

Trumbull Housing Authority – April 28, 2020

Trumbull Housing Authority Virtual Meeting
April 28, 2020
4:30 pm

Commissioners Present: Maureen Bova, Suzanne Donofrio, Jean Rabinow and Laurel Anderson

Absent: Paul Niebuhr

Also Present: Executive Director Harriet Polansky, Jason Geel, Accountant and Kathy McGannon, First Selectman's Office

The meeting was called to order at 4:35 pm by Vice-Chairman Donofrio followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call. Mrs. Donofrio requested a moment of silence to honor those individuals who have lost their lives to Covid-19.

Past Minutes

Motion was made by Mrs. Rabinow to approve the minutes of April 7, 2020 as written. Seconded by Mrs. Bova and approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Mrs. Bova reported for the Trumbull Housing Authority for the period July 1, 2019 through March 31, 2020. The overall gain of the Housing Authority is \$2,556,704. This includes all rental income, services income and Capital Grant Funding provided for the redevelopment – rehabilitation - remodeling efforts.

If the Capital Grant Revenue of \$2,698,703 is removed, the Housing Authority has an operating loss, before depreciation, of \$109,681 of which \$72,941 is attributable to the Village and \$36,740 is attributable to Stern Center.

Looking at Stern Village, the current month's operating loss, excluding Capital Grant Revenue, is \$5,773. This is primarily a result of higher than average payroll costs due to March having five pay periods. In addition, vacancies for the month of February total \$9,375 which is twice as high as budgeted amounts. For the year, the primary source of operating losses has been much higher vacancies. They anticipate much improved operating results once the remaining vacant units are rehabbed in the spring/summer of 2020.

For the month of February, Stern Center recognized a loss of \$2,637 which is primarily due to five weeks of payroll in the current month. Further, DOH released guidance for additional funding to cover COVID-19 costs of which \$8,466 was covered in service costs this month.

One of the goals for this year is to increase the reserve account/investment for Stern Center. However, reserves have not been increased due to operating losses primarily stemming from continued heating repairs.

The overall cash position of the Housing Authority, including reserves, is \$1,201,603 which includes \$592,609 reserved for renovations costs at Stern Village.

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As of March 31, Accounts Payable totaled \$200,842. This primarily relates to construction payables. 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:

1. The members of Trumbull Helps were thanked for making cloth masks for the residents and to Megan Murphy, Emergency Management Director, for providing the maintenance staff with a box of masks and gloves.
2. Her focus has been on keeping the residents and staff safe and taking every precaution to keep Covid-19 away from the THA. For the past month, Ms. Polansky, Heather and Paulette have been calling each Villager on a weekly basis just to see how they are doing and the Congregants are called daily. The residents are extremely appreciative of the calls.
3. Every Congregant has two masks and every Villager has a least one and she is trying to get more. It appears the residents are practicing social distancing and wearing their masks when they leave their apartments. They are allowing only one person at a time to enter the laundry room and have asked residents and aides to fold their laundry at home.
4. Flyers were printed outlining procedures for grocery shopping during Covid-19 and suggest residents only go for essentials. All updates from the CDC and Governor Lamont have been distributed to the residents. Residents can pick up the May newsletter in the laundry room.
5. Through the Federal Cares Act, the local Agency on Aging will be providing free grocery bags for seniors. Delivery is available for residents who are home-bound. All seniors are eligible and there is no cost for this. Begins May 1.
6. Ms. Polansky is planning on reopening the wait list for those who qualify and will start taking applications on May 15. The maintenance staff is painting and making vacancies ready for move-ins. They are doing their best to turn-over apartments every three weeks, depending on the condition of the apartment and essential work orders or maintenance emergencies. They have several vacancies they hope to rehab at this time. Once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, Millennium will continue rehabbing the vacant apartments.
7. Ms. Polansky is working on the 2020 Small Cities Application for the enhancements to the fire safety and life safety systems in the Village.
8. The administrative staff has continued to alternate working on-site and working from home on a weekly basis. Maintenance staff is working in two person shifts on a weekly basis.
9. Daisy is working on recertifications for the Congregants and should be completed soon.

Henry Stern Center/Congregate Sustainability

Mrs. Donofrio noted they must follow the rules and regulations established by DOH and continue to provide the residents with safe, sanitary and affordable housing for those that need to be in the Congregate. Ms. Polansky and Mr. Geel have held conversations with Christina Keune from DOH on several occasions. Christine is expecting the Management Plan and Core Services budget to be approved by the Commissioners in May. Ms. Polansky and Mr. Geel have been working on the budget and Daisy is near completion for the recertifications. This will include an increase in services per DOH. Mr. Geel noted there is a need to continue with the path of general increases to basically offset increases in costs that are outside of your control. Those effect the services specifically. They are mainly imposed by the State of CT and in order to be sustainable, at the very least, a \$25 increase is required. There is value to be had in understanding of the causes, the needs of what is going on and

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being up front with the Board as to what needs attention. In the past there has not been a delineation of what Village represents and what Stern Center represents and he feels it is important that the Board and management understands, ideally, these properties should operate independently of each other and not rely on each other on a daily basis. With this additional information, it would help the Board understand the why rather than being reactive and wondering why we are recommending things at budget season.

Mrs. Rabinow asked if the \$25 increase will do anything to improve the reserves or would it just cover current expenses. Mr. Geel noted, at this time, it would cover current expenses. It will help with operations but they would need a rental increase as well as a services increase to put money into the reserves account.

Mrs. Anderson requested the DOH be contacted with regards to the budget and inform them the committee will be meeting in May and that we would like an extension to June. It would be beneficial for the committee since the fiscal year doesn't start until July 1. Mr. Geel said the problem is that you need to give residents thirty day notice of the increase. If you want something effective July 1, you shouldn't wait until June to make that decision or you could forego the first months' worth of increase. The Board could vote on an increase in May independent of finishing a budget. DOH will be contacted to request a budget submission extension until June by Ms. Polansky.

Unfinished Business

Mrs. Anderson asked if the contractor doing the rehab on the units currently working. Ms. Polansky noted the Maintenance staff is doing the rehab on the units – sanitizing, repainting and replacing appliances. The contractor money is through HTCC and with the Maintenance Staff doing some of the work, they are saving some of the funding. Mrs. Bova asked if the Maintenance Staff was putting down the new floors or are they just sanitizing. Ms. Polansky noted they are not rehabbing but just getting them ready for rental. It is expected the rental units will be available May 15 through June 15. Mrs. Anderson felt with the revenue loss on the vacant units, she wanted to make sure there is a plan to get them on line ASAP. The Maintenance Staff will continue until Millennium returns to work.

New Business

Application for the 2020 Small Cities Grant

Mrs. Donofrio noted that Kat Lewis, the consultant hired by the Town, George Wiles and Ms. Polansky are in the process of completing the 2020 Small Cities Application for the enhancements to the fire safety and life safety systems in the Village. In order for this to be considered for funding, they must hire the architect, George Wiles. Mr. Wiles provided a proposal for review. Mrs. Bova moved to approve George Wiles' proposal for the 2020 Small Cities Agreement. Seconded by Mrs. Rabinow. Discussion. Mr. Wiles noted the project is to keep in place the existing call for aid and fire alarm system, replace all the devices in every unit and tie them together with a monitor on each building that would communicate to two central locations – one being the Community building and one in the Congregate building. This gives the ability to provide the 24/7 monitoring that is currently not available. In addition, all the devices are addressable which means that every single device has an address and if it is tampered with or there is an incident, it would go to the central station and identified. He needs to finish all the construction documents and designs in order to qualify for the grant. Meetings were held with the Fire Marshall before Covid-19 broke out. Testing was conducted to see if the wireless devices could talk to each other. They could not due to the unit construction. Based on that information, they upgraded the equipment and put a module on the outside of every building so the devices will talk to the module and the module will talk to the central station. They also have submitted drawings to the

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Fire Marshall and are awaiting a response. They will continue to work with EMS and other first responders and include their comments in the document. On schedule for submission on May 28.

Mrs. Anderson asked Ms. Polansky if she and Mrs. Bakalar felt there was a good chance of receiving the grant. Ms. Polansky was hopeful as they were able to receive Town Council approval on the grant submission before the COVID-19 restrictions but others were unable to do so. Mr. Wiles noted life safety, ADA issues and Code improvements have a high probability of approval. Sidewalks/pavement not so much. Mrs. Anderson asked if having several years of grant money would put us at risk of not being awarded the funds. Ms. Polansky was encouraged by DOH to apply. Mr. Wiles noted Trumbull has shown good performance in the past. They have completed their projects within/under budget and on time and this is a positive for the State when they look at applications. Mrs. Anderson is concerned about spending \$30,000 if there is not a reasonably good chance that they will receive the grant.

Motion was approved unanimously.

Resident Comments

Mrs. Bova noted she has heard from some residents complimenting Paulette, Heather and Harriet for their concern for the residents by making weekly calls to every single resident in the Village. They appreciate the masks and she is hearing positive comments about the way Covid-19 is being handled in the Village.

Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Mrs. Anderson to adjourn the meeting at 5:02 pm. Seconded by Mrs. Bova and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Crandall
Clerk