

Trumbull Housing Authority – May 19, 2020

Congregate Committee

Trumbull Housing Authority Virtual Meeting
Congregate Committee
May 19, 2020
4:00 pm

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

Also Present: Executive Director Harriet Polansky; Jason Geel, Accountant; Attorney Christopher Cody, Kathleen McGannan, First Selectman's Office; Daisy Torres, Congregate Manager and Frank Coyle, Director of the Ridgefield Housing Authority

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Donofrio at 4:02 pm followed by Roll Call and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Past Minutes

The following corrections were made to the May 12, 2020 minutes by Mrs. Anderson:

1. Page 1 under Financial Issues #1 should read "What was the operating cash as of 5/12..."
2. Page 3 #2 should read "Non-repayment of the Congregate debt". The next paragraph should also include "Mrs. Anderson requested that the Board be given these reports".
3. Page 4, third paragraph should read "Mrs. Bova felt there were sufficient Villagers interested but they feel the price is very high."

The following correction was made by Ms. Polansky:

1. Page 4, fourth paragraph should state "Daisy is completing the recertifications".

Motion was made by Mrs. Rabinow to approve the minutes of the Congregate Committee of May 12, 2020 as amended. Seconded by Mrs. Bova and approved unanimously.

Review and Discussion of Operations and Areas Impacting the Congregate

Mr. Geel noted the Trumbull and Ridgefield Housing Authorities are similar geographically and demographically as far as neighborhood and tenant income. Ridgefield had the same situation with the Congregate not being self-supporting in the past. He noted the two authorities chose different paths regarding recapitalization. Trumbull is using the grant method for the Village and Ridgefield used the development/developer, tax credits method.

Mr. Frank Coyle, Director of the Ridgefield Housing Authority, discussed staffing, maintenance and security at his facility. Mrs. Anderson also requested Mr. Coyle to elaborate on how his situation was rectified with regard to the Congregate. He noted there are several key differences between the Trumbull and Ridgefield Housing Authorities one being that Ridgefield tenants are 95% supported by the State in reference to rent and services payment. His rent is currently \$1,650 counting both charges. They do not hesitate to take rental increases based on cost changes and the 3% increase is easily justified.

Staffing is different at his facility. They outsource all the snow plowing, tree work, mowing and general landscaping needs. They have one maintenance employee for 152 units. They used to be self-managed but they hired a management company around 2008-2009. This was done to keep up the staffing and level of expertise needed as well as to address the complexity that comes from being a tax credit

Trumbull Housing Authority – May 19, 2020 Congregate Committee

property. His goal is to break even on the Congregate. Part of this plan on a cash basis is to cover small capital items through the budget. The reserves are put together between the three properties managed by the Authority and are kept as one entity to cover large capital expenses. They have been increasing their reserves over the last few years because the Capital Needs Assessment (CNA) showed they would need more funds within the next several years. He is also using low income tax credits. Additional accreditation in tax credits is required for staff.

Mr. Geel discussed the grants used by Trumbull and the differences with the Ridgefield properties. Mr. Coyle noted the State is looking to see that the Congregates can stand on their own at least from an operational basis.

Mrs. Anderson questioned whether the CNA was a large part of the budget process. Mr. Coyle noted that it is a roadmap used but the budget is mostly for immediate needs. They will not budget for large projects until they are closer to needing attention. They are not relying on getting grants in 15 years to keep them going.

Mr. Coyle noted his maintenance employee is constantly busy. If there are a lot of turnovers, they may contract for additional resources.

Security coverage was discussed. Mr. Coyle noted they reduced their coverage due to costs. The manager, assistant manager and Resident Services Coordinator cover during the day. Although having a security guard on duty all the time is not a priority at this time, they did hire security as a precaution during the pandemic. Mr. Geel noted that the situation with Trumbull is the same. Security is only hired to cover hours when staff is not in the building. Discussion was held regarding specific security coverage for both facilities.

The property management company for Ridgefield was discussed as far as their selection. The current company has great property management with great support.

Mr. Coyle felt filling of vacancies and turn-around time for vacancies has been a success. This had been a problem in the past due to poor management. It was not well publicized in the past but now they have a good number of individuals applying. When names approach the top of the list, they are certified that they qualify rather than waiting until they are offered an apartment. Turn-around time has decreased with resources brought in if the maintenance employee needs additional assistance. Their turn-around time is down to 2-3 days. Discussion was held regarding resident rights, in particular, their apartments, turn-around time and what is required to ready the apartments for the next tenants as well as rent returns should a resident pass away or move to another facility early in the month.

Staffing and Services Contracts

Mrs. Anderson noted they have food, security and cleaning contracts as well as two staff members. Ms. Torres noted her job responsibilities include handling of complaints, recertifications, maintenance work orders, and working with vendors as well as resident, aide and family issues. Tina, her assistant, is part-time and provides activities, helps with State forms, makes telephone calls, helps prepare the menus, shops for residents, visits residents if they are in the hospital and other jobs. Her family also assists Congregate residents. Essentially, she does the same jobs for the Congregate that Paulette does for the Village.

Trumbull Housing Authority – May 19, 2020 Congregate Committee

Maintenance staff for the Congregate was discussed. Ms. Torres noted she prepares the work orders for the Congregate and on occasion for the Village. This work is completed by the maintenance staff and not contracted out unless there is a serious problems. Work orders vary in number and importance.

Ms. Polansky discussed the cleaning contract with the Kennedy Center. They have two staff; one works approximately 23 hours per week and the other 6 hours per week. They are responsible for cleaning and sanitizing the hallways, railings and floors. They do go into resident apartments for cleaning. Proper PPE is supplied and they practice social distancing. Ms. Torres noted they often come to her regarding the well-being of residents, if they think they may need assistance. Mrs. Anderson questioned whether the staff has been given proper supervision as to how to properly clean the floors which was a problem. This has been resolved; build-up of wax on the floors has been removed which was taken care of by an outside service.

Ms. Polansky discussed ICS Security. There is no contract with them. They are hired to cover 4pm to midnight, midnight to 8am weekly and on weekends. Mrs. Bova noted that security in the Congregate also occasionally deals with problems within the Village when they are on duty. Ms. Polansky noted they are responsible for monitoring the camera system that has been installed which has resulted in less issues overall. Mrs. Anderson noted at a previous meeting, there were several complaints regarding a security guard not performing their responsibilities. This has been addressed but the resident is still upset about the situation. Ms. Polansky noted this can go out to bid at any time with other contracts in the Village.

Creative Culinary's contract ends May 2021 or upon a 60 day notice. Ms. Polansky discussed how this service was chosen. She noted they have changed their food service set up to containers which are delivered to the residents. They have not charged for the upcharges incurred for food supplies or containers for delivery. They have been very generous with other additional activities and have not charged. Mrs. Anderson noted they are higher in expenses than in income and is unsure what is occurring to make this difference. Mr. Geel noted that the projection is 6-8% over or about a \$12,000 loss. Discussion was held regarding an analysis of the contract which did not reveal any particular reason for the increase. Increases have been made by the contractor over the term of the contract which were larger in the past but seem to be more consistent at this time. He noted that what they are billing now is to contract. Question was why this wasn't picked up in the budget. Mrs. Donofrio noted that residents complained at a prior Board meeting that they didn't get enough food in the meals. Mrs. Anderson noted that for the price of \$11, they get a certain amount and if they want more, this should be billed appropriately. Increases were discussed with possible reasons. This situation will be reviewed.

Property was discussed. The last CNA was done in 2015 and it is updated every five years. Ms. Polansky suggested that once the Small Cities Grant is used for updates to the Congregate, then the CNA should be updated to reflect the current status. Mrs. Rabinow noted specific directions have been given from the State regarding the reserves. We need to update the assessment to indicate the Congregate has completed the activities in the old assessment and then the State will look and determine a reasonable reserve for the Congregate going forward.

Discussion was held regarding vacant apartments and the financial aspects. Until the key is returned, they are unable to enter the apartment. If the time goes over past the tenth of the next month, legal action may be necessary. Mr. Cody discussed some of the legal aspects of this situation and will

Trumbull Housing Authority – May 19, 2020 Congregate Committee

continue to research for past documentation regarding such occurrences. All this affects the turn-around of the vacant units.

Ms. Polansky noted one of the key points is having 100% occupancy at all times even with COVID. Some of the other expenses will be curtailed after revitalizing the Congregate. Bids are expected around the first week of June. A protocol is being developed as to how the bidders will review the project during this time. She is looking at the heating contracts as well as expenditures for maintenance for the alarm system, elevator, sprinklers, kitchen, fire system, generator and also supplies.

Pending Legal Issues

Mr. Cody presented FOI information to the Committee for review as requested. He also noted that he did not have any further update regarding resident selection. Ms. Polansky noted she can start doing more on-line and social media advertising to reach a different demographics. Mrs. Anderson noted that Mr. Coyle stated he changed their model of resident. The income level is set by the Department of Housing not by the Board. THA has approximately 15 applicants. Ms. Torres has been updating income statements and some of the applicants have seen the apartments at this time. Discussion was held regarding proposed protocols for new residents moving in during the pandemic including extra cleaning requirements, quarantine possibilities, testing requirements, family interaction, proper PPE for everyone involved, move-in protocols and visitor regulations. On completion, this document will be given to any new resident to sign on move-in. Extra cleaning was requested. Ms. Polansky noted additional costs incurred could be covered by FEMA.

Mrs. Anderson will present a summary of the topics discussed at the committee meetings for review by the Committee.

Next Meetings

Meetings scheduled for Tuesday, May 26, 2020 –

Committee Meeting will begin at 3pm instead of 3:30pm as originally set.

Regular Board Meeting will begin at 4:30 pm.

Resident Committee

No Resident Comments.

Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Mrs. Rabinow to adjourn the meeting at 5:57 pm. Seconded by Mrs. Bova and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Crandall
Clerk