

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING OF
THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF STAMFORD
JULY 27, 2022

A regular Board meeting of the Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Stamford was held at 40 Clinton Avenue, Stamford, Connecticut and a remote connection meeting platform, Zoom, on Wednesday, July 27, 2022.

Commissioner Rutz called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

A. Attendees

Present:	Susan Rutz	Absent:
	Rich Ostuw	
	Lester McKoy	
	Bianca Shinn-Desras	
	Sheila Williams-Brown	

Advisory Board Members: Laura Burwick
Ronice Latta

Present:	Vin Tufo
	Natalie Coard
	Jon Gottlieb
	Lisa Reynolds
	Sam Feda
	Jackie Figueroa
	Brethela Love-Ortiz
	Jan Tantimonico
	Chris Warren
	Christine Young

Public:	Ms. Frances Lane
	Ms. Cynthia Bowser

B. Approval of Minutes

- Approval of minutes of the COC Board Meeting of June 22, 2022

➤ Commissioner Ostuw moved, Commissioner Williams-Brown seconded

The minutes were approved.

Ayes:	Susan Rutz	Nays:	None
	Rich Ostuw		
	Lester McKoy		
	Bianca Shinn-Desras		
	Sheila Williams-Brown		

Public Comments – Ms. Lane asked to understand the reason for having the recent inspections of her unit. Ms. Lane stated that there were two different inspections and that she was unsure of the standards of one of the inspections. Ms. Coard responded that one of the inspections was a Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) inspection and the other was the annual Uniform Physical Condition Standards (UPCS) inspection. COC contracts with a company to conduct the UPCS inspections and staff from COC accompany them in the units. Ms. Coard noted that she'll inquire as to why one of the inspectors made a comment regarding Ms. Lane's stove.

C. **Board Committee Reports**

Human Resources Committee – Commissioners Rutz, Ostuw, McKoy and Williams-Brown and Advisory Board members Burwick and Latta, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Coard, Mr. Gottlieb, Ms. Tantimonico, Mr. Gomez, Mr. Fedra, Ms. Reynolds, Ms. Figueroa, Ms. Love-Ortiz, Mr. Paulemon, Mr. Soares, Mr. Stothart and Ms. Young attended the HR Committee meeting on 7/26/2022. Ms. Tantimonico provided a recruitment update including new hires and open positions. Mr. Gomez presented a high-level overview of the new ADP Employee Performance Review process and employee engagement events and communications.

Finance Committee – Commissioners Rutz, Ostuw, McKoy and Williams-Brown and Advisory Board members Burwick and Latta, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Coard, Mr. Gottlieb, Ms. Tantimonico, Mr. Gomez, Mr. Fedra, Ms. Reynolds, Ms. Figueroa, Ms. Love-Ortiz, Ms. Luzietti, Mr. Paulemon, Mr. Soares, Mr. Stothart and Ms. Young attended the Finance Committee meeting on 7/26/2022. Ms. Figueroa and Ms. Luzietti provided an overview of the FY 2023 HCVP Voucher Utilization and Funding module components and assumptions in accordance with the Board Fiduciary checklist. Ms. Luzietti detailed the projections for FY 2023 based on HUD-granted budget authority and highlighted the potential for a significant unused balance due to the timing of the budget allocation as well as the unusually large inflationary increase this year. Ms. Figueroa outlined the next steps, both internally and with HUD, to protect this surplus from recapture. It was agreed that the voucher module would be reviewed with the Board on a quarterly basis as we work through the options associated with a reserve recapture.

Mr. Fedra provided an overview of the Finance Department's revised organizational structure resulting from projections of workload growth associated with redevelopment efforts and the HCV Program. Mr. Fedra noted the addition of two new positions and the status of internal and external hires filling those key roles. Ms. Reynolds gave an update on Scofield Manor subsidy funding activity recognizing the funds received from the City for the Operating Grant; the CBD Grant to cover unreimbursed COVID-19 related costs; a recent significant increase to our cost reimbursement rate of 6%; and the possible distribution of ARPA funds that could range between 3% to 10% over the next year.

Operations Committee – Commissioners Rutz, Ostuw, McKoy and Williams-Brown and Advisory Board members Burwick and Latta, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Coard, Mr. Gottlieb, Ms. Tantimonico, Mr. Gomez, Mr. Fedra, Ms. Reynolds, Ms. Figueroa, Ms. Love-Ortiz, Ms. Luzietti, Mr. Paulemon, Mr. Soares, Mr. Stothart and Ms. Young attended the Operations Committee meeting on 7/26/2022. Mr. Fedra provided reports on the A/R for 06/2022 and ongoing efforts to secure rent relief payments. Ms. Coard reported that we still have applications pending to be processed through applications both at the UniteCT Rent Relief program and Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut (CAAWC). Ms. Coard noted that forty-two UniteCT applications are still pending. COC has five applications pending at CAAWC. Ms. Coard noted there will be an estimated \$17,000 write-off for a resident that failed to follow through with a UniteCT application.

Ms. Figueroa announced that a grant application for additional HCV Mainstream Vouchers was submitted at the beginning of 7/2022. HCV Mainstream Vouchers assist non-elderly persons with disabilities. Charter Oak Communities (COC) has a current award of 78 Mainstream Vouchers and is looking forward to expanding opportunities to qualified households. If awarded these vouchers, COC will continue to work closely with community partners such as The Housing Collective, Inspirica, Pacific House and Abilis to ensure these vouchers are utilized by offering supportive services and housing search assistance to applicants.

Ms. Figueroa discussed an application that was submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requesting a regulatory waiver allowing COC to set the Housing Choice Voucher payment standards at 120% of the Fair Market Rates. A proposed payment standard amount would offer a higher subsidy to voucher households who may be at risk of voucher expiration or facing rent burden. This higher subsidy would improve outcomes and success rates for voucher families searching for units in Stamford's high and competitive rental market. If granted this exception, the waiver would be applied to new voucher lease-ups through 12/31/2022.

Ms. Figueroa provided an update of the self-service kiosk that has been installed in the vestibule of Clinton Manor. The kiosk will be accessible 24/7 and will assist COC applicants, residents and program participants by

increasing self-service options and minimizing customer wait times. The kiosk offers accessibility across an array of services including applications, work orders, document submissions and employee contacts.

Ms. Coard provided an update on the capital projects for site improvements and erosion control at the Lawn Avenue Townhouses development.

D. Report from Executive Director - Ms. Coard provided an update on the Area Median Income (AMI) increase that impacts the setting of Below Market Rate (BMR) rents. Ms. Coard noted that two owners have elected to use the higher rates effective July 1st for recertifications and new move-ins resulting in sharply higher rental rates for those units. The City of Stamford provided guidance on the rate increase to the owners to encourage a tiered or lower increase; however, the city has no mechanism currently in place to enforce the owners to comply. Additionally, Ms. Coard mentioned there has been an increase in calls from individuals from around the state looking for affordable housing opportunities.

E. Strategic Overview from Chief Executive Officer – Mr. Tufo reintroduced Dovetail: SIP, Inc., which is a subsidiary corporation of COC to facilitate effective collaboration to improve the social and economic well-being of the community. The Vita Health & Wellness Partnership, Fairgate Farm, Cradle to Career, Youth Mental Health Alliance, Parents as Co-Educators, Pathways to Employment Growth and other initiatives have been stimulated, in part, because of Dovetail. The revitalization to create partnerships with local communities began 25 years ago with the HOPE VI program and HUD changing the way residents connected to the community through better services including education, jobs, housing, etc. To further develop this initiative at that time, COC began to collaborate with service providers such as Stamford Hospital, Family Centers, Inspirica and the Boys & Girls Club. Dovetail has been the driver that can provide solutions to more complex challenges in education, health, economic security and equity.

Mr. Tufo stated that he's offering an opportunity to Board members to serve on the Dovetail board of directors, which will include three COC commissioners and up to two community directors. We will be reconstituting the Board and develop a strategic plan including opportunities that will move the mission forward. Dovetail will be further formalized with its own cost center so that when applying for grants it can be viewed a standalone entity.

Board Discussion – Commissioner Rutz welcomed comments on the recent Stamford Affordable Housing Trust Fund article that announced the increase from 5% to 10% of in Linkage Fees to be made available to the Trust Fund. Ms. Rutz welcomed Frances Lane into the discussion as she sits on the Affordable Housing Trust Fund board. Commissioner Rutz asked Ms. Lane if she could tell us if she expected more to come into the fund in addition to the linkage fees? Ms. Lane responded that, at present, Trust Fund income was limited to Fee in Lieu funds, from developers, and the Linkage Fees. She felt that, speaking personally, the Fund was under-resourced and would benefit from other lines of funding to be provided by the City.

Advisory Board member Latta asked about how Fee in Lieu (FIL) funds work and how does it relate to developers who can have up to 10% affordable housing. Mr. Tufo described how FIL funds are made available, either to a specifically designated project or to the Trust Fund. He noted that, since it's difficult to predicate the future volume of private development activity, we can't predict how much FIL fund money will be available.

Mr. Tufo stated that there is no recurrent ongoing source of income for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund unless city money is allocated through its Operating or Capital Budget processes.

Commissioner Rutz stated that she has mixed feelings about the Trust Fund. In some ways you want the money to come to COC, but it might be better for the community if developers built BMR units on site. Mr. Gottlieb stated that when you look at the apartments that are created under the BMR program, they are mostly one- and two-bedroom units, at 50% AMI, with a small number created for families. If COC gets FIL funds, we would build two- and three-bedroom units, often at 25% AMI.

F. Executive Session

No Executive Session was held.

G. Adjournment

At 6:47 p.m., after a motion duly made by Commissioner Rutz and seconded by Commissioner Williams-Brown, the Board meeting was adjourned.

Natalie Coard
Executive Director