

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING OF  
THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF STAMFORD  
DECEMBER 8, 2021

A regular Board meeting of the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford was held using a remote connection meeting platform- Zoom on Wednesday, December 8, 2021.

Commissioner Rutz called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m.

**A. Attendees**

Present: Rich Ostuw  
Susan Rutz  
Sheila Williams-Brown  
Lester McKoy  
Bianca Shinn-Desras

Advisory Board Member: Ronice Latta

Staff Members Present: Vin Tufo  
Sam Feda  
Jacqueline Figueroa  
Jonathan Gottlieb  
Darnel Paulemon  
Jamie Perna  
Lisa Reynolds  
Peter Stothart  
Janice Tantimonico  
Christine Young

Resident: Frances Lane

**B. Approval of Minutes - Approval of minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of November 17, 2021**

- Commissioner Rutz moved, Commissioner McKoy seconded

The minutes were approved.

Ayes:	Susan Rutz	Nays:	None
	Rich Ostuw		
	Lester McKoy		
	Bianca Shinn-Desras		
	Sheila Williams-Brown		

**C. Public Comment – Ms. Lane, resident of Post House, stated that everything is going well and that she would like to wish everyone a happy holiday.**

**D. Election of Officers –**

- Commissioner Williams-Brown nominated, Commissioner McKoy seconded, Commissioner Rutz as Chairwoman
- Commissioner McKoy nominated, Commissioner Williams-Brown seconded, Commissioner Ostuw as Vice Chairman
- Both appointments were approved by unanimous vote.

**E. Strategic Overview from Chief Executive Officer-** Mr. Tufo stated that Stamford has a new mayor, Mayor Caroline Simmons. Mr. Tufo, Ms. Figueroa and Ms. Shinn-Desras were appointed to the transition advisory teams to help guide the new administration into office. The recommendations of the various transition policy teams are being presented to Mayor Simmons and will be prioritized by the new administration. Mr. Tufo reported that Mayor Simmons has begun to appoint her cabinet with appointees that need to be approved by the Board of Representatives for permanent status. Mayor Simmons has retained the City's contract for grant writing services with Sustainable Strategies DC, which is a progressive lobbying firm helping communities obtain resources for revitalization. COC's informal relationship with the City are expected to allow us to use these grant writing services for federal programs.

Mr. Tufo stated that Mayor Simmons has apparently taken on major challenges to include federal infrastructure spending, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which includes some unallocated funds at the City and State level that COC would like to request. COC is monitoring the proposed Build Back Better bill which, if authorized, would provide additional funds for public housing, housing vouchers and new housing construction.

**F. Board Discussion – Internet Access for Residents** - Ms. Rutz opened the discussion on COC's ability to provide universal broadband access. Ms. Rutz stated that COC provides more than physical housing and that, at a national HUD conference, it was suggested that internet availability is seen as an essential utility to residents. Ms. Latta stated that the pandemic has raised concerns for children residing in public housing authorities not having access to the internet to support their education. COC should determine if it may make broadband access a priority, affordable and accessible to all residents. Ms. Williams-Brown stated that affordability is a concern for many families including senior citizens. Mr. Ostuw questioned how much cost savings there would be on a master account instead of an individual account. COC will conduct research to learn if such an option is available and cost effective.

Ms. Perna discussed the temporary HUD emergency broadband benefit available to the residents 08/2021. Ms. Perna stated that there was limited interest in the program due to the amount of the discount and the limited time basis. A long-term option may be more beneficial to residents. Wi-Fi availability in the COC community rooms was discussed to allow access for school-age children. The staff will follow up with the IT Department to learn if access to the internet can be made available. Mr. McKoy raised concerns on the lack of hardware for Wi-Fi in the City and recommended that we consider partnering with other agencies to learn what can be accomplished. Mr. Tufo noted that a city-wide Wi-Fi Hotspot initiative was developed under the Martin administration, and COC should inquire if the Simmons administration is focused on this. Mr. Ostuw noted that it would be important to develop a survey of the residents to learn: What percentage of residents have Wi-Fi today? How large is the gap? Why? Ms. Rutz stated that we should review the different options and learn what is feasible.

**G. Resolutions:**

**21-31: Approve Easement with City of Stamford at Stamford Manor Property**

- Commissioner Ostuw moved, Commissioner Shinn-Desras seconded.

Be it resolved by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford that the easement in favor of the City of Stamford for utility and service access across the Stamford Manor property be approved as submitted.

The resolution was passed.

Ayes:	Susan Rutz	Nays:	None
	Rich Ostuw		
	Lester McKoy		
	Bianca Shinn-Desras		
	Sheila Williams-Brown		

**21-32: Accept City of Stamford Year 47 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for Replacement of the Dining Room Air Conditioning units at Wormser Congregate**

- Commissioner Ostuw moved, Commissioner Shinn-Desras seconded.

Be it resolved by the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford that the Executive Director is authorized to accept \$33,600.00 YR 47 CDBG Grant from the City of Stamford for the Replacement of the Dining Room Air Conditioning Units at Wormser Congregate. The Executive Director is authorized to execute a contract and related documents, including requests for payment from this grant.

The resolution was passed.

Ayes:	Susan Rutz	Nays:	None
	Rich Ostuw		
	Lester McKoy		
	Bianca Shinn-Desras		
	Sheila Williams-Brown		

**21-33: Approve the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program Administrative Plan**

- Commissioner Ostuw moved, Commissioner Shinn-Desras seconded.

Be it resolved by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford d/b/a Charter Oak Communities that the updated Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan is hereby adopted effective December 31, 2021.

The resolution was passed.

Ayes:	Susan Rutz	Nays:	None
	Rich Ostuw		
	Lester McKoy		
	Bianca Shinn-Desras		
	Sheila Williams-Brown		

**H. Executive Session**

No Executive Session was held.

**I. Adjournment**

At 7:04 p.m., after a motion duly made by Commissioner Ostuw and seconded by Commissioner Williams-Brown, the Board meeting was adjourned.

Natalie Coard  
Executive Director