

Trumbull Housing Authority – January 7, 2020

Trumbull Housing Authority Meeting
January 7, 2020
4:30 pm
Dining Room in the Congregate at Stern Village

Commissioners Present: Vice-Chairman Paul Niebuhr, Maureen Bova, Suzanne Donofrio, Jean Rabinow and Laurel Anderson

Also Present: Executive Director Harriet Polansky

The meeting was called to order at 4:33 pm by Mr. Niebuhr who introduced Laurel Anderson as a new Commissioner for the Trumbull Housing Authority. This was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.

Past Minutes

Mrs. Rabinow made one correction to the minutes of November 26, 2019. Last paragraph on Page 2 should read – “Ms. Polansky reports that she has worked hard to change the culture of the THA...”. Motion was made by Mrs. Rabinow to approve the minutes of November 26, 2019 as amended. Seconded by Mrs. Donofrio and approved with one abstention from Ms. Anderson.

Treasurer’s Report

Mrs. Bova reported for the Trumbull Housing Authority for the period from July 1, 2019 through November 30, 2019. The overall gain of the Housing Authority is \$1,791,687. This includes all the rental income and Capital Grant Funding provided for the redevelopment – rehabilitation - remodeling efforts.

If the Capital Grant Revenue of \$1,860,818 is removed, the Housing Authority has an operating loss of \$69,131, of which \$60,037 is attributable to the Village and \$9,094 is attributable to Stern Center. The current loss at Stern Village of \$6,225 is driven by vacancies due to the ongoing development. Vacancy loss is expected to decrease over the next few months as the last remaining units are completed. In addition, the remainder of the wall units were cleaned in November and the project is now complete.

For the month of November, Stern Center recognized a loss of \$828 that is almost entirely accounted for by the \$850 vacancy loss. Two units remain vacant. Management is actively working on filling the remaining vacant units.

One of the goals for this year is to increase the reserve account/investment for Stern Center.

The overall cash position of the Housing Authority, including reserves, is \$895,867.

As of November 30, 2019, Accounts Payable totaled \$355,891. This figure is larger than usual due to construction payables. We continue to pay all of our bills in a timely manner.

Overall, the Housing Authority remains in a good financial position. The Village is anticipating to have a better year going forward as vacant units begin to lease.

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Executive Director's Report

Ms. Polansky wished Barbara the best of luck in her retirement. Barbara, from EMS, will remain the THA clerk. She thanked her for everything she has done for the residents over the years and thanked EMS for their wonderful service.

There are two vacancies in the Congregate. One is being used as the RSC office until the Community Room is completed. There are 12 vacancies in the Village. Eversource is coming January 8, 2020 to present the THA with a check for \$500,000 to be used to rehab other units.

Ms. Polansky noted it was a remarkable year for Stern Village. This is a year of positive outlook – positive outcomes. Over the past year, Stern Village has gone through a \$6.8 million transformation which was badly needed and had not been done for approximately 46 years. The goal was to rehabilitate, revitalize, and improve Stern Village in order to provide safe and sanitary housing in addition to a better living experience for all the residents.

In 2013, they were deemed critical and at risk by the Connecticut Housing & Finance Authority (CHFA). Thanks to persistent lobbying on behalf of the residents, and with the support of the THA Board of Commissioners, First Selectman of Trumbull, Vicki Tesoro and the Trumbull Delegation, we are now sustainable. This was accomplished by navigating the complex world of state financing. They obtained financing from a diverse group of agencies, including: \$5.3 million from the State, \$500,000 from 2018 State Housing Tax Contribution Program (HTCC), \$800,000 from 2018 Small Cities Funding, and \$200,000 from CHFA Critical Needs Funding. This does not include the 2019 Small Cities Funding or the 2019 HTCC Funding.

Goals included:

- repaving sidewalks and roads so that they were safe and drivable;
- making significant improvements to property drainage and the sanitary systems;
- improving energy efficiency and comfort through a combination of insulation, new water heaters, new doors, new windows, and heat pumps;
- making structural changes to include several new porches, columns, gutters;
- mounting new shutters and mailboxes;
- installing radon mitigation systems throughout the Village;
- landscaping and tree removal that will continue in 2020 for safety reasons and to provide more light to the apartments;
- creating nineteen ADA units with large bathrooms, walk-in showers, ADA compliant cabinets, new lighting and new floors;
- rehabbing twenty-four units with walk-in showers, new cabinets, new floors, new lighting;
- constructing a new Community Room with an ADA compliant kitchen, ADA compliant bathroom, laundry room and more. It is anticipated that the Community Room will reopen by the end of January or beginning of February 2020. Several problems were addressed in the Community Room renovation that were found.
- new signage throughout Stern Village in 2020. Various designs are being discussed for all signage within the Village to assist in locating apartments and a new sign at the entrance.
- creating a rain garden by Unit 51; this will be good environmentally and pretty to look at.
- painting the apartments in the Village in 2022.

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Ms. Polansky noted for the Henry Stern Center, the Congregate, much needed energy efficient upgrades were made to the kitchen and a new generator and sprinkler system were installed. Power outage lights were placed in every congregants unit and additional outside lighting was installed to illuminate the path leading to the Congregate. New mailboxes have been ordered. New table cloths have also been ordered.

It was also noted that the THA Congregate Kitchen was the only eatery in Trumbull that received the highest score of 100% from the Trumbull Heath Department. Thanks to all who made this happen.

Additional upgrades will be made to the Congregate in 2020. These upgrades will include new energy efficient boilers, new heating/air conditioning systems, walk-in showers, higher toilets and more that will increase the safety and comfort of our frail and elderly residents.

Ms. Polansky noted some of the residents of the Congregate have brought up a concern regarding the heat pumps. Once the contractors and engineers are awarded the job, everyone will be given an opportunity to talk about the heat pumps. There is a lot of information, some good some bad, about the pumps. Some residents want them; some do not. This will be addressed so that there will be a complete understanding of the project. Research has been done on the best way to clean the heat pumps and there are systems available. Unfortunately, you have to be a certified engineer for the heat pumps so the purchase of cleaning equipment and maintenance by staff will not be done. The cost will be added into the operating budget for next year. Cleaning will be done at least twice a year which should prevent any problems.

Renovations are not complete. Rehabilitation needs to be extended to all units and the THA will continue to make significant improvements to ensure the health and safety of the residents.

In 2018, a grant from TD Bank was used for security cameras. There are now cameras focused on the second circle and in front of the Congregate. Our goal is to have security cameras throughout our 16.19 acre parcel. These cameras are monitored and security can address any problems.

Every year, Eagle Scouts work on projects to benefit the residents. This year, Ben Cousins constructed a bus shelter by the Congregate. Our goal for next year is to ask the Eagle Scouts to build picnic tables.

We received a \$1,000 donation in memory of a Stern Village resident. This will be used to create a gathering space/park by the Community Room.

Friends of the THA

The THA works closely with businesses who have donated their services and products to help our residents:

- Home Depot created community gardens for the residents and provided discounts on holiday decorations;
- Jeff Shapiro, of Creative Culinary, hosted the THA Picnic and First Annual Winter Wonderland Party;
- Stop & Shop provides a variety of breads and pastries every Wednesday and donates cakes when needed;
- Bruegger's Bagels provides bags of assorted bagels every Friday.

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The goal is to work with other businesses to help support our needs and to provide more programs and events to bring our residents together.

A new golf cart is needed. Ms. Polansky thanked Mark, the Maintenance Staff and the staff for their efforts this past summer during the road paving. She thanked Mrs. McGannon for her help with coordinating efforts.

For 2020, with the help of the residents, THA staff and THA Commissioners, they will continue to make a positive impact on the Trumbull Housing Authority and work closely with the residents to achieve positive outcomes. Ms. Polansky feels they are truly the Jewel of Trumbull.

Unfinished Business

Mrs. Rabinow noted two resolutions were tabled at the last meeting pending legal review. She moved that they remain tabled as the THA has not heard from the attorneys as they are still in discussion. Seconded by Ms. Anderson and approved unanimously.

New Business

Slate of Officers – Mr. Niebuhr noted that Janice Kopchik’s term on the Board as a commissioner ended which leaves a vacancy for Chairman. Mr. Niebuhr motioned that the Board act as an as is committee of the whole for the purpose of nominating members to fill those vacancies. Seconded by Mrs. Rabinow and approved unanimously. Nominations were taken.

Susan Donofrio nominated Paul Niebuhr for the position of Chairman
Maureen Bova nominated Jean Rabinow for the position of Chairman
Paul Niebuhr nominated Suzanne Donofrio for the position of Vice-Chairman
Laurel Anderson nominated Jean Rabinow for the position of Vice-Chairman
Paul Niebuhr nominated Jean Rabinow for the position of Secretary
Jean Rabinow nominated Maureen Bova for the position of Treasurer
Paul Niebuhr nominated Laurel Anderson for the position of Vice-Treasurer

A vote was called for the appointment of Paul Niebuhr as Chairman

Yes – Paul Niebuhr, Suzanne Donofrio and Maureen Bova

A vote was called for the appointment of Jean Rabinow as Chairman

Yes – Jean Rabinow and Laurel Anderson

A vote was called for the appointment of Suzanne Donofrio for the position of Vice-Chairman

Yes – Paul Niebuhr, Suzanne Donofrio, Maureen Bova, Jean Rabinow - majority

There were no other contested positions.

The slate of officers is as follows:

Chairman – Paul Niebuhr

Vice-Chairman – Suzanne Donofrio

Secretary – Jean Rabinow

Treasurer – Maureen Bova

Vice-Treasurer – Laurel Anderson

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Mr. Niebuhr made a motion to adjourn as an as is committee of the whole. Seconded by Mrs. Rabinow and approved unanimously. Mrs. Rabinow motioned to approve the slate as nominated, seconded by Ms. Anderson and approved unanimously.

AIA Agreement for George Wiles, Architect, for Small Cities 2019 Funding

Mrs. Donofrio moved that the Board approve the agreement with George Wiles, Architect for the 2019 Small Cities Funding. Seconded by Mr. Niebuhr. Discussion. Ms. Anderson noted that a part of the agreement posted on the website was incorrect. This document needs to be changed as it currently reads Stern Village Window Replacement. This seems to be a carry over with the software from the previous grant funding. It should read Stern Village Congregate Energy Improvements – Boiler and living unit controls, replacement/installation of living unit heat pumps, hallway improvements and replacement of existing bathtubs with walk in showers. The document is correct it is just the title on the paperwork. The corrected version will be posted on the website for the next meeting. Mr. Niebuhr moved to have the corrected documents posted on the website and vote on acceptance at the next meeting pending publication of the final form of the document on the website. Seconded by Mrs. Bova and approved unanimously.

Presentation by George Wiles

Mr. Wiles presented renderings of the proposed new Community Room. He noted the corrective work being done, energy efficient lighting, new round tables to promote community conversation, kitchen renovations, bathroom and laundry updates, new computer area, update to CAT 5 for advanced technology capabilities, creation of a new work space in the administrative offices, storage areas and overall color scheme and materials. Question was raised about privacy screens for the computers. It was noted that this cannot be done in a public area. A water fountain and a water cooler will be included according to code. A new fire alarm system with strobes and horns is being installed with emergency lighting within ten seconds. Generator will start within 90 second of an outage. Ms. Polansky reminded the residents that the Community Room is a warming center for the residents as well as an emergency center. Question was raised about a new sound system for activities as the old one was removed with the renovation. This had not been included but will be considered as it is a necessity for Village activities.

Updates from the Stern Village Resident Association

Mrs. Bova reported they are awaiting the completion of the renovation to the Community Room so that activities can resume. She noted that the Winter Wonderland at the Village was great and it made the Village look like a Christmas village with all the lights and decorations. There was caroling by some college students and they even had Santa and Mrs. Claus. This was a great way to get the residents into the holiday spirit.

Resident Comments

John – thanked Ms. Polansky for helping him when he moved into the Village six years ago.

Maryanne – spoke on the rent increase. She requested a name and telephone number of an individual she can contact regarding the increase. Ms. Polansky noted the rent is set by the Department of Housing and will provide contact information.

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Maryanne asked why residents are not paying an increase in their rent for moving into the newly renovated apartments in the middle of the Village. Ms. Polansky noted that the rents have been stratified. Only new residents are paying the increase rents. The rents are all based on income. People have to at least pay the base rent. Ms. Polansky noted some residents require reasonable accommodation, which could be an ADA unit. There are residents who have been here for a while that have had to move into the ADA apartments for a reasonable accommodation so their rent is different from others coming into the Village.

Maryann asked about residents moving from the Congregate to the Village. Ms. Polansky noted that it was ruled by the Board in the past that once residents were in the Congregate, they had to stay in the Congregate. Mrs. Rabinow stated that the Board should revisit this ruling and requested Ms. Polansky to provide a schedule of how the rents are calculated for review.

Heat pumps are a concern of some of the residents. Some of the elderly residents do not understand what they are signing. They do not want mold in the apartments; they are not dirty people as implied in the past. Mrs. Rabinow requested Ms. Polansky to provide the average electrical costs for heat pump units and non-heat pump units. There are costs built into the rent for some residents and not others and the Board will need to have a true cost to make a decision. Residents have noted that the heat pumps are not good. They spoke of one resident who had health problems when they had a heat pump and have since moved to the Congregate and now do not have the problems. Mrs. Rabinow noted that the heat pumps are more powerful than a standard AC unit and will suck up construction particulate matter. The pumps may work better with the construction ending. It was determined this was not the case for this individual as it was before the construction. Installation of the units was discussed and Maryanne noted that Ms. Polansky stated that she would pay the UI. Ms. Polansky noted they will pay for the heat and air conditioning coming from the HVAC units. The remainder of the bill will be paid by the resident. The heat pumps will be metered separately from the remainder of the unit expenses. Mrs. Rabinow noted that it is the job of the Commissioners to see that this happens.

Request was made to put a number on the Congregate building for identification purposes. Ms. Polansky thanked her for the suggestion and will take care of it.

Gus – in defense of the heat pumps, he has breathing problems and had a heat pump installed in their ADA unit. He has used it in the summertime for AC, fresh air and then heat. Since they have been installed, they have been cleaned twice, once by maintenance and once by the company that did a complete cleaning even replacing parts. Their electricity bill has decreased since the installation. He and his wife have not had a problem with it even during the construction. If you learn how to use it properly, you should not have problems. Residents need to be educated on its use.

Maryann will provide Ms. Polansky the unit in question so they can resolve any problem with the heat pump.

Sandra – She has been here since November of 2008 and everything has improved here as a result of Ms. Polansky especially after a hurricane where she found coverage for residents who required

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electricity. Improvements are continuous. She has a concern for the residents, an open door at all times and is someone who listens to their needs. There is no partiality shown. All contractors are professional and courteous. She appreciates everything Ms. Polansky has done. She also noted that the Resident Board also listens to the residents and members are very helpful.

Michelle – noted that when her heat pump was cleaned, there was mold in it. She wanted to know if there is a plan to clean the units twice a year as her doctor wants to know. Mr. Niebuhr noted the pumps will be cleaned twice a year but if anyone is having difficulty, the pump will be checked. She also noted that the airflow is directly on her in her apartment. Could someone help her with changing this situation? Mrs. Rabinow noted that the THA is responsible for this and will help.

Mark – Ms. Polansky has done everything she possibly can for the residents of the community. She is a caring lady and wants to help all the residents. She has done an amazing job. Feels she should be here for a long, long time.

Mr. Niebuhr noted that he appreciated everyone's comments. Typically the Resident Comment portion means that residents get to speak. It is not supposed to be a back and forth but he thinks to the extent that they can and with the importance of some of the comments, it is important the Board does that. He thanked the residents for their comments.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Ms. Anderson to adjourn the meeting at 5:49 pm. Seconded by Mrs. Rabinow and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Crandall
Clerk