

JANUARY 5, 2017
 Council Chambers-Borough Hall
 221 South 5th Ave.
 Highland Park, NJ 08904
 The Highland Park Redevelopment Agency
 Board of Commissioners Reorganization and Regular Meeting

Call to Order

The Reorganization Meeting of the Highland Park Redevelopment Agency was called to order in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by Chairperson Baruh at 7:36pm. Mrs. Baruh indicated the location of the fire exits.

Roll Call

Present	Mrs. Baruh, Mr. Perlman, Ms. Levinson, Mr. Solomon, Mr. de Villa, Mr. Fechter
Absent	
Agency Professionals	
Council Liaison	Ms. Susan Welkovits, Council Liaison

Selection of Officers

Mrs. Baruh called for a nomination for herself, Mr. Soloman, and Mr. de Villa to the positions of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary, respectively. Ms. Levinson made a motion nominating the three commissioners to their positions with a second from Mr. de Villa hearing no other nominations.

ROLL CALL: Ayes – de Villa, Fechter, Levinson, Perlman, Solomon, Baruh
 Nays – None

There being six (6) ayes and no nays, the nomination of Mrs. Baruh, Mr. Soloman, and Mr. de Villa to serve as Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary, respectively for 2017, passed.

Appointment of Professionals and Staff

Mrs. Baruh called for a nomination for Mr. Baumann, Ms. Santiago, and Hodulik & Morrison to the positions of Agency Attorney, Clerk, and Auditor, respectively. Mr. Perlman made a motion nominating the three commissioners to their positions with a second from Ms. Levinson hearing no other nominations.

ROLL CALL: Ayes – de Villa, Fechter, Levinson, Perlman, Solomon, Baruh
 Nays – None

There being six (6) ayes and no nays, the nomination of Mr. Bauman, Ms. Santiago, and Hodulik & Morrison to serve as Agency Attorney, Clerk, and Auditor, respectively for 2017, passed.

Setting 2017 Official Newspaper

Mrs. Baruh called for a nomination for Home News Tribune to be the official agency newspaper. Ms. Levinson made a motion nominating the newspaper with a second from Mr. Fechter. With a voice vote, the Home News Tribune was set as the official newspaper for 2017.

Adopt Rules of Order

Mrs. Baruh called for the adoption of the agency's rules of order subject to a future review of the rules by Ms. Levinson. Mr. Solomon made a motion to adopt the rules with a second from Ms. Levinson. With a voice vote, the rules of order were adopted for 2017.

Mrs. Baruh asked the board to send any ideas or suggestions to Ms. Levinson directly without copying the entire agency so as to abide by state laws.

Public Comment

Mrs. Baruh opened the floor for public comment. With no public comment, it was moved by Mr. Solomon and seconded by Mr. Perlman with voice vote the reorganization meeting was adjourned at 7:44 pm.

Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the Highland Park Redevelopment Agency was called to order in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by Chairperson Baruh at 7:45pm. Mrs. Baruh indicated the location of the fire exits.

Roll Call

Present	Mrs. Baruh, Mr. Perlman, Ms. Levinson, Mr. Solomon, Mr. de Villa, Mr. Fechter
Absent	
Agency Professionals	
Council Liaison	Ms. Susan Welkovits, Council Liaison

Approval of minutes of previous meetings

Mrs. Baruh said that minutes would be addressed at the next meeting.

There was a motion by Mr. Solomon seconded by Mr. Perlman to table the approval of minutes.

Chairperson and Committee Reports

--Popov project

Mrs. Baruh clarified that the Popov project relates to the International Food Market, which is closing. She stated that proposed plans were distributed to the sub-committee for the Popov project. The plans have been worked on with the property owner, but the owner still needs to come before the agency to present it.

Mrs. Baruh said that in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan, the property owner needs to enter into a written agreement to provide a parking spot to each proposed residence. The plan currently calls for five residences, which means the owner must provide at least five spots. Mrs. Baruh said that the property owner had already gone through his escrow funds but that another check had just been received to replenish his account.

Mrs. Baruh said that the project cannot start until there is a redevelopment agreement with the agency. Mrs. Baruh reached out to the Construction Department earlier in the day to remind

them that this project was in the redevelopment zone and that no permits could be issued until the redevelopment agreement has taken effect.

Mr. Fechter said that this project was relatively simple and did not involve any environmental clean up. Mr. Perlman asked if the property owner was allowed to start tearing down the inside of the building before he gets any permits. Mrs. Baruh said that the agency has already run into that situation in Block 22, at a property between Second Avenue and Third Avenue. She said that in this case permits seem to have been issued without consulting the agency.

Mrs. Baruh said that there is a method for keeping track of which lots need approval from the agency. Ms. Welkovits confirmed that Code Enforcement does have a system in place. Mr. Solomon said he believes it is the duty of the agency to get more involved with the permitting process to better understand it. Mr. Solomon said that there was a problem with the old Zoning Officer where restrictions that had been placed on the Rite-Aid building by the Planning Board were not considered in permitting.

Ms. Welkovits said that if someone gets a permit to install central air, for example, that would be in Code Enforcement's system. Mr. Soloman said that the Zoning Officer should make sure that all decisions made by boards with authority should be reflected in permitting decisions made by Code Enforcement. Mr. Perlman said that the first step in issuing a permit should be to check if there are any encumbrances, restrictions, or approvals from the Planning Board. He said that Code Enforcement's system is more for state restrictions and does not interface with the boards.

Mrs. Baruh said that she has spoken to Code Enforcement with the Mayor to remind them that there is a process for projects in redevelopment zones that includes formally going before the agency. Ms. Welkovits recommended setting up a meeting with Code Enforcement to discuss this process. Mr. Solomon said the agency should invite Scott Brescher from Code Enforcement to the next meeting.

Mr. Perlman said the agency was probably not consulted on the property in block 22 because it likely did not need a site plan approval. Mr. Fechter said that he was worried a similar situation would arise eventually. Mrs. Baruh suggested setting up a meeting with the two of them, Ms. Welkovits, and Code Enforcement.

Mrs. Baruh said that the agency should ask Mr. Baumann at the next meeting what the impact of interior renovation is if someone guts the inside of their house and makes no exterior change.

--Tantleff project

Mrs. Baruh said the Tantleff project was being held up primarily because of the need to determine the extent of environmental contamination on the property. Denise Nickel, who works for the county, filed a grant application with the Environmental Protection Agency involving this project. Mrs. Baruh said that Ms. Nickel has also been asked to apply for a grant under the Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund that would pay for site investigation.

Mr. Solomon said that Ms. Nickel had told him that if all goes well the grant will be received in the summer, the money would be made available in the fall, and the agency could then start contracting to get the work done. Mr. Solomon said this means the project is definitively stalled

until 2018. He said that he believes the borough should pay the cost for the site investigation then get reimbursed because it cannot afford to have this major development fall through. The economy makes this a good time to take on the project.

Mrs. Baruh said that she was not expecting to get the grant with the EPA because past applications have been rejected. She said that the Hazardous Discharge grant was more likely to bring in money. There are three phases that cost money, the first is site investigation, which could be paid for by the Hazardous Discharge grant.

Mr. Solomon confirmed that there are three phases, ending in remediation. He said that ideally the developer will bear the cost of all three phases, but that she cannot buy the property at a reasonable price without the site investigation being done first. Mrs. Baruh said she has expected the Hazardous Discharge grant application to be sent in that day, but it had not been yet.

Power in the building was lost between 8:11pm and 8:17pm. The meeting was put on hold between these times.

--Borough Square project

Mrs. Baruh said that the Borough Square project was on the back burner while the borough figures out what resources it can use to acquire the properties for the project. Ms. Welkovits said she would look into what funds have been made available for the project.

Mr. Solomon explained that the key to this project was to bundle together multiple properties, purchase them, then sell them to developers so that development can occur. Mr. Fechter clarified that the goal of such activity is not to speculate on land value to make a profit but to encourage development.

Public Comment

Mrs. Baruh opened the floor for public comment. Mrs. Baruh was asked about the locations of the properties discussed. She said the Popov project is on Raritan, close to Second Ave, and is called the International Food Market. She said the Tantleff project is on Raritan, between First Avenue and the International Food Market. Mrs. Baruh said that Borough Square is the area in need of redevelopment between Second and Third Avenue, not including the corners, on the south side of Raritan Avenue.

Mr. Alvin Chin, 111 South Fourth Avenue Apartment 1, questioned whether Highland Park could help with site control by buying properties on a temporary basis. He asked if the borough would buy any property that goes up for sale in an area in need of redevelopment or only within specific project areas. Mrs. Baruh said this was something that should be discussed when more is known about the borough's bond authority. Mrs. Baruh also said that the borough and developers are not interested in buying property without knowing the state of the land.

Hearing of new agenda items

HPRA R2017-01 Resolution Certification of the 2015 Audit

Mrs. Baruh explained that the auditor was not able to be at the meeting but that the agency could approve the resolution subject to any changes. The audit was completed for 2015, covering the financial transactions of the agency.

The only internal control matter referenced in the audit was segregation of duties. Mrs. Baruh said that there has always been a segregation of duties issue with the agency because it relies on the borough but that the agency was complying with statutes.

There were no recommendations in the audit. Mrs. Baruh said that Mr. Ron Garner would be at the next meeting to go through the audit in detail.

Mrs. Baruh asked for a motion to certify the annual audit. A motion was made by Ms. Levinson and seconded by Mr. de Villa.

ROLL CALL: Ayes – de Villa, Fechter, Levinson, Perlman, Solomon, Baruh
Nays – None

There being six (6) ayes and no nays, the audit was certified.

HPRA R2017-02 Budget Adoption Resolution

Mrs. Baruh said that the language in this resolution is boilerplate provided by the state. The resolution shows that the agency has an annual budget and projected total revenues of \$50,000 coming entirely from the borough.

Mrs. Baruh asked for a motion to adopt the 2017 budget resolution. A motion was made by Mr. Solomon and seconded by Mr. de Villa.

ROLL CALL: Ayes – de Villa, Fechter, Levinson, Perlman, Solomon, Baruh
Nays – None

There being six (6) ayes and no nays, the resolution was passed.

HPRA R2017-03 Budget – Late Filing

Mrs. Baruh explained that the agency had to wait for borough approval to file a budget. Mrs. Baruh asked for a motion to pass resolution HPRA R2017-03. A motion was made by Ms. Levinson and seconded by Mr. Solomon.

ROLL CALL: Ayes – de Villa, Fechter, Levinson, Perlman, Solomon, Baruh
Nays – None

There being six (6) ayes and no nays, the resolution was passed.

HPRS R2017-04 Approval of Bills List

Mrs. Baruh said the only bill that had arrived came from counsel for different things. Mrs. Baruh said she reviewed the bills and they were reasonable and appropriate. Mrs. Baruh said the bills should be charged to last year's budget since the charges were accrued last year. Mrs. Baruh said that the fiscal year for the agency and the borough are not the same. The agency uses the calendar year.

Mrs. Baruh asked for a motion to approve the bills list. A motion was made by Mr. Perlman and seconded by Mr. de Villa.

ROLL CALL: Ayes – de Villa, Fechter, Levinson, Perlman, Solomon, Baruh
Nays – None

There being six (6) ayes and no nays, the bills list was approved.

Action on any other business:

Mrs. Baruh said that there was another article on boutique hotels in the Wall Street Journal. Mrs. Baruh said she mentions the boutique hotel idea to every developer that speaks to her. Mrs. Baruh said that the borough could benefit from a small hotel, especially because it is on the edge of Rutgers University campus.

Mr. Fechter said he believed you could not have a liquor license in a hotel unless it has at least 100 rooms. Mrs. Baruh said she was not sure about that but she was hoping for a hotel around 40 suites. Ms. Welkovits asked if there were any available liquor licenses in Highland Park. Mr. Solomon said that according to the state website, a distribution license can be issued for every 7,500 residents and a consumption license can be issued for every 3,000 residents.


Mrs. Baruh said the agency has a vacancy. Many people have been suggested for the vacancy. Mrs. Baruh said a decision will be made soon.

Mr. Perlman said that Rutgers received a grant for a bike share program that would include Highland Park. The grant is for over \$1 million. The bike share will encompass New Brunswick, Highland Park, Edison, and Piscataway.

Mrs. Baruh said that transit village status was discussed in her meeting with the DCA but that the DCA thought it was unlikely we could get the status and that the benefits would likely not be enough to warrant changing the laws to include Highland Park. Mrs. Baruh said that the DCA did not think it was worthwhile to pursue transit village status.

It was moved by Ms. Levinson and seconded by Mr. Perlman with voice vote the meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


Jennifer Santiago
Agency Clerk