation of Ms. Smith and Ms. Balle, who recently joined the CAC. Ms. Hillman said the CAC was created by the Hudson Common Council to advise it on environmental matters ranging from flooding to global warming, street trees and storm water runoff. The CAC researched the impacts of parking lots and shared its findings with the Planning Board, which resulted in the applicant offering to use the CAC's recommended methodology.

Ms. Hillman said the CAC did not have a landscape architect on board and was short on members, but would still be happy to help the HHA board with language in its RFP for building renovations or new construction with green space in mind. The parking lot would be an issue as well. She said it was very important that all parking lots in the city, new or repaved, be done with the environment in mind. Cars create heat and many parking lots have runoff. Parking lots should have trees to help contain runoff, she said. "If we can be of help, we'd like to be."

Ms. Wolff said there were many environmental concerns that might come up in the process. She said she had been looking into green building processes as well.

The board thanked Ms. Hillman and the CAC for its offer.

Five-Year Plan

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) five-year plan is due in May. "Would we want to talk about our plans for development?" Ms. Borrer asked. Mr. Mattice said it was included. A couple of areas addressed developing affordable housing and pursuing community partnerships, for example.

Ms. Borrer said the previous plan included various events. She asked if a barbecue would be held this year. Mr. Mattice said it would, as it was a way to show appreciation to the tenants. Ms. Smith asked if "our real plans" should be included. Mr. Mattice said the submission could be more specific, but he tried to keep the goals general and overarching. If specifics were offered and not done, the board might have to deviate from its statement. "There's no hard and fast rule. We can frame it any way the board wants." He added that if there were any concerns, changes could be made in the statutory 45-day comment period, during which time the document is open for public inspection. A public hearing will follow during the June meeting and the board could approve the plan at that time.

Tenant Relations Subcommittee

Ms. Smith said a recent meeting with tenants was a good one with children present. Ms. Cousin said enough tenants came down at a time to allow social distancing. She said the subcommittee should plan to meet on Wednesdays, especially while the survey was under way. “We’re building a network,” she said, and the last meeting “left a good taste in tenants’ mouths.” Ms. Smith said almost 85 tenants participated and four surveys were left off today, which she believed would be done soon. Efforts of the Hudson Catskill Housing Coalition have been “a wonderful success,” she said, and tenants liked the survey and what they saw.

Ms. Cousin asked if it would be productive to have a facilitated session in the Community Room after the surveys were collected to share concerns about either option. Board members agreed.

It was noted that tenants stressed they would like to be reached directly about the surveys. Their apartment numbers are on the surveys so it was agreed that could easily be done.

Ms. Smith stressed the importance of outreach. When the Albany Housing Authority conducted a recent survey, only 45 percent of tenants were reached. “We far surpassed that.” She said commissioners had to figure out a way to continue outreach after the surveys were completed. “What will get them to meetings?”

Ms. Borrer said at the last tenant relation committee meeting people wanted to see visual examples of other sites. Ms. Cousin said it could be tied to a Town Hall or State of the HHA event.

Development Subcommittee

Ms. Borrer said the subcommittee had begun writing a request for qualifications (RFQ) and that many organizations were interested in helping. A draft should be available in May.

Off-line Apartments

Mr. Mattice reported that two of the off-line units had been leased and the remainder should follow. Bids were to be let for 13 units remaining in Bliss and work could start next month. The Low Rise units were not included.

Subcommittee Leadership

Ms. Smith said it was important to have both a chairman and vice chairman for each subcommittee to work could continue seamlessly. Ms. Balle will serve as vice chair for the tenant subcommittee and Ms. Borrer as vice chair for the development subcommittee.

Ms. Borrer asked if the Town Hall meeting could be conducted after both subcommittees met. It was tentatively scheduled for May 5 at 6 p.m. in the Community Room and via Zoom.

Maintenance Staff

Ms. Borrer asked if a maintenance position would be filled. Mr. Mattice said no one had been hired. There are three full-time and one part-time maintenance staff members. Ms. Borrer wondered if a grant or scholarship could be offered for people to complete a carpentry program at Columbia-Greene Community College. The program can be completed in a year and lines up with the board’s development timeline. Mr. Mattice said he had contacted the college regarding skill development programs and carpentry was not mentioned. He will follow up. Ms. Cousin was looking for a way to offer small businesses incentives for training such students and

graduates. Ms. Wolff suggested that she contacted Columbia Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Mike Tucker.

Mr. Mattice referenced the Commission on Economic Opportunity's YouthBuild program in Troy, which helps people ages 16 to 24 that have struggled or dropped out of school. YouthBuild is a 34-week workforce development program that helps youth set and achieve employment and training goals, and removes barriers to success through hands-on vocational learning, soft skill development and preparation for the high school equivalency exam. Youths are prepared for several career pathways, with an emphasis on the construction and culinary industries.

A tenant was glad to hear about the carpentry program at the college and through that people should be informed about it. Ms. Borrer said it could be mentioned at the Town Hall meeting.

Ms. Borrer made a motion to adjourn at 7:30 p.m., which was seconded by Ms. Cousin and approved unanimously.