

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING OF
THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF STAMFORD
MARCH 23, 2022

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, March 23, 2022.

Commissioner Rutz called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

A. Attendees

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

Advisory Board Member: Ronice Latta
Laura Burwick

Present: Vin Tufo
Natalie Coard
Jon Gottlieb
Lisa Reynolds
Sam Feda
Jackie Figueroa
Jamie Perna
Peter Stothart
Megan Shutes
Jan Tantimonico
Michele Tarulli
Chris Warren
Christine Young

Public: Roxanne Rivera Bajra
Ms. Frances Lane

B. Approval of Minutes

- Approval of minutes of the COC Board Meeting of February 23, 2022

➤ Commissioner Ostuw moved, Commissioner Shinn-Desras seconded

The minutes were approved.

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

C. Public Comment –No public comments.

D. Board Committee Reports

Human Resources Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, McKoy, Shinn-Desras and Williams-Brown, Advisory Board members Latta and Burwick, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Coard, Ms. Reynolds, Ms. Tantimonico, Ms. Young, Ms. Figueroa, Ms. Perna, Mr. Stothart and Mr. Feda attended the HR Committee meeting on 3/22/22. Ms.

Tantimonico provided a review of recent promotions, new hires and open positions. Ms. Tantimonico provided an update on employee engagement and communication initiatives, which included “Getting to Know the COC Family” special edition newsletter, along with other planned wellness activities. Ms. Tantimonico reviewed COC’s employee workforce demographics data.

Finance Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, McKoy, Shinn-Desras and Williams-Brown, Advisory Board members Latta and Burwick, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Reynolds, Ms. Coard, Ms. Tantimonico, Ms. Young, Ms. Figueroa, Ms. Perna, Mr. Stothart, Mr. Gottlieb, Mr. Fedá, Ms. Luzietti, Ms. Silverio, Ms. Shutes, Ms. Young, Mr. Montanez, Mr. Paulemon and Mr. Yanouzas, Mr. Engberg, Mr. Kelly and Mr. Bassette (Whittlesey LLP) attended the Operations Committee meeting on 3/22/22.

Whittlesey LLP, independent auditing firm for the Tax Credit Partnerships and Scofield Manor, was represented by partners Mr. Yanouzas and Mr. Engberg and Audit Managers Mr. Kelly and Mr. Bassette who presented the audit results for the Y/E 12/31/2021 tax credit developments, Rippowam Manor, Glenbrook Manor and Scofield Manor. COC has received unmodified and “clean opinions” for FY 2021. The Whittlesey team discussed the scope of the audit, the financial results and the financial variances from year to year. They provided an overview of the portfolio life cycle and discussed required Board communication relating to audit and compliance matters.

Mr. Paulemon presented the Fiduciary Checklist highlighting activities completed in Q1 2022 and activities upcoming for Q2 2022. Ms. Reynolds provided an overview of the policy reviews planned for 2022.

Operations Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, McKoy, Shinn-Desras and Williams-Brown, Advisory Board members Latta and Burwick, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Coard, Ms. Reynolds, Ms. Tantimonico, Ms. Young, Ms. Figueroa, Ms. Perna, Mr. Stothart, Mr. Gottlieb, Mr. Fedá, Ms. Luzietti, Ms. Silverio, Ms. Shutes and Mr. Paulemon attended the Operations Committee meeting on 3/22/22. Ms. Perna presented the 2022 Flat Rent Schedule and stated that flat rents are offered annually at Recertification as an alternative to income-based rent. COC has three residents electing to pay flat rent. When a household elects to pay a flat rent, that option is locked in for the year until their next annual recertification.

Ms. Perna reported that the Clinton Manor Low-Income Housing Tax Credit waitlist would open 03/26/2022 and is expected to remain open indefinitely. Ms. Perna gave an update on the UniteCT Rent Relief program recognizing that COC has a total of 152 applicants in the portal with 59 having been paid to date, for a total of \$489,000, which is an increase of \$30,000 since the February Board meeting. Ms. Perna noted that the program is closed to new applicants and that all pending applications that are complete by 03/31/2022 will be funded if they are determined to be eligible. Ms. Perna reported that property management staff and resident service coordinators are working closely with residents to ensure all pending applications are complete by the deadline. Mr. Fedá gave an update on the 02/2022 A/R status and a preview of the 03/2022 results.

Ms. Coard reported that Rippowam Corporation published an RFP for Taylor Street Condominium professional property management services. COC was the sole bidder and will be presented for renewal at the 04/2022 Taylor Street Condominium Board meeting. Ms. Coard reported that COC will be publishing an RFP to outsource attendant and housekeeping services at Wormser Congregate due to staffing requirements and challenges. Ms. Coard stressed that continuum of care and service is a key priority when selecting a vendor.

Ms. Figueroa provided an overview on the voucher utilization for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. Ms. Figueroa noted that utilization is monitored closely in collaboration with the Finance department and is used to develop COC’s leasing strategy and wait list management. When tracking utilization, the following factors are taken into consideration: attrition, new voucher awards, growth of the portability program, and the financial impact to COC’s budget authority and reserves. COC last opened the HCV wait list in 2019. At that time, approximately 6,000 applications were received, and a lottery was conducted to randomly select 500 applicants. Ms. Figueroa stated that, while working off the HCV tenant-based waiting list is an important goal, the 155 special designation vouchers awarded since 2019 have impacted the leasing strategy.

Mr. Stothart provided an update on the upcoming capital project at the Lawn Avenue Townhouses for site improvements and erosion control. Mr. Stothart discussed the upcoming projects funded through the CDBG program, which include the Scofield Manor improvements to the walk-in cooler, and the Wormser Congregate RFP for replacement of the air conditioning system that will be out to bid 4/2022.

- E. **Report from Executive Director** - Ms. Coard provided an update on the first-floor office construction. The completion date has been moved to the end of 04/2022 due to the discovery of asbestos during the floor replacement. The removal and remediation are underway. Ms. Coard discussed the recruitment of open key positions for the HCV department. Ms. Coard discussed recruitment challenges and changes made to the job description to attract more potential candidates. Ms. Coard solicited feedback and comments on recruitment from the Board members.
- F. **Strategic Overview from Chief Executive Officer** – Mr. Tufo provided an overview on the framework of three external influences that impact the success of COC. This is a strategic overlay of COC’s core objectives to build and maintain influential external relationships. The first area: (1) Official government entities, such as our key relationships with the mayor’s office and senior City leadership. COC depends on its goals to be aligned with the city to provide opportunity for collaboration and funding and to forge alignment with City policies as they affect community development. (2) Administrative services such as maintaining constructive relationships with the zoning and planning boards, which is important for our long-term success. (3) The legislative component of managing relationships with the Boards of Representatives, Finance and other City boards. The senior staff has spent significant time building and maintaining these strong relationships to further our mission.

Secondly, Mr. Tufo discussed the unique, strong strategic partnerships that COC has built and maintained within the community, which includes Stamford Public Schools, Police Department, Stamford Health, United Way, Health Department, Family Centers, Boys & Girls Club, Inspirica, Domus, etc. These key providers assist COC in offering enhanced and comprehensive services for the challenges our residents face.

Lastly and most importantly, the population COC serves. COC must understand the key needs of the vulnerable and challenged Stamford population to include those with limited income, mental health disabilities, the elderly and disabled.

Mr. Tufo stated that the three spheres in which COC operates involve a consistent effort, and he welcomed individual Board members to align themselves with one or more of them to work with senior staff on maintaining those connections. When COC interfaces within the community in these spheres, we will invite the Board members to participate with us. This is an important opportunity for the organization to strengthen its role in the community and to continue moving forward.

Mr. Tufo stated that the Federal government passed the 2022 Appropriations Bill, which includes significant increases in funding most of the HUD programs. There are some substantial increases that include the public housing operating formula, public housing capital fund, Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) administrative fund and the HCV HAB subsidy with approximately 25,000 new vouchers.

G. **Board Discussion – Advisory Board Recruitment**

Ms. Rutz provided an overview of the purpose and role of the COC Advisory Board. It was determined that the limited number of Board of Commissioners is challenged to provide sufficient oversight. The Advisory Board functions in an ex-officio role but with functional engagement across the enterprise; the Advisory Board serves as a source of new commissioners having been previously acquainted and partially integrated into the business of COC. The intent is that members fully participate in all activities of the Board of Commissioners except for voting on official matters. The Board members provided their comments: Rich stated that a five-person Board doesn’t provide the diversity of experience and perspectives for all that we need to do. We need to expand, bring people in with various skills and experience, a few at a time. Yes, there will be challenges in expanding if we become too large, but there are several committees that require Board members commitments. Bianca stated being an Advisory Board member provided the opportunity to learn different parts of the organization and feel more comfortable before becoming a commissioner. Ronice concurred and added that being on the Board requires additional work, and it was a larger undertaking than expected. It was suggested that seven Advisory Board members would help with capacity and that they would not have to attend every committee meeting.

H. Resolution:

22-06 Adopt Updated Flat Rent Schedule for all Federal Low Rent Public Housing Properties

- Commissioner Ostuw moved, Commissioner McKoy 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 flat rent schedule is hereby adopted and effective April 1, 2022.

The resolution was passed.

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

I. Executive Session

The Board meeting paused at 7:14 p.m.; the Executive Session resumed at 7:49 p.m. to discuss recognition for the Senior Staff.

J. Adjournment

At 8:00 p.m., after a motion duly made by Commissioner Rutz and seconded by Commissioner Shinn-Desras, the Board meeting was adjourned.

Natalie Coard
Executive Director