

East Windsor Housing Authority
Regular Meeting April 15, 2013
MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chairman Pauline Legassie.

Before the meeting officially started, Chairman Pauline Legassie introduced the two newest members of our Board, Elizabeth LeBorious and John Burnham and asked them to say a few words.

Ms. LeBorious spoke first and detailed her experience on many State level Boards and Commissions. She also said that she was working for CREC at the present time, is interested in being an advocate for the population at Park Hill and also that she had worked at the Senior Center in Enfield teaching art classes.

Mr. Burnham then spoke and said that he was a life long resident of East Windsor, had been a member of the Board of Selectman, a member of the River Commission, a constable and had been involved with the Boy Scouts. He also stated that he had a part in the construction of the 3rd level of Park Hill.

Ms. Legassie thanked them both for speaking and proceeded to introduce the rest of the board as follows: Marie DeSousa, Commissioner, Beverly Percoski, Commissioner, Jennifer DiMauro, Executive Director and Darlene Kelly, Assistant Director. Also in attendance was Jim Richards, the liaison to the Board of Selectman.

Chairman Legassie also announced that the meeting was being taped, at which time Commissioner Burnham said that he was also taping the meeting and tapes all conversations and meetings.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A) Discussion of Emergency Management Plan
First Selectman Denise Menard, Chief of Police Edward DeMarco and Leonard Norton, Department of Public Works

Chairman Legassie introduced the three (3) attendees and proceeded to turn the meeting over to First Selectman Menard. Ms. Menard thanked Ms. Legassie but said that the person most qualified to speak about the Emergency Management Plan for the Town of East Windsor would be the Chief of Police, Edward DeMarco.

Chief DeMarco thanked Ms. Menard and the Board of Commissioners for the East Windsor Housing Authority for inviting him to speak on the Emergency Management Plan. He started off by saying that he is a 25 yr. veteran of law enforcement and that he has been charged with the over-sight of the emergency management program for the Town of East Windsor. The Chief explained that a lot has changed over the past year and a half, and that the town is better prepared for any type of emergency whether it be storm related, accident or a man-made disaster. There is now in place a command center fully equipped with computer, communication capability and staff. There will be no problem with food or water supplies, even MRE's courtesy of the National Guard. The Chief did explain that one of the problems that are still being encountered is sheltering for a number of people. The town has acquired a large generator which can be transported to where it is needed as well as a couple of smaller generators which can be loaned out where needed. He further explained that there is now a liaison between the Town of East Windsor and Connecticut Light & Power and that Park Hill is on the top of the priority list as far as electrical restoration due to the population that we serve. He did explain that the plan in place right now as far a sheltering goes is for the High School as it has cooking and showering capabilities with the back-up shelter being Scout Hall. He also mentioned that there is medical staff

on call and every shelter will have medical personnel on hand to assist the residents of the Town. The other item that the chief mentioned was that the Town now has three (3) sandwich boards located throughout the Town which will contain information pertinent to the emergency situation.

Leonard Norton, Director of Public Works, spoke to the responsibilities of the road crew with regard to snow removal and keeping the main roads open. Mr. Norton said that every effort would be made to get Park Hill open during a major snow event but it might take a while due to the amount of staff available and the fact that keeping the main roads open are a priority.

The discussion was then opened to the residents of Park Hill for questions and further discussion. Chairman Legassie spoke up at this time and said that a list of questions had been compiled and that she would be asking the questions. They are as follows:

Question: Should the tenants who need assistance vacating their apartment down to the community hall call the police department for assistance, or just wait until someone comes out.

Answer: Yes call the Police Department of assistance but call early and call often.

Question: Is the High School, which is the designated emergency shelter, equipped with handicapped access, bathrooms and showers? How many bathrooms are handicapped/wheelchair accessible?

Answer: There are a few which are handicapped accessible. Sheltering is our weakest area; but there are cooking facilities and showers and the gym can be opened for cots etc.

Question: How will meals be provided to the residents who go to the shelter? Who will supply and cook the meals at the shelter?

Answer: We will use the existing food at the shelters, we have resources to acquire additional food and water if necessary, the National Guard will be able to supply us with MRE'S and the volunteers at the shelter will be doing the cooking.

Question: Are there plans to have a nurse or other medical professional available at the shelter to check on those who may be in distress with high blood pressure or in need of medications?

Answer: There will be a member of the ambulance crew(s) at the emergency shelter at all times as well as some RN's, EMT's, and Para-medics to help the people out but those will be prioritized.

Question: What happened to the bomb shelters of the 1950's.

Answer: That was before my time as I was born in 1968 and I really don't know if there any in Town.

Question: It was mentioned that the town has the ability to get extra generators. As the Housing Authority already has a generator, how would these additional generators be of help to us?

Answer: If for some reason the generator fails at Park Hill, an extra one will be brought in to connect to the hall.

Question: Should the residents of Park Hill program their cell phones to receive alerts from the Town of East Windsor Emergency Services?

Answer: All cell phones should be programmed to State Emergency Management – they will send alerts to the cell phones.

Question: During the last big storm, emergency responders dropped off a very ill elderly woman, and told us “By order of the First Selectman we have been told to bring people here.” What is the likelihood of this happening again, as it presents liability for the Housing Authority and we have limited resources for our rent paying residents only?

Answer: This question was answered by the First Selectman, Denise Menard. Ms Menard stated that at no time had she ever told emergency responders to “dump” the elderly at Park Hill as it was a designated shelter, and that at no time did she ever put into the papers that Park Hill was a designated shelter/warming station. Many of the residents in attendance objected to this statement as they had seen it in the newspaper.

Question : What can be done to assure the residents of Park Hill and other elderly housing complexes, that we will be designated for top priority for power restoration?

Answer: We now have a liaison with the electric company and we have been assured that Park Hill is a top priority as far as power restoration goes due to the population and the many needs that need to be met here.

Question: How will the shelter be staffed? Will Human Services personnel be a part of the staffing plan.

Answer: The shelter will be staffed by authorized personnel including police officers, fire fighters, medical personnel and other volunteers. Human Services will be called in if needed.

Question: Will resident be permitted to bring service/companion animals into the shelter?

Answer: yes

Question: Are there any written guidelines that we can distribute to our residents, so they know what to bring with them in the event that a shelter is opened?

Answer: Yes a list of emergency supplies can be found on the Town website on the right hand side but remember rule of thumb – cell phone fully charged, battery operated radio, medications for a couple of days, toiletries, etc.

In conclusion, the Chief reminded everyone to call early and call often. If there is a real emergency call 911 – if not call the number for the EWPD 860-292-8240. He then thanked everyone again for allowing him the opportunity to speak and left the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Renters Rebate – Denise Menard

Ms. Menard began the presentation by saying that there appeared to be some questions regarding the renters rebate program. She went on further to state that Lori Butenas of the Human Services Department was more than willing to cooperate with Park Hill as far as scheduling time to meet with the residents of Park Hill. Ms. Menard did state that the dates had changed and are now April 1 – October 1, 2013.

Ms. Menard went on further to state that the only requirements Ms. Butenas had to do the applications at Park Hill is a secure area with internet access as the applications this year are going directly to OPM via the internet.

MEETING MINUTES

Special Meeting – January 15, 2013

The minutes of the Special Meeting of January 15, 2013 were reviewed by all Commissioners present. A motion was made by Commissioner Percoski to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting of January 15, 2013 as presented. Commissioner DeSousa seconded but added for discussion.

Commissioner DeSousa then proceeded to comment on the content of the minutes by stating that there needed to be a time noted as to when the Executive Session was closed; also that the minutes of an Executive Session should only include those in attendance, the time Executive Session was entered into, the time the Executive Session was closed, and the motion (if any) that was made at the close of the Executive Session.

The minutes of January 15, 2013 have been amended to include the time the Executive Session was closed which was 7:25 p.m.

At the close of the discussion regarding the minutes of January 15, 2013, a motion was made by Commissioner Percoski, seconded by Commissioner DeSousa to accept the minutes with corrections.

Percoski/DeSousa

Unanimous

Regular Meeting – January 22, 2013

The minutes of the regular meeting of January 22, 2013 was reviewed by all commissioners present. A motion was made by Commissioner Burnham to accept the minutes of January 15, 2013 as presented. Commissioner DeSousa seconded but added for discussion.

Commissioner DeSousa started this discussion by saying there were several areas of these minutes that needed to be corrected and there are as follows:

Page 1, paragraph 3 – Unfinished Business – Original minutes:

“Commissioner DeSousa spoke up at this time and said that Ms. Menard had not been informed of the meeting, but we have a stamped copy of our agenda which had been delivered to Town Hall by Darlene Kelly, Executive Assistant for the Housing Authority, stating that she was to speak and also e-mails to her from the Chairman of the Board, Pauline Legassie, regarding this issue”.

Correct to read: Commissioner DeSousa spoke up at this time and said that Ms. Menard had not been informed of the meeting.

Page 6 – paragraphs 3,4,5 – Policies and Procedures
12-02 Emergency Shelter

Original minutes: “A motion was made by Commissioner Percoski to accept Policy 12-0002 as presented. As there was no second to this motion, a vote was taken with the following results:

DeSousa – Nay

Percoski – Aye

As there were only two commissioners present, it was the responsibility of the Chairman to cast the deciding vote and she voted Aye.

The motion was carried and Policy 12-0002 will become a permanent policy for the East Windsor Housing Authority”

There was further discussion regarding the above noted paragraphs wherein Commissioner Burnham spoke up and said that if there was no second to the motion it was considered a dead issue. This statement was agreed to by both Commissioner DeSousa and Commissioner LeBorious.

Corrected to read: paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 will be removed from the minutes.

Page 7 – paragraph 2 under Public Comments

Original minutes: “First of all he started out by saying how pleased he was to see Marie DeSousa in the board and he was glad she had been “hired” to be on our board.”

Commissioner DeSousa took exception to this paragraph as she is here as a volunteer and not hired. It should be noted that although Ms. DeSousa took exception to this statement, it was observed by both Ms. DiMauro and Ms. Kelly that he was shaking his head in the affirmative that he had indeed made the statement.

Correction: remove: and he was glad she had been “hired” to be on our board.

Page 9 – paragraph one – Public Comments

Original minutes: “think of the feelings of the Town before any decisions are made or actions taken. He was then questioned regarding the sewer usage fee (which had been mentioned by Commissioner DeSousa earlier in the meeting) and he said he would look into it. Jennifer went on further to state that we would be bringing the PILOT payment issue to the Board of Selectman at their next meeting.”

Corrected to read: think of the feelings of the Town before any decisions are made or actions taken. He was then questioned regarding the sewer usage fee and he said he would look into it. Jennifer went on further to state that we would be bringing the PILOT payment issue to the Board of Selectman at their next meeting.

After the discussion was ended, a motion was made by Commissioner Burnham, seconded by Commissioner DeSousa to accept the minutes as corrected.

Burnham/DeSousa

Unanimous

Special Meeting – February 4, 2013

The amended minutes of the Special Meeting of February 4, 2013 were reviewed by all Commissioners present. A motion was made by Commissioner Burnham to accept the minutes as presented with corrections. Commissioner Burnham requested the following change – time when the Executive Session closed.

Correction: The Executive Session closed at 10:30 a.m.

After the correction was agreed upon, a motion was made by Commissioner Burnham, seconded by Commissioner Percoski to accept the amended minutes of the Special Meeting of February 4, 2013 with the corrections.

Burnham/Percoski

Unanimous

Before this section of the meeting was closed, Commissioner DeSousa brought up additional documentation in conjunction with the amended minutes of the Special Meeting of February 4, 2013. She took exception to the minutes which had been included in their packet under the heading FYI which contained details of the Executive Session. She stated that as Executive Session was closed to the general public that this documentation was illegal and never should have been included in the packet. Commissioner Burnham agreed with Commissioner DeSousa regarding this issue and requested that this additional documentation be removed from the packets and destroyed and any evidence in the computers also be deleted.

A motion was made by Commissioner Burnham seconded by Commissioner LeBorious to remove the FYI minutes from the packets as Executive Session is the place to discuss things freely without any constraints.

Burnham/LeBorious

Unanimous

REPORT(S) OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Combined for February and March, 2013

The final project under the Small Cities Grant, for the ADA conversion of unit #28 went out to bid during February and East Coast Interiors was the contractor selected. The work began in March and continues. We anticipate the project being completed in June.

Two substantial winter storms on February 9th and March 8th dropped some substantial amount of snow, and kept staff busy clearing the walks, cars and parking areas.

The annual recertification process is almost completed for the coming leasing period, which begins July 1st.

During February, CHFA held mandatory trainings and administrative staff attended seminars on the application and waiting list procedures, grievance procedures and state funding opportunities. Tomorrow, April 16th, the Maintenance Staff will be attending mandatory training which will include occupational safety issues, OSHA matters, personal protection, Material Safety Data Sheets and other topics.

During the past two months, maintenance staff completely refurbished the following units for occupancy #11,12,30 and 77. All four units have been rented. We have two vacant units at this time, which are being refurbished for occupancy. We expect to be at 100% occupancy by May 1st. We have a current waiting list, and receive approximately 3 to 5 new applications each month.

A St. Patrick's Day dinner was held for residents on March 19th, with approximately twenty five tenants in attendance.

In March, we began installing new larger apartment numbers, that are easily seen from a distance, on all front and visible back doors. Plans are also being made with CL&P to continue to replace the outdated exterior lighting above all apartment doors. These improvements will be provided to us at no charge, but the process is a very slow one. We also hope to receive occupancy sensors for the community hall lighting and laundry room areas, as well as controlled thermostats for the laundry rooms on the second and third levels.

Our Authority was selected by CHFA to receive a Capital Needs Assessment at no cost. A team, consisting of an Architect and Real Estate Advisor conducted an extensive visit and evaluation of the property. A report was submitted to us and was very favorable, rating our property in good condition, but requiring a number of upgrades. Those upgrades

include asphalt sidewalk replacement, replacement site lighting, vinyl siding replacement, replacement of bathroom and kitchen fixtures, exhaust fan replacement, and much more. A complete report is available for review by commissioners or residents who are interested.

Last year, the board recommended that we hold off some costly repairs to our aging plow 2002 Ram pick-up truck. While we faced doing the necessary repairs to brake lines, shocks, belts and tires, in order to get the truck through one more snow season, the underside of the truck and the plow were very corroded. During March, we had the opportunity to purchase a pre-owned 2011 Ram pick-up truck with very low mileage, and still under original factory warranty. The truck is equipped with a new 8 ft. stainless steel plow. The new vehicle has also been undercoated and will qualify for oil changes at no cost for as long as we own it. The selection was compared to some other pre-owned vehicles available around the area, but none were located to compare with the features that this truck had. Our maintenance staff is dependent on the vehicle for plowing all of our parking areas, picking up hot water heaters, stoves, moving heavy furniture, picking up supplies and materials and for hauling scrap metal. The authority cannot be without a reliable vehicle.

I would also like to report that Park Hill now has a Tenant Association. This is an organization soon to be required in state-sponsored elderly and disabled complexes. The Tenant Association is an organization which is "by the residents and for the residents". The Association held an election on April 9th and they have elected the following officers:

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| President: | Carmela Mills |
| Vice-President | Jeanne Swicklas |
| Secretary | Pauline Legassie |

The association will be meeting on a monthly basis and planning some resident events, such as Pot Luck suppers. I will be available to meet with them, at their request to discuss any matters or issues of concerns that they have.

In closing, I would like to welcome the two new commissioners, John Burnham and Elizabeth LeBorious. I would also like to add that each new

commissioner has been provided with a handbook for Commissioners put forth by the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials. A housing authority works effectively for the good of the residents and the property, when both the board or the commission and the Executive Director understand their assigned roles.

While the ultimate governing responsibility rests with the board, it is the Executive Director that stands between the board, CHFA, DECD, staff, residents and the community. The Executive director is charged with the day-to-day responsibility of making the property operate. The Commissioners are policy makers, so they must be educated and trained to understand all that setting policy in this complex environment entails. There are laws on the state and federal level that must be understood and complied with. There are also the varying needs and feelings of the elderly and disabled residents that call our property their “home”. It should also be recognized that the Housing Authority is NOT a town agency and therefore any preconceived ideas and practices by those who have worked in municipal settings should be put aside and replaced with open mindedness and a readiness to listen and understand. The commissioners need to understand that they are not the managers of the authority. With each commissioner and each staff person understanding their respective roles, with a commitment to work together, the result will be an enhanced quality of living for the residents and a property that will operate more effectively and successfully.

BILLS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Check register January 17 – February 13, 2013

The check register of January 17 – February 13, 2013 was reviewed by all commissioners present and all questions answered. A motion was made by Commissioner Burnham, seconded by Commissioner Percoski to accept the check register of January 17 – February 13, 2013 as presented.

Burnham/Percoski

Burnham – Aye

DeSousa – Aye

Percoski– Aye

LeBorious – Abstain

Motion was carried.

Commissioner LeBoriorous took this opportunity to explain that until she received the financial documentation she would be unable to cast a vote regarding the check register.

Check Register – February 14 – March 13, 2013

The Check Register of February 14 – March 13, 2013 was reviewed by all commissioners present and all questions answered. A motion was made by Commissioner Burnham, seconded by Commissioner Percoski to accept the check register of February 14 – March 13, 2013 as presented.

Burnham/Percoski

Burnham – Aye

DeSousa – Aye

Percoski – Aye

LeBoriorous – Abstain

The motion was carried.

Check Register – March 14 – April 10, 2013

The check register of March 14 – April 10, 2013 was reviewed by all commissioners present and all questions answered. A motion was made by Commissioner Burnham, seconded by Commissioner Percoski to accept the check register of March 14 – April 10, 2013 as presented.

Burnham/Percoski

Burnham – Aye

DeSousa – Aye

Percoski – Aye

LeBoriorous – Abstain

The motion was carried.

ADDED AGENDA ITEMS

Commissioner Burnham requested that the following items be placed on the agenda under New Business:

- a) Cost of trash pick-up
- b) Meeting time change
- c) Secure e-mails for commissioners

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

There were no Reports of Committees

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

There were no Policies and Procedures

NEW BUSINESS

- A) Cost of trash pick-up

At the request of Commissioner Burnham, discussion of the cost of trash pick-up to be tabled to the May meeting. The rest of the commissioners agreed to this and the matter will be placed on the Agenda for the May meeting. At this time, Commissioner Burnham asked the First Selectman, Denise Menard, to look into what might be done to assist the Housing Authority with the cost of trash pick-up.

- B) Meeting time change

There was a discussion among the commissioners present that our present meeting time of 4:30 p.m. is too early due to working schedules of two of the commissioners. A motion was made by Commissioner Burnham, seconded by Commissioner Percoski to change the meeting time back to 7:00 p.m. to begin with the May 20th commission meeting.

Burnham/Percoski

Unanimous

- C) Secure e-mails

Some concerns were expressed regarding sending e-mails to the Commissioners at their place of work due to the confidential nature of some of the e-mails. Commissioner DeSousa's email address as listed is her personal e-mail, Commissioner Burnham provided us with his personal e-mail address and Commissioner LeBorioso told us that it is easier for her to receive e-mails at her workplace rather than her home as she would see them right away at work. The other e-mail addresses for Chairman Legassie and Commissioner Percoski are their personal e-mail addresses

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Alice Samson, apt. 3, took this opportunity to express her concern over the mold on the outside siding of her apartment. She stated that she suffers from COPD and as such is concerned with the growth on the outside of her apartment. She also stated that her pipes had burst inside her wall last year and she had a mold problem in her apartment.

Ms. DiMauro responded to these statements by saying that the vinyl siding on the outside of the buildings was very old and stained – that it was not mold. As to the issue of possible mold in her apartment Jennifer reiterated that there was no mold apparent in her apartment and that she was unaware of any broken pipes in her apartment last year but that she would look into both issues.

Gary Taylor, apt. 52 spoke up at this point and said the he also had a mold problem and that he had complained numerous times to Jennifer and that she had done nothing to solve the issue except to send a “jerk” with a cell phone camera to take a picture. Ms. DiMauro went on further to explain to the commissioners present that when a tenant calls with an issue regarding his/her apartment a maintenance work order is filled out and given to the maintenance department. If there is indeed a mold problem in the apartment we call in a mold or remediation specialist to assess the mold, the cause of same and a recommended solution. In this instance, the company that was called in to assess the situation determined that the mold was tenant induced due to the following: not using exhaust fan in bathroom, not opening windows, keeping the heat

high and smoking inside the apartment. All of these factors create the perfect conditions and atmosphere for mold development and growth. Jennifer also stated that she had put all this information into a letter to Mr. Taylor as well as speaking with him personally. At the time she spoke with him in her office he appeared to understand and had no issue with the report from the specialist.

Mr. Taylor was angry and became belligerent towards Jennifer by stating that the mold issue was not his fault, that there was no floor base except for concrete which is why the apartment is always so cold, and if he wanted to crank up his heat and not use the exhaust fan and smoke in his apartment he would. Jennifer tried to calm Mr. Taylor down by saying that she would gladly provide him with a microbial cleaning agent to clean the surfaces in his apartment, but that was really all she could do at this point in time as this mold is tenant induced and not neglect on the part of the Housing Authority. Mr. Taylor became even angrier, told Ms. DiMauro what she could do with her report and stormed out of the meeting. During Mr. Taylor's tirade towards Jennifer, he was allowed to use whatever language he wished and not one commissioner intervened to ask the tenant to stop using foul language and to stop his inappropriate and threatening behavior.

The actions on the part of Mr. Taylor prompted a discussion among the commissioners present, in particular that that type of behavior would not be tolerated and it would be very easy to get a police officer here quickly. Commissioner DeSousa left the meeting over the objections of the Chairman of the Board who did not want him at the meeting due to the fact that he appeared to be under the influence. Ms. DiMauro also stated that he should not be allowed to return as it appeared he was inebriated. Commissioner DeSousa did not listen to the Chairman, Ms. DiMauro or acknowledge what they had said except to become angry and say she didn't want to hear it and left the meeting to calm Mr. Taylor down and to bring him back. She returned a few minutes later and said that he was ok and Mr. Taylor came back into the meeting in a few minutes.

Commissioner LeBoriosis then asked what steps are taken to identify a mold problem and once the problem is noted, what is done to eradicate

it. Jennifer responded to this by saying that the Maintenance staff or herself will inspect the apartment to make sure that there is definitely a mold problem and then it is treated with a microbial agent to get rid of the mold.

Mr. Taylor returned to the meeting and apologized for losing his cool but that he felt that Park Hill was not doing anything regarding his issue of the mold in his apartment.

Mr. Taylor was told that the commissioners were here to listen to the tenants and to try and solve whatever problems they might be having.

Mr. Taylor also said that the issue of nicotine streaks in his apartment was not truthful as the streaks on his walls were not caused by nicotine. Mr. Taylor then left the meeting.

Carmela Mills, apt 22, responded that nicotine does cause streaks and that when her husband was a heavy smoker they did have nicotine streaks on the walls in their apartment.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Per CGS Section 1-200(g) – Tenant Complaint

Per the request of Commissioner DeSousa, the Executive Session was cancelled as she wanted the Tenant Complaint heard in open session.

Cherie Martyn, apt. 84 was asked to read for the record her complaint, which is as follows:

“Dear Chairman and Resident Commissioner Pauline Legassie;

This letter is to inform you of what I believe to have been unprofessional behavior by an East Windsor Housing Authority Commissioner, Marie DeSousa, if not downright misconduct on her part. This matter has weighed heavily enough upon my mind that I feel it needs to be addressed – so it doesn’t happen with any other residents at Park Hill.

As a Resident Commissioner, you know, a rent review appointment is the most important meeting we residents annually have conducted with the office. It involves complex and confidential financial issues. This makes for these meetings to be highly private. The calculations done at this time determine what our rent will be for the coming fiscal year. It can have a huge impact upon those of us with a fixed income. Needless to say, these meetings are often very stressful for tenants.

On March 21, 2013, as my rent review meeting was being conducted with Darlene Kelly, it was interrupted by Marie DeSousa and the newly appointed commissioner, John Burnham. Apparently with an unscheduled visit to see our Director, Jennifer DiMauro.

At first Ms. DeSousa just leaned her head into the office, asking if she was interrupting anything. I quickly and politely told her, "Yes, you are. This is my rent review." She ignored me and asked Ms. Kelly the exact same question again. Ms. Kelly also formally informed Ms. DeSousa that she was indeed interrupting a rent interview, and, could she please just take a message for Ms. DiMauro, as Ms. DiMauro was not available at that time.

Instead of Ms. DeSousa doing the professional thing, quickly stating what her intended business was and leave as message, she totally ignored my and Ms. Kelly's statements that she was interrupting an important meeting. Ms. DeSousa proceeded to then walk on in and planted herself squarely into the middle of the office. With total disregard to my privacy, she continued on with what her agenda was – for approximately 20 minutes.

Furthermore, the entirety of this interruption consisted of Ms. DeSousa discussing Commissioner Board business. Much of which I felt, as a tenant, was totally inappropriate information for me to be privy to.

Repeatedly, Mr. Burnham apologized for interrupting our meeting and made indications he wanted to leave. Repeatedly, Ms. DeSousa was reminded, by myself and Ms. Kelly, that she was interrupting a rent review meeting. Not only did she ignore any and all polite social cues by Mr. Burnham – she totally blew off Ms. Kelly's authority by informing her

that she was indeed interrupting. And, Ms. DeSousa even went as far as to refuse to give me any eye contact. I was treated as if I was an insignificant person in the entire scenario.

Physically barging into a meeting that you have been repeatedly informed you are interrupting is not only rude, it's downright unprofessional. In my corporate working days, I would have been written up for such misconduct – especially for a 20 minute interruption, while being aggressively dismissive towards another person, over something that was not even time sensitive.

Ms Legassie, it has always been my understanding that anyone who signs on to be a commissioner for Park Hill has agreed to be an advocate for the elderly and disabled people who live here. They have volunteered to look out for our best interests and well being. They are here to be of service to us. We are not their underlings to be dismissed or bulldozed over when our presence doesn't suit their agenda(s).

After having a commissioner display such unprofessional conduct, openly show downright dismissive disregard to my privacy, and me as a person, I must state that I have sincere doubts as to whether or not being a positive advocate can be said of Ms. DeSousa.

Again, I have only written this letter because I do not want any other resident to have to have an incident like this weigh as heavily upon their minds as this one has upon mine.

Thank you, Ms. Legassie, for being an advocate, that over your many years of service on our Commission Board, I have come to trust enough to know that you will do the right thing in regard to this matter.

Sincerely,

Cherie Martyn”

Commissioner DeSousa's response to the above tenant complaint was that the statement wasn't entirely correct, that she did knock on the door and was told to come in, that she had been told that she could come to

the office at any time and that as she had some free time, she called John Burnham and asked him if he would like to go to Park Hill to be introduced to Jennifer. She once again said that she was told to come in to the office and yes she was halfway through the door, but she did not believe that she was rude and that it was not made clear that there was a conference going on and that she did not realize there was a problem in coming into the office.

As it appeared that Ms. DeSousa was not accepting responsibility for her actions or admitting to any wrong-doing on her part with regard to this matter, Jennifer DiMauro informed the Board that there was also a written complaint by the staff member involved, Ms. Kelly. Ms. DiMauro asked Ms. Kelly to get the letter and she read it aloud.

Ms. Kelly's letter to Chairman Legassie and the Executive Director, Jennifer DiMauro is as follows:

"To: Pauline Legassie, Chairman of the Board
Jennifer DiMauro, Executive Director

From: Darlene Kelly

Date: March 21, 2013

Subj: Staff Concerns

On this day, March 21, 2013 I had an appointment at 10:30 a.m. with Ms. Cherie Martyn, apt. 84, to review her documentation in preparation for the annual rent recertification. While Ms. Martyn and I were discussing her documentation, my door opened and Ms. DeSousa came into my office with John Burnham. She did not knock, did not acknowledge the fact that there was someone sitting at my desk or the fact that I was looking through various papers. She wanted to know if Jennifer was available and I told her no as Jennifer was off-site. I asked her why she wanted to see Jennifer and she said she wanted to introduce her to John Burnham. I once again told her that Jennifer was unavailable and that she would need to make an appointment.

At this point, Ms. DeSousa looked at me and said am I interrupting anything? My answer was yes that I was conducting a rent recertification; she appeared to ignore my statement and the fact that Ms. Martyn also told her yes she was interrupting her recertification. To his credit, John Burnham appeared to understand what I was saying and tried to leave but Ms. DeSousa kept on talking and tried to discuss things with me that were inappropriate (i.e. board matters in front of a tenant). Finally, after 20 – 30 minutes Ms. DeSousa left.

This unexpected visit and the length of time that she was in my office was extremely stressful – not only to myself but to the tenant sitting at my desk. It interrupted the flow of the recertification, I had to retrace my steps with regards to the documentation I was looking through and start from the beginning again; it has put me behind on the rest of my recertifications for the day and her rudeness to Ms. Martyn was unprofessional.

In conclusion, the type of behavior exhibited by Ms. DeSousa today not only bordered on the unprofessional but also showed insensitivity to the work environment of the East Windsor Housing Authority and to the population that we serve. This type of insensitivity and unprofessionalism should not be condoned or allowed to continue.”

This letter from Ms. Kelly prompted a further heated discussion wherein Ms. DeSousa disagreed with the content of the letter and that she felt the letter was incorrect in its context. She continued in the same vein by stating she had not been told she was interrupting anything and did not feel that she had been rude. She also said that she had called Commissioner Burnham upon receipt of the complaint to see if he remembered her being rude and she said that he said no and that he had taped the meeting. Commissioner Burnham then spoke up and said that he did not remember the incident happening the way that it was described and that he had been taping the meeting unbeknownst to Ms. Kelly or Ms. Martyn.

Commissioner LeBorious questioned Ms. Kelly as to how many recertifications are done in the course of a day and how the confidentiality is handled. Ms. Kelly responded that she did 4 to 5 a day

by appointment only and that the tenants either waited outside of the office or in the community hall. Commissioner LeBorious then stated that maybe there should be a policy regarding the recertifications and the proper procedure for handling the appointments and the confidentiality.

Two of the tenants present at the meeting, Jeanne Swicklas, apt. 20 and Carmela Mills, apt. 22, spoke up and said that everyone knows that during recertification Ms. Kelly is extremely busy and if you need something from the office you have to look in the window to see if Ms. Kelly is putting her finger up as saying in a minute, if she is motioning you in or shaking her head no it's not a good time.

Ms. DeSousa was still not satisfied with the explanation by Ms. Martyn or Ms. Kelly and continued to insist that she had been invited into the office and had not been rude to Ms. Martyn.

Ms Martyn responded to this by re-reading paragraph 4 of her complaint. Ms. DeSousa once again reiterated that she had not been rude, but did say that she had been told that she was intimidating due to the fact that she is a large woman and has a deep voice, but again did not feel that she had been rude or intimidating at this "meeting". Ms. Martyn took exception to her statement that she had not been intimidating, got up out of her seat, walked to the front of the commissioners table and stood in the same type of military stance that Ms. DeSousa had used that day in the office and asked the board members at large if they felt intimidated by her stance. She then returned to her seat.

There was additional discussion regarding this matter with no action being taken other than Commissioner DeSousa and Burnham apologizing for what had happened that day.

Chairman Legassie then spoke up and said that she thought it would be a good idea if a special meeting was called for commissioners only to go over their roles and responsibilities and the roles and responsibilities of the staff.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Commissioner Percoski, seconded by Commissioner Burnham to close the regular meeting of the East Windsor Housing Authority Board of Commissioners at 7:26 p.m.

Percoski/Burnham

Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene H. Kelly
Recording Secretary
East Windsor Housing Authority
Board of Commissioners