

# Trumbull Housing Authority – September 22, 2020

Trumbull Housing Authority Virtual Meeting  
September 22, 2020  
4:30 pm

**Commissioners Present:** Vice-Chairman Suzanne Donofrio, Maureen Bova, Laurel Anderson and Kathleen McGannon (replacing Jean Rabinow on the Commission)

Also Present: Executive Director Harriet Polansky; Jason Geel, Accountant

Absent: Paul Niebuhr

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Donofrio at 4:31 pm followed by Roll Call and the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **Past Minutes**

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

## **Treasurer's Report**

Mrs. Bova presented the financial narrative for August 31, 2020. Due to technical difficulties during her presentation, this information was taken from her Financial Report as published on the Town of Trumbull website with the agenda. From July 1, 2020 through August 31, 2020, the overall gain of the Housing Authority was \$156,951, which includes all rental income, services income and Capital Grant Funding provided for the redevelopment – rehabilitation - remodeling efforts.

If the Capital related items are removed, the Housing Authority has an operating gain, before depreciation, of \$53,888 of which \$46,004 is attributable to the Village and \$7,884 is attributable to Stern Center.

The current month's operating gain for Stern Village is \$20,785 compared to the budgeted gain of \$4,578. The gain includes \$9,571 in donations this month primarily from CHFA for the food pantry. In addition, payroll and maintenance contracts continue to be lower during the period pending labor negotiations and seasonal expenses.

The current month's operating gain for Stern Center is \$2,731 compared to the budgeted gain of \$292. This is also partially due to lower than budgeted payroll and maintenance contracts as noted in the Village. In addition, wellness costs are lower than budget due to the suspension of activities due to COVID. The anticipation is that costs will be spent later in the budget cycle assuming improvement in COVID conditions. Further, Stern Center continues to operate with higher than sustainable vacancies, which could have a negative impact on these results if grant funding is exhausted prior to the end of the year.

The overall cash position of the Housing Authority, including reserves, is \$1,202,678, which includes \$536,784 reserved for renovations costs at Stern Village. Construction payables total \$36,540.

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A snapshot of program balances are as follows: YTD

<b>Stern Village</b>	<b>6/30/2020</b>	<b>7/31/2020</b>	<b>8/31/2020</b>	<b>Change</b>
Cash	\$ 87,630	\$196,227	\$ 83,552	\$ (4,078)
Accounts Payable	\$ 57,117	\$106,107	\$ 58,695	\$ (1,578)
Interprogram Loan	\$322,823	\$336,133	\$349,381	\$(26,558)
Reserves	\$506,321	\$506,408	\$506,457	\$ 136
<b>Stern Center</b>				
Cash	\$ 42,376	\$ 41,926	\$ 66,021	\$ 23,645
Accounts Payable	\$ 22,993	\$ 21,544	\$ 24,895	\$ (1,902)
Interprogram Loan	\$322,823	\$336,133	\$349,381	\$(26,558)
Reserves	\$ 9,462	\$ 9,463	\$ 9,464	\$ 2

Stern Center payable to the Village increased as Stern Center is awaiting budgetary approval and receipt of subsidies from DOH. Management expects to receive funding by September. Monthly subsidy is approximately \$10,000. It's anticipated that receipt of such funding plus a portion of accumulated cash noted above (\$23,645) will be sufficient to repay current year costs.

It was requested that the term Stern Center be changed to Congregate for clarification and continuity purposes.

Mrs. Anderson questioned the statement in the report "Stern Center continues to operate with higher than sustainable vacancies..." According to the vacancy sheet, there are three vacancies that came open in late August. According to the agreement from the last meeting when reviewing the Congregate Committee meetings, it was agreed that 3% was the maximum for vacancies in the Congregate and 45 days to fill. This would give us a rate of under 3%. The report implied they were in trouble with this situation. Mr. Geel noted if this was projected out, additional funding would need to be requested. Three vacant units in one month is not typical. He noted there were three vacant in July and another three vacant in August which runs through the vacancy loss for the year. Mrs. Anderson felt this 3%/45 days needs to be revisited. The Commission needs to take into account the circumstances for these vacancies such as the passing of a resident or the need to move to another facility. Mr. Geel felt that because this vacancy rate is so high, additional funding from DOH could be requested. He has spoken with Ms. Polansky regarding this situation. Depending on the level of subsidy required by the new residents, there may not be enough in the budget to cover expenses. Further discussion was held regarding financial assistance. Mrs. Anderson requested Ms. Polansky to review the demographics of the vacancies, the circumstances for the vacancy, where did they go and contact other Authorities to see if this is a problem elsewhere. Ms. Polansky is working with Daisy on the current vacancies. Daisy is currently in compliance with the directive given to her. Mr. Geel noted he brought this to the attention of the Commission as it is an unusual situation. Mrs. McGannon commented that there could be full waiting lists but as you make contact with the individuals, they may no longer be interested for any number of reasons. This could extend the length of time the units remain vacant.

Mrs. Anderson questioned the last paragraph of the report regarding the DOH money. Mr. Geel noted it is very likely they will receive the \$23,000 which can be applied to the \$26,000 debt. They currently receive approximately \$20,000 per month.

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## Executive Director's Report

Mrs. Polansky noted the following:

1. With the pandemic over 6 months in duration, Stern Village and the Congregate have not had any reported cases of COVID-19. Strict protocols are enforced. They are in contact with Lucy Bango and are in compliance with updated CDC guidelines. Everyone must wear a mask and social distance. They have also enforced strict protocols for the contractors. There are some issues with residents not wearing masks and congregating in the laundry rooms, especially the aides who accompany them. They are speaking to the health care agencies about their aides. Each resident who employs an aide must let them know the agency they are using and update it, if needed. There will be forms for residents to fill out in the upcoming newsletter. Individuals must wear masks when they are in contact with the residents.
2. Cameras will be installed in the laundry room as requested by the residents to monitor individuals and ensure proper mask usage.
3. Focus has been on filling vacancies in Stern Village. This means meeting with applicants, showing the apartments, calculating rent, reviewing policies, creating lease agreements, and explaining everything a tenant needs to know about their apartment and the THA. I have filled all the vacancies that have been rehabbed or in the process of being rehabbed. By October 30, they will have 14 new residents at Stern Village with approximately 15 people on the waitlist.
4. Since the focus has been on abatement and rehabbing the apartments, they have not completed the community room and it is not ready for occupancy. Due to the pandemic, very few housing authorities are opening their community rooms. Residents are meeting with admin staff and frequenting the new food and necessities pantry by appointment only. Anyone interested in donating food items or necessities contact Heather or Paulette. Bread day is Wednesday and bagel day is Friday.
5. They are preparing for the closing of the SSHP project, where they received over \$5 million for the revitalization and rehabilitation of Stern Village. Bruce Whitaker, from Millennium, will discuss the SSHP closing process as well as the HTCC funding. They were awarded another round of HTCC funding for \$500,000 to rehab additional units in Stern Village. This is the third round received in three consecutive years. Ms. Polansky would like to use the \$500,000 to rehab existing apartments. This means they would need to create one or two temporary apartments on-site like they did when they created the ADA apartments. They would move residents into the apartment for a few weeks, rehab their existing apartments and move them back. They could do the oldest section first or they could do a lottery for residents who need to have their apartment rehabbed. This needs to be discussed by the Board and Ms. Polansky will place it on the November meeting agenda. At this time, they do not know how many units can be rehabbed. The goal is to rehab every unit at Stern Village. This takes time and funding.

## Congregate Updates

Mr. Whitaker discussed the handling of the SSHP and the HTCC money the Authority received. Millennium was the consultant working with the architect on the redevelopment plan presented to DOH. This was the template and path forward for the redevelopment of Stern Village.

Mr. Whitaker gave a history and update of the project:

1. Stern Village is part of the State housing program. The State of Connecticut embarked in 2012 to analyze all apartments throughout the State that were financed under the program. This process produced a schedule and they rated every property based on what they thought its capital needs were. They assigned target years and hoped to fund the modernization for the developments over the course of six years.

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2. Many meetings were held with the state. They attended the Affordable Housing Academy required by the State for exchange of ideas at the operator level.
3. Approximately two years of negotiations followed in a very involved process with various plans being discussed. The State ultimately did not have funding for the \$30 million proposed project as submitted. The THA was never formally turned down and were awarded \$5.3 million for infrastructure type items and ADA compliance. This work has been done over the last 15 months.
4. The program was a multi-year plan with the State but did not address non-ADA units.
5. A plan was made to request Small Cities funding and HTCC money. They were awarded \$1.5 million in three awards from HCTT and about \$1.6 million in two awards from Small Cities. It is unheard of in the industry to have one agency receive that amount of funding sequentially in those years. He feels the reason for this is because of the plan put together and adherence to that plan. A little over \$8 million has been raised to date and no reserve money has been used. Other funding was raised as incentives from the utility company.
6. When COVID hit, they had just received the HCTT money and had started to complete the community building which was under the SSHP funds. The site was shut down in the middle of March and only recently re-opened for contractors with guidance from the CDC and the State of Connecticut. Their concern was the high risk population on the property and potential exposure.
7. Mr. Whitaker felt they are on track for the commitment made for the end of October.
8. With the new finding, they need to have a plan as to how to move forward. Construction on a vacant unit is very different than placing residents in a temporary unit one unit at a time. They will need to establish sanitization protocols, standard protection protocols, etc.
9. The grant funds (loan) through DOH are administered through CHFA and the process will require a cost certification. When 100% of the work is completed and all the invoices are in, Mr. Geel will be involved in the cost certification which is a review of all the invoices associated with the work. These are matched against the original budget and estimate. The Board will be given this report to review to see how the \$5.2 million was spent and where it was spent. This report will be submitted to CHFA. There will be a closing meeting and acceptance of the report. Any money due to the Authority for payments made on bills for which they have not been reimbursed will be calculated at this time and a check written by the State to cover them. Time frame for this closing is expected in Q1 of 2021 at the earliest. No money is in jeopardy.
10. Vacancy is part of the redevelopment plan. They had to identify which units were being improved and show, on a monthly basis, how this would be accomplished. There is approximately \$56,000 in vacancy loss funding. There is approximately \$34,000 remaining of the funds to be reimbursed to the Authority for vacancy reimbursement. Any vacancies beyond that, a budget adjustment can be requested. Any funding not used can be reallocated in that line item should it be required.
11. There are still some items to be completed. The commitment made to Ms. Polansky regarding the six abatement units to be ready for rental in September and October will be met.
12. The \$500,000 is a new grant and will not have to be bid out. Millennium acts as a construction manager and this funding falls under the same contract that has been in place. The existing contractors currently being used can continue as they have already been bid. Mrs. Anderson would like to know they are using the best contractors available. Mr. Whitaker noted the new \$500,000 will be used for additional rehab work which is a continuation of work already being done. Mrs. Anderson requested that fewer units be taken off line at one time to avoid vacancy losses/lost revenue.

### **Unfinished Business**

1. Mrs. Anderson thanked Ms. Polansky for writing the COVID policy. She was confused about the maintenance employees as emergency responders and wanted to know what they received over the other staff and when it kicked in. Ms. Polansky clarified that if they are exposed to COVID, do we have

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them come in as they do in other towns, give them the time off and pay them for the time or do they take their sick days. Mrs. Anderson asked what happens if any other employee is exposed and are required to stay home for 14 days. Discussion was held on this policy. It was agreed the difference is that maintenance staff cannot work from home where office staff is set up to work from home. Mrs. Anderson felt it seemed like an unfair benefit for the maintenance employees but understood the reason for the policy. Mrs. McGannon noted this has also happened with other departments within the town. Mr. Geel noted it is also hourly versus salaried staff. If the hourly employees do not work, they do not get paid. They should not be penalized if they cannot put in their hours. Mrs. McGannon suggested the wording be changed to essential workers. She noted that they would be given the two weeks and after that, it is out of their own time. Mrs. Anderson noted that if an individual chooses to visit a place where a 14-day quarantine is required on their return, that time is not covered under this agreement.

2. Mrs. McGannon noted residents have called wanting to know if they will be able to do their laundry in the Community Room and wait for it to be finished due to medical conditions that make it difficult to make multiple trips. She asked about a sign-up sheet for time slots to accommodate those types of requests. Ms. Polansky noted once the Certificate of Occupancy is received, they would be able to have some type of system in place.

### **New Business**

Mrs. Anderson noted the residents should be receiving applications for absentee ballots. Perhaps many will want to vote by mail. She is cautioning the staff, that once the ballots are received, that they not be involved in helping residents fill out the ballots. If they need help with the application, staff can assist. If residents need assistance with completing the ballots, Mrs. Anderson will request help from the local league and have volunteers come to help them. We do not want any staff to be accused of ballot or election meddling. Polling places should be safe if residents decide to vote in person. Mrs. McGannon noted a press release went out earlier in the day regarding the polling process and what has been done.

### **Resident Comments**

No resident comments.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, motion was made by Mrs. Donofrio to adjourn the meeting at 5:41 pm. Seconded by Mrs. McGannon and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Crandall  
Clerk