

# UPDATE



## Message from the Executive Director

*Nicholas A. Calace*

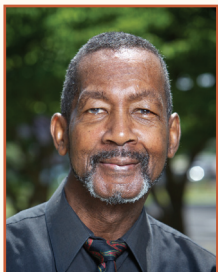
As the holiday season approaches us, I can honestly say we have much to be grateful for. I'm thrilled with our newly promoted and hired leadership. They are people who have proven themselves throughout the years and have now hit the ground running.

If you get a chance please come and see The Franklin and The Eleanor. The new apartment buildings are gems in Bridgeport's South End. The Franklin and The Eleanor give Park Avenue a whole new feel and are now home to 110 people.

We're excited about the prospects of construction beginning on the Albion Street project which will provide more affordable housing as well as health care. Our Energy Initiative project is also complete and now we can start to calculate the savings in our annual budgets. That's very important for an organization with net assets in excess of \$120 million and annual revenues greater than \$60 million.

### New Commissioners

It's very important that as Commission seats become vacant the authority quickly fill them so that there's no disruption in service. Thankfully, the Mayor of Bridgeport and our Commission made recent additions. Internally, Commissioner Dulce Nieves was elected Chairperson and the major appointed James Brown as a new commissioner.



Mr. James Brown, is the resident representative on the Commission. The Vietnam-era Veteran has served on the Democratic Town Committee. "I am going to enjoy this new position," states Brown. "I look forward to providing my input. This is where I belong – I speak for the people - the residents of public housing."

Nicholas Calace, Executive Director for the Housing Authority, welcomes Brown with enthusiasm. "We've worked together for the last five years. I respect his wealth of knowledge and dedication to serving the residents. He should be an asset to the Commission."



Dulce Nieves, the new Chairperson has lived in Bridgeport since she was five years old. She's employed within the juvenile and probate court systems as the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Guardian Ad Litem. It's valuable experience in her volunteer role on the board which deals with families constantly.

We are one of the nation's largest housing authorities. We provide more than 2,500 apartments to the elderly, disabled, and extremely low incomes families, who otherwise might be homeless without these resources. The fact that our occupancy rate is 99.41% says volumes about the value of the service we provide. The housing authority also administers a Section 8, Housing Choice Voucher program that provides more than 2,800 vouchers to extremely low-income persons. This subsidy allows participants the flexibility to select apartments within Bridgeport's general market that are close to their employment, children's schools, extended family, and other life activities. We supply housing for approximately 12,000 persons, which makes the population it serves larger than half of the State's towns and cities.

All the more reason we should be involved with initiatives like the gun buyback program, job training or even fire safety campaigns. We consider ourselves important participants in the development of the Greater Bridgeport community.

### New Senior Management

As part of the BHA's movement toward solidifying its corporate leadership, summer 2010 has been a very busy season. Most importantly the authority now has two new Deputy Executive Directors, a new Controller and a recently hired Human Resources Director. The newly promoted executives will all play important roles in guiding the BHA at a time when its services are depended on heavily.

New Deputy Executive Director Peter Hance heads up Administration while Blanca Carrasquillo will head up Management. Carrasquillo has worked in nearly every possible position on the side of operations at the housing authority. She said recently, "I love what I do and have never said no what was asked of me." Calace added, "With the support of my office and our Commission, I am fully confident they will do an excellent job." Hance will oversee: Planning, Procurement, Resident Services, Information Technology, Human Resources and the Chief Financial Officer.

Robyn Stewart was hired in June to the position of Human Resources Director. Stewart says she's happy to be working in a union environment because of her background in labor relations and contract negotiations. The new HR Director has a Masters Degree in HR Development and Organizational Management with a minor in legal studies. "We're working together toward the same goal." That's the message BHA's new Human Resources Director would like to communicate.

The BHA has also promoted Maureen Merlo to Controller. Previously, Maureen was an accounts payable accountant and has been with the BHA 14 years. Prior to joining BHA she was an Assistant Controller at Bridgeport Hospital. She has an MBA in management.

## The BHA and Job Training

The BHA is committed to participating in programming that helps to train people, especially youth, in industries they may prosper in for years to come. The BHA helps train people for green jobs, trades, and in housing related careers. In fact, some of the newly trained are hired temporarily and even permanently by the Housing Authority.

The Authority took part in the WorkPlace's Earn as you Learn summer youth program where forty-three participants took on jobs in summer camps and Authority clerical, maintenance and lawn care jobs. Through Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises, Inc. the BHA instituted a weatherization course where Housing Authority residents plied their newly learned trade while making the BHA more energy efficient. Also, the YouthBuild program has helped low-income youth to transform their lives and serve their communities by building affordable housing.

## Albion Street

All systems are go for the Albion Street project. In the partnership with Southwest Community Health Center, BHA is developing a new mixed-use facility that will provide 35 units of housing and a full range of health services, including a dental clinic.

The total estimated cost for the project is \$26 million. Pending funding, construction and lease-up it is anticipated that the BHA will break ground early in 2011. The new facilities would replace Southwest's clinic site at 361 Bird St., also owned by the BHA.

## Energy Initiative Update

The Bridgeport Housing Authority expects to be finished with its conservation measures by mid-October 2010. The \$28 Million-dollar conservation project included new windows, refrigerators and boilers, to name a few of the installations, and has reached each of the BHA's properties and residents. Funded through the HUD approved Energy Performance contract and ARRA funds. Beyond helping the environment the energy conservation methods, considered one of the largest in New England, will reduce costs and help stabilize BHA's financial base through conservation driven savings.

## Fire Safety Management

The BHA fire safety program is well underway. Former fire fighters are communicating fire safety measures to our residents building by building empowering them to prevent fires. The authority is also producing brochures and customized videos in English and Spanish that will help residents understand the issues in their respective housing complexes. The BHA believes this approach of providing electronic and printed communications along with personal training will go a long way toward preventing fire tragedies. The new fire safety program is a model for all public housing authorities and is part of BHA's promise to work with residents to do what we can to make their residences safe.

## 10.6 Million Dollars in US Stimulus funds provide upgrades and jobs

The BHA has obligated all of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, all \$10.6 Million dollars worth. The BHA used the funds for much needed retrofits and upgrades that enhanced many of the authority's projects to serve low-income communities while employing local trades people. The projects managed by the BHA included new boilers, roofs, windows as well as accessibility upgrades to the Gary Crooks Center.

## The Franklin and The Eleanor

It was once a great benefit to the community but in the last two decades it had become a blighted eyesore. That is until now. The BHA is proud to have turned the old Park City Hospital into The Franklin and The Eleanor, a 110 unit housing complex for those in need. The BHA's partnership project with the Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development now offers 48 supportive housing units for homeless and low-income individuals in The Franklin and 62 units of elderly housing in The Eleanor-- all of which will serve as Father Panik Village replacements. The units are fully occupied.

Nicholas Calace said at the ribbon cutting recently, "Managing public housing is a difficult business...but in this business there is no greater satisfaction than seeing someone move into a new home. Today, I have 110 reasons to be satisfied." BHA's partners in the project, included the US Dept of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Bridgeport, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, the State Department of Economic and Community Development, Webster Bank, and the Federal Home Loan Bank, among others.

Also on hand at the ribbon-cutting was Cynthia M. Koch, director of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, N.Y., who thanked the development team for choosing to name the housing complex after the Roosevelts. She presented a letter from the first couple's grandchild Curtis Roosevelt who wrote, "By providing much needed housing and jobs to the community this project carries forward the efforts of my grandparents to provide affordable housing for every American and a helping hand for those who are most vulnerable." Former Bridgeport City Council member Donna Curran said her maternal grandfather, Dr. Paul D. Hippolitus, one of the Park City Hospital founders, would be proud that the hospital's mission of providing services to everyone, regardless of race, color, creed or income level will live on. "In 1993, it (the hospital) closed, but it didn't die and it has been reborn today," she said.

## Gun buyback a success!

The BHA has funded a citywide program to buy back guns in order to prevent future violence in the Park City. It's a new public safety effort aimed at enticing gun owners to swap their firearms for Stop & Shop gift cards. The Bridgeport Housing Authority kicked off the program by contributing \$5,000. Program coordinators hope local businesses will contribute to keep it running. The program netted 79 firearms.

"We are very pleased Mayor Bill Finch and Chief Joseph Gaudett's Gun Buyback program is starting to work." Nick Calace said. "It is our hope residents participating in this program will see they play a critical role in making our neighborhoods safer".

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