

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING OF
THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF STAMFORD
MAY 26, 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, May 26, 2021.

Commissioner Rutz called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

A. Attendees

Present: Susan Rutz
Rich Ostuw
Lester McKoy
Sheila Williams-Brown
Adriana Ospina

Advisory Board Members: Ronice Latta
Bianca Shinn-Desras
Angie Murphy

Present: Vin Tufo
Natalie Coard
Dorothea Dorante
Sam Feda
Jackie Figueroa
Jonathan Gottlieb
Jamie Perna
Suela Pergjoni
Lisa Reynolds
Janice Tantimonico
Christine Young

Resident Present: Frances Lane

B. Approval of Minutes - Approval of minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of April 28, 2021

➤ Commissioner Ostuw moved, Commissioner McKoy seconded

The minutes were approved.

Ayes:	Susan Rutz	Nays:	None
	Rich Ostuw		
	Adriana Ospina		
	Lester McKoy		
	Sheila Williams-Brown		

C. Public Comment – Ms. Lane stated that she had no comments.

D. Board Committee Reports

Human Resources Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, Ospina, McKoy, and Williams-Brown, Advisory Board members Latta, Shinn-Desras and Murphy, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Tantimonico, Ms. Coard, Ms. Reynolds, Ms. Dorante, Ms. Perna, Ms. Figueroa and Ms. Young attended the HR Committee meeting on 05/25/2021. Ms. Tantimonico reported on open positions and the two eligibility specialists hired for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Department. Ms. Tantimonico provided information on employee engagement activities, including communication and events. Ms. Tantimonico reviewed the Code of Ethics Policy. Ms. Coard discussed Phase 2 of the Reopening Office plan.

Operations Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, McKoy, Ospina, and Ms. Williams-Brown, Advisory Board members Latta and Shinn-Desras, Ms. Coard, Ms. Perna, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Feda, Ms. Pergjoni, Ms. Figueroa, Ms. Tantimonico, Ms. Dorante, Mr. Paulemon and Ms. Young attended the Operations Committee meeting on 05/26/2021.

Ms. Perna provided an update on the state of Connecticut's UniteCT Program, noting that 33 households have applied to the program. Ms. Perna gave an update on the Charter Oak Communities-Family Centers Rent Relief Program. Currently, there are 33 households enrolled in RRP 1.0 with assistance expected to continue through 06/2021. A total of 28 households have received assistance under RRP 2.0 with total program funding to date at \$186,000.

Ms. Perna reported that COC is hosting a COVID-19 testing event at Clinton Manor 6/8/2021 that will be open to all COC senior residents. Ms. Figueroa noted that bi-weekly employee and resident testing is ongoing at Scofield Manor. Ms. Perna reported that 302 residents have been vaccinated by Stamford Health through their "No-Barriers" program. Ms. Perna reported that all funds for the COC Childcare Stipends Program have been distributed to eight households, which supported childcare costs for 10 children from 01/2021 through 04/2021.

Ms. Perna discussed the Wormser rent increase. Ms. Perna noted that COC is requesting a \$50 rent increase and a \$0 congregate services fee increase. The new monthly charge, effective 07/1/2021, will be \$1,769 (\$941 rent, \$828 congregate fee). Ms. Perna noted that the rent portion of the total tenant payment is subsidized, so residents will continue to pay 30% of their adjusted income.

Ms. Figueroa presented proposed changes of the Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan affecting two sections. The changes appear in Chapter 4, updated policy language to include 25% AMI preference language for implementation of new construction or rehabilitation, and in Chapter 7, added language regarding verification requirements for new preference.

Ms. Perna reported that COC is applying for an Emergency Safety & Security Grant from HUD to cover security upgrades at Stamford Manor. Ms. Perna noted that the funds cannot be used to hire security personnel but must be used for equipment such as cameras, lighting, fencing, etc. COC is considering installing "blue box" emergency phone systems on each floor of the building. As part of the grant application, COC has received letters of support from the Stamford Police Department, Family Centers, residents and the current security vendor.

Ms. Perna reported that COC is actively working with the Stamford Police Department on resident engagement opportunities. The police will be holding a community meeting at police headquarters in 06/2021. We are also working with Family Centers to organize "Coffee with a Cop" at Stamford Manor and a community BBQ on the East Side.

Finance Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, McKoy and Williams-Brown, Advisory Board members Latta, Shinn-Desras and Murphy, Ms. Coard, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Gottlieb, Ms. Figueroa, Ms. Perna, Ms. Ball, Mr. Fedá, Mr. Paulemon, Mr. Arturo, Ms. Silverio, Ms. Luzietti, Ms. Shutes and Ms. Young attended the Finance Committee meeting on 05/25/2021.

Mr. Fedá reviewed the 3/31/2021 Financial Report focused on ratio analyses while providing a holistic perspective of the financial and operational matters of each program and property. The Board members provided feedback on the ratio-focused approach, and it was agreed that this format will be used for the next several quarters as we work to define program and/or property specific ratios. The ratios will be tailored to individual property and/or program circumstances to make them useful for oversight and decision-making.

Ms. Perna and Ms. Silverio reviewed the Board resolution: Acceptance of COC Write-Off of Tenant Accounts Receivable Balances Over \$5,000. Ms. Perna discussed each write-off in detail including the individual circumstances, history and collection efforts. Ms. Perna noted that there was an accumulation of write-offs due to the suspension of legal proceedings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

E. Report from Executive Director –Ms. Coard provided an update on the shooting incidents that recently occurred at Oak Park and Lawnhill Terrace. Ms. Coard advised that the actual cause of death of the deceased Stamford Manor resident has not yet been confirmed. Ms. Coard provided a summary of her recent meeting with the Stamford Police Department to address concerns for the safety of Stamford Manor residents. Ms. Coard provided a summary of action items by the leadership team to improve conditions for the safety of staff and residents. These include updates to policies that relate to visitors and identification; Family Center engagement efforts with residents coping with trauma; police involvement on community building initiatives; and addressing staff safety concerns and stress related factors.

- F. **Strategic Overview from Chief Executive Officer** - Mr. Tufo presented the strategic overview session on Community Initiatives, the last in the series of Spring 2021 briefings that has included Operations (Property Management, Resident Services, Maintenance, Procurement and HCV) and Board Engagement.

Mr. Tufo provided background on how COC began its Community Initiative journey to where it is today. Mr. Tufo stated that, approximately 15 years ago, COC began a public housing transformation initiative to address the complex needs of the community that it serves. COC recognized that the physical condition of buildings needed to be improved, but it also acknowledged that responding to broader resident needs was important to promote self-sufficiency and better quality of life.

COC was a two-time recipient of the major HOPE VI grants (Department of Housing and Urban Development's efforts to transform public housing) to address the revitalization of Southfield Village and Fairfield Court. The program provided essential funding for those properties' comprehensive physical revitalization paired with establishing positive incentives for resident self-sufficiency and comprehensive services to respond to resident needs. The partnership with Family Centers began with the revitalization of Fairfield Court by providing on-site resident services to help residents manage financial, personal, relocation services and educational challenges.

COCs relationship with Family Centers was the inspiration for the *Vita Health & Wellness Partnership*, which was initially focused on Stamford's West Side neighborhood where COC had a significant presence. Stamford Health and 12 other social service agencies – spanning many sectors - soon became members as the partnership recognized residents' complex challenges that included physical and mental health, education, public safety, affordable housing, employment and food insecurity.

COC, through *Vita*, has become the backbone (i.e. facilitator) of a robust network to share critical information and collaborate on programs for vulnerable populations so that they may achieve better outcomes and promote sustainable communities. As a result of its experience with *Vita*, COC's mission has expanded to develop diverse initiatives with provider partners to focus on the "whole resident" and broader community.

Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, Ospina, McKoy and Williams-Brown, Advisory Board members Latta and Shinn-Desras provided feedback in support of COC's holistic approach and expanded vision to accomplish its mission and leverage community partners for the benefit of the whole resident. Mr. Tufo recognized how the Dovetail initiative has helped highlight the effects of social change by connecting local governments, businesses, nonprofits and citizens. Mr. Tufo discussed the benefits of Dovetail's current programs: The *Vita Health and Wellness Partnership*, Fairgate Farm, Parents as Co-Educators, all that have provided better outcomes for the residents in our community.

Mr. Tufo discussed examples of current Community Initiatives: *Vita* with COC in the lead has organized a community task force under the Stamford Cradle to Career (SC2C) initiative to assist in closing the achievement gap in Fairfield County; Parents as Co-Educators integrates multiple programs to confront Stamford's achievement gap by improving outcomes for preschool children before kindergarten; Fairgate Farm provides locally grown produce to underserved residents and brings community cohesion and improved quality of life for the Stamford community; the Dovetail [website](#) contains a variety of materials along with an online newsletter connecting local and national programs of collaboration.

Commissioner Rutz spoke on the last Community Initiative: Board engagement in community initiatives and supporting COC's external relationships.

Mr. Tufo stated that this was the last of the strategic sessions with many of these goals underway and staff working hard to meet the Board members expectations.

- G. **Board Discussion** – Commissioner Rutz stated that April's Board discussion on government advocacy was a vigorous discussion that will be a topic at the next strategic committee meeting. Mr. Ostuw led tonight's discussion with the Board members on the following items: should staff prepare a regular report to the Board on occupancy; what data would be of interest; are there categories we should look at separately, such as market rate verses affordable units; how often should we review the data. The Board members held a discussion and provided comment and feedback to the items. Further discussion will take place at the committee level.

H. Resolutions –

21-13: Acceptance of Charter Oak Communities Write-Off of Tenant Accounts Receivable Balances Over \$5,000

- Commissioner Ospina moved, Commissioner Ostuw seconded.

Be it resolved by the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford d/b/a Charter Oak Communities that the uncollectible funds of \$64,182.63 be written off to reduce current A/R balances.

The resolution was passed.

Ayes: Susan Rutz
Rich Ostuw
Adriana Ospina
Lester McKoy
Sheila Williams-Brown

Nays: None

21-14: Approve 2021 Congregate Fee and Rent Increases for Wormser

- Commissioner Ospina moved, Commissioner Ostuw seconded.

Be it resolved by the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford d/b/a Charter Oak Communities that the monthly rent increase of \$50.00 for Wormser Congregate is adopted effective July 1, 2021 and continuing thereafter, subject to final approval by the Connecticut Department of Housing.

The resolution was passed.

Ayes: Susan Rutz
Rich Ostuw
Adriana Ospina
Lester McKoy
Sheila Williams-Brown

Nays: None

21-15: Approve the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program Administrative Plan

- Commissioner Ospina moved, Commissioner Ostuw seconded.

Be it resolved by the 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 June 1, 2021.

The resolution was passed.

Ayes: Susan Rutz
Rich Ostuw
Adriana Ospina
Lester McKoy
Sheila Williams-Brown

Nays: None

I. Executive Session

No Executive Session was held.

J. Adjournment

At 7:17 p.m., after a motion duly made by Commissioner Ostuw and seconded by Commissioner Ospina, the Board meeting was adjourned.

Natalie Coard
Executive Director