

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING OF
THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF STAMFORD
JANUARY 27, 2021

A regular Board meeting of the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford was held using a remote connection meeting platform Zoom on Wednesday, January 27, 2021.

Commissioner Rutz called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

A. Attendees

Present: Susan Rutz
Rich Ostuw
Lester McKoy
Adriana Ospina
Sheila Williams-Brown

Absent: Courtney Nelthropp

Advisory Board Members: Ronice Latta
Angie Murphy
Bianca Shinn-Desras

Present: Vin Tufo
Natalie Coard
Dakota Arturo
Dorothea Dorante
Sam Feda
Jonathan Gottlieb
Alexis Luzietti
Darnel Paulemon
Jamie Perna
Lisa Reynolds
Peter Stothart
Janice Tantimonico
Christine Young

B. Approval of Minutes - Approval of minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of November 18, 2020

➤ Commissioner Rutz moved, Commissioner Ostuw seconded

The minutes were approved.

Ayes: Susan Rutz
Rich Ostuw
Lester McKoy
Adriana Ospina
Sheila Williams-Brown

Nays: None

C. Public Comment –No public comments.

D. Board Committee Reports

Human Resources Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, Ospina and Williams-Brown, Advisory Board Members Ms. Latta, Ms. Murphy and Ms. Shinn-Desras, Ms. Tantimonico, Ms. Coard, Ms. Reynolds, Ms. Dorante, Ms. Perna, Mr. Tufo, and Ms. Young attended the HR Committee meeting on 01/26/2021. Ms. Tantimonico and Ms. Dorante discussed the Board of Commissioners Conflict of Interest Policy for all Board members to review, sign and return to Human Resources. Ms. Tantimonico reported on the number of employee and vendor COVID-19 positive cases, year-to-date. Ms. Tantimonico stated that the mandatory biweekly COVID-19 tests and protocols are believed to be factors in decreasing the number of cases thus far in 2021. The Voluntary Vaccination Policy for all employees was discussed. Ms. Tantimonico reported that currently 85% of employees and vendors that work at Scofield Manor have received their first COVID-19 vaccination.

Operations Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, McKoy, Ospina and Ms. Williams-Brown, Advisory Board Members Ms. Latta, Ms. Murphy and Ms. Shinn-Desras, Ms. Coard, Ms. Perna, Mr. Stothart, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Feda, Mr. Paulemon, Ms. Luzietti, Mr. Arturo, Ms. Pergioni, Ms. Tantimonico, Ms. Dorante and Ms.

Young attended the Operations Committee meeting on 01/27/2021. Ms. Coard provided an update on the vaccination clinics administered by Community Health Center (CHC) to elderly residents in which 81 residents received the first dose of the vaccination. Ms. Coard described the Scofield Manor hardship rate request denial from the State of Connecticut. The request was denied stating that we do not meet the conditions of a hardship since Scofield Manor's occupancy rate is 93%, and the statewide occupancy rate is 90%, which the State has determined is "above average". COC will continue to advocate to local leaders to seek assistance in obtaining a fair rate adjustment to sustain its operation of Scofield Manor.

Ms. Coard reported on the recent decrease in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) FY2021 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Fair Market Rents (FMRs). COC has contracted Econometrica to perform an independent rent study to support a FMR appeal (to HUD) for the Stamford, Norwalk, and Greenwich Metropolitan Statistical Areas. To date, 48 qualified surveys were submitted to HUD for review, short of the 100 responses that are typically required. Mrs. Perna reported that CHFA has announced a second round of funding for a Basic Needs Pantry through the Housing Authority Small Improvement Program. COC has applied for the full \$2,000 grant to serve 241 eligible units at Oak Park, Wormser Congregate and Lawnhill Terrace. Mrs. Perna reported that COC continues to work with Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC) to host monthly COVID-19 testing at all senior developments. Participation remains high and residents have expressed appreciation for the convenient testing services.

Mrs. Perna reported on various holiday outreach efforts coordinated between COC, Family Centers and other community partners. Charter Oak Communities' maintenance and custodial contractor, Integrated Building Maintenance (IBM), generously purchased toys for 187 children at Lawnhill Terrace and Oak Park. The Stamford Police Department also provided gifts for 10 households at Connecticut Avenue and Lawn Avenue Townhouses. The Union Baptist Church distributed food to the community surrounding Oak Park on 12/26/2020. With the assistance from Family Centers and the Union Baptist Church, together we distributed food to over 300 families. Mrs. Perna presented an update on the Charter Oak Communities-Family Centers Rent Relief Program. To date, 23 households have enrolled in the program with approximately \$100,000 in program funds dispersed. Ms. Perna also noted that 15 residents have been approved for the Connecticut Temporary Rental Housing Assistance Program (TRHAP). The program is currently closed, but it is anticipated to re-open in the coming weeks with additional funding received from the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF). Our Property Managers and RSCs continue to contact all residents to offer support in applying for all available assistance programs, including local funders Person-to-Person and Family Centers. Ms. Coard provided a procurement update and the highlights for the resolutions for Recruitment Agency Services. Additionally, Ms. Coard briefly discussed the Security Services Request for Proposal (RFP).

Finance Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, Ospina and Williams-Brown, Advisory Board Members Ms. Latta, Ms. Murphy and Ms. Shinn-Desras, Ms. Coard, Mr. Tufo, Mr. Gottlieb, Ms. Reynolds, Ms. Perna, Mr. Fedra, Mr. Paulemon, Ms. Luzietti and Mr. Arturo attended the Finance Committee meeting on 01/26/2021. Mr. Fedra reported on the 12/31/2020 Quarterly Financial Report and highlighted the results for the calendar year-end properties. Mr. Fedra provided an overview on the COVID-19 funds received and spent by sources (PPP, HUD, State, etc.). The actual and projected operating results at Scofield Manor for Y/E 9/30/2020 and through the first quarter (12/31/2020) were discussed. Mr. Fedra highlighted the funds expended on COVID-19 activity and the status of COC's outstanding funding request with FEMA.

Ms. Reynolds provided an update on the COC audit for Y/E 6/30/2020 in draft form. There are no audit findings or comments. For this audit COC has created its inaugural Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The CAFR is unique among financial statements in that it affords more transparency by providing extensive historical information (10-year review) and a look ahead in a transmittal letter that describes COCs' mission, goals, accomplishments and future plans. COC will be submitting the CAFR for review by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) with the potential for an Award of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. Mr. Fedra reported that the Stamford Elderly Housing Corporation d/b/a Scofield Manor Y/E 09/30/2020 audit is in draft form.

E. Report from Executive Director –Ms. Coard reported on the Business Enterprise activity. Ms. Coard provided an overview of the four contracts currently in place comprising a total of 137 units and about \$200k in additional revenue projected over a three-year period. Ms. Coard also announced the execution of another contract with White Oaks @ Wilton to provide Affordable Management Services, including recertifications, file review and compliance reporting for

30 units. Ms. Coard discussed the website updates that will support marketing strategies to target the 50-60% Area Median Income (AMI) households. The goals of the campaign are to drive traffic and potential leads to COC through advertisements on Facebook and Google search for apartments. COC is constantly adjusting the website based on the suggested changes provided from Rebel, the Digital Marketing Group, to increase COC's footprint on the web.

F. Strategic Overview from Chief Executive Officer - Mr. Tufo reported on strategic opportunities that COC currently has put into place through the final stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes COVID-19 testing and vaccination events that our staff has managed for the 75+ year-old elderly residents of Scofield Manor and Wormser Congregate, which have helped to reduce the spread of the virus and potentially worse outcomes. Mr. Tufo expressed appreciation for the efforts of Ms. Coard and Ms. Perna who have been instrumental in having direct impact in stopping the spread of the virus with the elderly population by working closely with the City, NAACP, Stamford Hospital and others in the community.

Mr. Tufo stated that one of COCs' priorities during the pandemic has been to listen to the staff's questions and concerns. Through these efforts, regular communication among coworkers is an area that COC recognized needed some assistance. As a result, management has increased the level of ongoing communication with employees. One example of employee engagement has been multiple emails sent to all employees to elicit responses on what is going on throughout COC, what is COC committed to, where COC is headed and "who we are". The two-way dialogue will help deepen our broad and diverse opinions as well as strengthen our culture.

Mr. Tufo reported that COC is an exceptional organization and would like to thank the leadership staff for their extraordinary efforts on the many challenges and new responsibilities that they encountered in an exceptional year, 2020. Mr. Tufo stated that the February Board meeting will provide a 2021 Strategic Plan that is aligned with COC's (10-year) Core Objectives. The Plan will examine opportunities to prioritize our work that will guide us in the future.

G. Resolutions –

21-01: Approve Award of Contract to Absolute Staffing for Recruitment Agency Services

- Commissioner Rutz moved, Commissioner Ostuw seconded.

Be it resolved by the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford d/b/a Charter Oak Communities that the Executive Director is authorized to enter into a contract with Absolute Staffing, LLC, of Trumbull, Connecticut for Recruitment Agency Services. The cost of this contract shall not exceed a total annual amount of \$100,000.00. Further Board approval will be required if the contract amount exceeds 110% of the authorized amount.

The resolution was passed.

Ayes:	Susan Rutz	Nays:	None
	Rich Ostuw		
	Lester McKoy		
	Adriana Ospina		
	Sheila Williams-Brown		

21-02: Approve Award of Contract to Robert Half International for Recruitment Agency Services

- Commissioner Rutz moved, Commissioner Williams-Brown seconded.

Be it resolved by the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford d/b/a Charter Oak Communities that the Executive Director is authorized to enter into a contract with Robert Half International, of Stamford, Connecticut for Recruitment Agency Services. The cost of this contract shall not exceed a total annual amount of \$100,000.00. Further Board approval will be required if the contract amount exceeds 110% of the authorized amount.

The resolution was passed.

Ayes: Susan Rutz
Rich Ostuw
Lester McKoy
Adriana Ospina
Sheila Williams-Brown

Nays: None

21-03: Approve Award of Contract to Excel Partners for Recruitment Agency Services

➤ Commissioner Rutz moved, Commissioner Ospina seconded.

Be it resolved by the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford d/b/a Charter Oak Communities that the Executive Director is authorized to enter into a contract with Excel Partners, LLC, of Norwalk, Connecticut for Recruitment Agency Services. The cost of this contract shall not exceed a total annual amount of \$100,000.00. Further Board approval will be required if the contract amount exceeds 110% of the authorized amount.

The resolution was passed.

Ayes: Susan Rutz
Rich Ostuw
Lester McKoy
Adriana Ospina
Sheila Williams-Brown

Nays: None

H. Executive Session

No Executive Session was held.

I. Adjournment

At 7:15 p.m., after a motion duly made by Commissioner Rutz and seconded by Commissioner Ostuw, the Board meeting was adjourned.

Natalie Coard
Executive Director