

Trumbull Housing Authority – February 25, 2020

Trumbull Housing Authority Meeting
February 25, 2020
4:30 pm
Dining Room in the Congregate at Stern Village

Commissioners Present: 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 4:30 pm by Mr. Niebuhr followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.

Past Minutes

Motion was made by Mrs. Anderson to approve the minutes of January 28, 2020 as written. Seconded by Mrs. Donofrio and approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Mrs. Bova reported for the Trumbull Housing Authority for the period from July 1, 2019 through January 31, 2020. The overall gain of the Housing Authority is \$2,564,018. This includes all the rental income and Capital Grant Funding provided for the redevelopment – rehabilitation - remodeling efforts.

If the Capital Grant Revenue of \$2,663,388 is removed, the Housing Authority has an operating loss of \$99,370 of which \$74,539 is attributable to the Village and \$24,831 is attributable to Stern Center.

Looking at Stern Village, the current month's net income, excluding capital revenue, is \$2,260. It is expected the Village will generate positive net income results moving forward as the remaining vacant units are rehabbed and leased in the Spring/Summer of 2020.

For the month of January, Stern Center recognized a loss of \$9,600, which is primarily due to heating repairs totaling \$5,895. The award of CBDG money will be used to rehabilitate the heating system.

The goal is to make Stern Center sustainable. The cost of living has increased, as well as minimum wage, which will keep increasing each year until it is at \$15/hr. This affects the costs to run the Congregate. They also need to increase the reserve account/investment for Stern Center in accordance with DOH guidelines.

The overall cash position of the Housing Authority, including reserves, is \$1,430,218.

As of January 31, Accounts Payable totaled \$28,498. They continue to pay all bills in a timely manner.

Overall, the Housing Authority remains in a good financial position.

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Polansky reported the following:

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For the Congregate:

1. There are two vacancies. One should be filled in March. The RSC temporary office should be filled in May.
2. Ms. Polansky is trying to do what's in the best interest of the Congregants by creating sustainability. There have been significant heating issues and costs this year which took away from funding the reserves.
3. Paulette is creating a resource guide for the residents which should be completed the end of March.

For the Village:

1. The Community Room has been painted and the floor is smooth. There are additional finishes that have to be done and the flooring is the last thing to be installed. Hoping for completion by the end of March.
2. They are working on new signage. Each area will be color coded for ease.
3. The showers in the ADA units will have a dam installed this week to prevent any water from getting onto the bathroom floor. Letters will be sent to residents with the date and time frame.
4. Ms. Polansky is working on a variety of grant applications for the Village and Congregate including 2020 Small Cities. She is looking into a central monitoring system in the Congregate whereby, if the smoke detector goes off, residents do not have to rely on neighbors to call 911. She met with Fire Marshal Megan Murphy, Assistant Fire Marshal Alex Rauso, the Architect, the Engineer and Jeff Holt to look at systems and figure out the best way to handle this. On February 24, she attended the Legislative and Administrative Committee meeting to discuss this project and it was unanimously approved. The next meeting is Monday, March 2 in front of the Town Council. All are welcome to attend. Mrs. Rabinow questioned what type of alarms are in the units. Ms. Polansky noted now they are only smoke detectors that are hard wired. If there is no one around when they sound, residents must rely on a neighbor to call in the alarm. The new system would also alert the Manager's Office. Discussions are in the preliminary stages; costs are based on the system chosen.
5. For 2019 Small Cities, there were many meetings with the engineers, architect, consultant, Jeff and Daisy. The goals are to increase energy efficiency in the congregate and to increase the comfort level for the residents. Updates include:
 - a. New bathrooms with walk-in showers with molded seats and grab bars, higher toilets with grab bars, new sinks, new energy efficient fans with timers and motion sensors, new energy efficient lighting, new ceilings and floors and larger medicine cabinets.
 - b. They are adding fresh air to the corridors.
 - c. New boilers and heat pumps, new gas-fired water heater, install two new energy efficient boilers, install energy efficient heat pumps with easy to use wall-mounted thermostats, dispose of wall AC units with repair of the wall, install radiators that will kick in depending on frigid temperatures, replace the shut off valves on the radiators and add metering – all heat and AC will be paid for by the THA.

Unfinished Business

There is no Unfinished Business.

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New Business

Mr. Niebuhr read the following proposed new Trumbull Housing Authority Policies for approval:

Entry into Tenants' Units

All visits to units in which tenants are currently living will be prescheduled, either in person, by phone, by email or in writing. Contractors' visits will be scheduled for a specific date and time, preferably with a time window of not more than four (4) hours.

There will be no unscheduled entry into tenants' units except

1. In cases of probable medical emergency; or
2. In cases in which the tenant has been absent for more than eight (8) weeks without leaving a forwarding address, email address, or phone number.

In cases in which any commissioner, employee, contractor or other agent of the Trumbull Housing Authority has entered a tenant's unit without prior agreement, that person will leave a written note for the tenant giving the date, time, and reason for the visit.

Statutory authority: CGS 47a-16 and 47a-16a

Motion was made by Mrs. Rabinow to approve the policy. Seconded by Mrs. Bova. Counsel suggested to change the wording in #1 to all emergencies, not just medical emergencies. Mrs. Rabinow felt removing the word medical left it open to the staff to determine emergencies on a broad basis. After discussion, the Commission agreed to retain the original wording as most emergencies could be categorized under health and safety for the resident. Motion was approved unanimously.

Tenant Elections

No commissioner, employee, contractor or other agent of the Trumbull Housing Authority will oversee, direct, or in any way attempt to influence any election for tenant commissioner or for any position(s) on the Stern Village Tenants' Association. All such elections will be overseen by a neutral third party, such as, but not limited to, the League of Women Voters or Trumbull Registrars.

Statutory authority: CGS 8-41; CGS 8-64c(c)(1); 24 CFR 964.130 (first paragraph)

Motion was made by Mrs. Rabinow to approve the policy. Seconded by Mrs. Bova and approved unanimously.

Updates from the Stern Village Resident Association

Mrs. Bova noted that Michele Jakabs from the Senior Center was at the last meeting and spoke about transportation for the residents such as trips to the Library or to doctor's appointments. She also spoke on the services that the Senior Center has available for all residents. Activities and events are on hold at this time until completion of the Community Room. She is looking forward to planning many activities once the renovation is completed.

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Resident Comments

Marty Salerno – stated he is against the way minutes are handled for this meeting. He felt the agenda should include all items for discussion from the last meeting. The minutes are then voted on when the residents do not have the opportunity to read them. He asked how to review the recording of the meeting. It was noted that it can be viewed on Charter/Spectrum Channel 194. Requested the minutes be posted for review. It was noted the minutes are posted in the Congregate and are on the website for review. Minutes are posted within seven days after the meeting to the town and they are posted by Ms. Polansky at that time for the residents to review. (Clerk's note – the programs can also be viewed on Frontier Channel 6019 or on demand through Trumbull Community TV at trumbullps.tv at any time.)

Debbie VanScoi – asked how the proposed rent increase to the Congregate residents is calculated. Mr. Niebuhr noted the rent increase is not a fact yet until the Board votes on it. There is a resident meeting on March 16 where there will be a discussion with proposals which should answer any questions. She noted the tenants are struggling after the \$64 increase from last year. Mrs. Rabinow stated that she has spoken to the CT Department of Housing and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. They set the rules for how much money the Congregate housing and the Village have to have in reserve. The CHFA sets the limits for the Village. As of this morning, they have not approved any rent increase in the Village. Congregate is under the Connecticut Department of Housing. They are in charge of the Congregate budget that has to be met. They know that it is a tight fit. The problem is they demand that the Housing Authority have sufficient funds in the reserve to deal with the likely changes that have to be made within the Congregate housing. That includes updating of the lighting, electrical system, replacing the boiler, etc. As of this morning, they were not aware that almost all of the items in the 2012 plan submitted to them had been met. They are still asking for funding from Ms. Polansky and the residents to provide funding for based on the unfinished items listed in 2012. In the meantime, many improvements have been completed such as the paving of roads, new sidewalks, new heating units, remodel of the kitchen. They are now requesting a new Capital Needs Plan with a new assessment based on the work that has been completed. They will not need to ask for the same level of cash reserves as in the past. That may mean that the increase may be lower. However, they need to know that, if there are problems, they can be addressed. They will not approve an option that relies on the Town of Trumbull to cover those expenses. They are looking for funding several years out to cover anticipated needs.

Ms. VanScoi also expressed her feelings about the guard system in the Congregate. Guards have been found not at their post for extended periods of time or asleep. Mr. Niebuhr noted the contract will be reviewed but any problems should be brought to Ms. Polansky or Daisy.

Maryann Garrow – addressed Mrs. Bova noting that she was elected by the residents and does not work for Harriet. She asked how the generator was paid for. Ms. Polansky noted it came from a Critical Needs grant. She wanted to know why the Congregate is not included in the \$5.3 million for renovations. What is the justification of the rent increase? Mr. Niebuhr noted the increase is to build up the reserve. Ms. Garrow asked what was going to happen if six or seven residents decide to leave. They can't fill one vacant apartment at this time. Mr. Niebuhr noted there is a healthy waiting list of applicants. She noted this is no longer affordable housing. Mrs. Rabinow noted that Stern Village was set up to be affordable. The problem with the Congregate housing is the State Department of Housing

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does not care if it is affordable housing or not. The goal is to make sure that congregate housing in the state can meet its replacement costs. Mrs. Garrow noted residents do not want heat pumps or their bathrooms renovated.

It seems like there is a lot of money coming in and it was requested that a private entity be hired to review where the money is being spent. Mr. Niebuhr noted the accountants are a private concern as well as the outside auditors. The State also watches quite closely.

Sara Goldsmith – doesn't know why there is discussion about a rent increase in the Congregate and not the Village. Mr. Niebuhr noted they are two separate entities and at this time, the revenue for the Village is sufficient and the revenue for the Congregate might not be sufficient in order to build the reserves. She noted the residents are suffering. There are subsidies available and help is available to apply for them.

Question was asked as to why Village residents can move into the Congregate but Congregate residents cannot move into the Village. Mr. Niebuhr noted they are working on changing this regulation. He noted everyone would need to apply. The Congregate has certain qualifications in order to be approved. There are additional services available to residents. Ms. Goldsmith noted that she does not use the extra services and would like the amount she pays for them to be removed from her rent. Ms. Polansky noted several apartments are being rehabbed and applications will be taken in May or June. Rent is still based on the 30%. When asked if some units could remain with bathtubs, Mr. Niebuhr noted the changes made to the Congregate need to be done as a single entity and not individual units to provide efficiency.

Roberta Stober – noted she has a refrigerator that is very loud. Maintenance was notified but nothing was done to correct the situation. She also needs to have her apartment painted since it has been a long time. Mr. Niebuhr noted there is a work order form that should be completed. Ms. Polansky noted she will speak with Maintenance about the refrigerator.

Thelma Giuidry – Can someone review the rules about bullying? Ms. Polansky met with Daisy and Ms. Giuidry regarding an issue and will definitely continue discussions.

Executive Session

Mrs. Rabinow requested the Commission enter into Executive Session to discuss legal matters. Counsel noted a general indication of what is being discussed must be included in the motion. Mrs. Rabinow moved the Commission enter into Executive Session and clarified the topics for the agenda.

1. The over reliance by Ms. Polansky to call the police on matters which may not require their involvement.
2. A resident called stating that she had requested Ms. Polansky not contact anyone in her family about anything to do with her and gave Ms. Polansky an alternate contact. She has learned from a family member that Ms. Polansky has contacted her family and the resident is now considering legal proceedings.

Mrs. Anderson requested one additional item be placed in the motion. Mrs. Rabinow amended her motion to include

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3. Discussion of the presentation to the Town Budget Committee on February 24.

Motion was seconded by Mrs. Anderson and approved unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 5:20 pm. Included in the Executive Session were Paul Niebuhr, Suzanne Donofrio, Maureen Bova, Jean Rabinow, Laurel Anderson, Harriet Polansky and general counsel for the Housing Authority.

Motion was made by Mrs. Anderson to exit the Executive Session at 6:40 pm. Seconded by Mrs. Rabinow and approved unanimously.

Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Mrs. Donofrio to adjourn the meeting at 6:41 pm. Seconded by Mrs. Rabinow and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Crandall
Clerk