

MINUTES
WEST HARTFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY
Regularly Scheduled Monthly Meeting via Teams and Dial-In
September 12, 2023

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Milagros Acosta, Mark D’Addabbo, Clare Dowd, Lee Reynolds

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Abdul Rahman

OTHERS PRESENT: Jill Corrado, Executive Director, Forest Berwick, Director of Operations, Yadira Mora, Section 8 Manager, Tim Mable, Director of Property Management, and Barbara McGrath, Corporate Counsel.

Adam Scher, a member of the public.

Rebecca Shulman, a member of the public.

Ms. Dowd called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

- Minutes of May 9 were approved on a motion from Ms. Reynolds and seconded by Ms. Acosta
- Minutes of July 5 were approved on a motion from Ms. Reynolds and seconded by Ms. Acosta

Financial Report

- FYE upcoming for Faxon and 616 New Park
- Budget season for Faxon and 616, followed by the other properties and WHHA

Trend data was presented on average HAP, Number of HCV units and Per-Unit-Cost through July 2023. Voucher segmentation data by program (West Hartford, J. D’Amelia) and voucher type was presented. Unit data was presented for the JDA and Wallingford contracts. Occupancy and collections trend data were presented for managed properties.

West Hartford program numbers are up largely due to our election of the HUD waiver of 120% reimbursement level, which has enabled us to house more people off the waiting list, eliminating high rental rate barriers in West Hartford.

Rent collection and occupancy rates on average are in the 90% ranges across the board. Our goal is 95% for the portfolio, through July we are tracking at 94%.

Financials were presented for the seven months ending July 31, 2023. Management is showing some \$12,000 in positive income. HCV unrestricted income through July is \$38,000, we are exploring some options with this. Contract Administration is showing a net loss of \$43,000. There are some things we can do to assist with this, but the J. D’Amelia program is running at high volume with insufficient staffing. We feel the program deserves a rate increase, since the rates have been static for quite some time despite cost increases.

HCV & FSS Report

Ms. Mora reported we have 582 HCV participants including port-outs. We had 10 port-outs, we continue to absorb port-ins. Average HAP is \$1046.

The DOH program is at 2,130 vouchers with 620 RAP certificates and 124 State PBV's. Voucher programs are at 1,321 HCV, 43 VASH, 18 PBVs, and 4 enhanced vouchers.

Wallingford is at 15 units.

We planning a waiting list opening (HCV) and are coordinating with Town Social Services. We are tentatively planning for early October.

Staff continues to make ongoing leasing efforts to house families.

FSS Grant Application was submitted on August 8th.

HUD published 2024 SAFMR. We do not believe HUD will be extending any Waivers past 12/31, i.e. HUD is likely to go back to establish payment standards between 90%-110%. We historically have maintained 110% and are currently taking advantage of the Waiver with a 120% payment standard.

Data on current and projected payment standards was presented. For zip codes for decreases (of which we have few housed families) we will be allowed to continue the current payment standard until the second annual recertification.

Ms. Acosta asked how many units do we have available right now. Ms. Mora replied theoretically we have a budget allocation of 684 vouchers total. Ms. Corrado and Ms. Dowd clarified this is for the voucher program.

Operations Report

Occupancy is at 95% or more for all the properties, except for Plant and Faxon which are expected to surpass 95% by month end.

Quarterly Safety Meetings have been introduced and held on June 29 and September 7. The State of Connecticut audited us the first week in July (No findings).

Conflict De-Escalation and Active Shooter Training was held for all staff on August 16.

Mr. Mable and Mr. Berwick attended a 6 hour HOTMA training on new changes to LIHTC and Section 8 asset and income calculation changes effective January 2024, Ms. Mora will be training later this month.

We met with Hands-On-Hartford, our supportive services partner at the Faxon, who provides counseling services to the supportive units there.

On the Property Management side, we continue to see a shifting demographic to young women fleeing Hartford, many with children. These applicants typically have very poor credit and no voucher assistance.

We received a complimentary letter from the Veterans Administration regarding Ms. Kasina Hill, a resident services coordinator at 616 New Park. The VA complimented Ms. Hill on her dedicated service and exemplary communication.

Ms. Corrado suggested that, as there appear to be members of the public in attendance, we amend the agenda to include a Public Comment period.

A motion was approved to add a Public Comment period to the agenda by Mr. D’Addabbo and seconded by Ms. Reynolds.

Public Comment Period

Ms. Dowd invited members of the Public to ask questions limited to no more than 3 minutes in length. While the board is not in a position to answer any questions we will respond to all inquiries.

- Caller “A” reported no comments at this time.
- Caller “B” identified as Rebecca Shulman, who identified as a neighbor to 1244 North Main Street. Ms. Selman requested clarification on a proposed 1244 North Main Street development. Ms. McGrath responded that WHHA is not developing the property, that is another group, the Town will be conducting hearings over the next few months to this effect. Ms. Corrado added that Trout Brook Realty Advisors is the developer of record for that property, and they have engaged Coursey & Co. to do public outreach for the public, directly reaching out to neighbors and inform them of the process in terms of town hearings and approvals. Ms. Shulman provided her phone number for this purpose.

Development Committee Report -none

Finance Committee Report -none

Resident Services Committee Report -none

Executive Directors Report

Ms. Corrado reiterated activities and achievements that staff have accomplished since our last meeting including:

- Pulled and leased up of a substantive number of waiting list applicants
- Meetings with HUD to review their two year tool and forecasting for upcoming leasing
- Introduced new system enabling the public to schedule calls with staff, e-business cards for all staff including links to their calendars
- Working on AHAP with the Camelot development team, utilizing a consultant
- Working on upcoming HCV waiting list opening
- Staff emphasis on filling vacancies and rent collection for all 6 properties
- Continual reporting to investors and stakeholders
- New RSC at Faxon/Elm Grove
- Agreement with Lex-Laz with regard to One Park Apartments
- Introduced a social media campaign with more frequent postings on more sites (please follow or “Like” us!)
- Annual plan is in public comment period
- Closing on 540 permanent financing

- Introduction of an employee recognition program (“Shout-Out” Program)
- Meetings with public officials (Kate Farrar)

We continue to:

- Expand on our branding initiative
- Expand educational opportunities
- Increase HCV program leasing
- Hold collaborative meetings with J. D’Amelia
- Continue to look for development opportunities
- Digest our new enterprise software

Challenges include:

- Staff bandwidth for both Voucher Administration and Property Management
- Behaviors of the Public
- Misconceptions of who we are
- Leasing and Receivables

Mr. Corrado thanked her team for all their efforts and support to our mission. She commented on we have two long term staff anniversaries this year, two 10 year and one 15 year, and indicated her appreciation for staff.

Mr. D’Addabbo asked what “branding” is. Ms. Corrado responded that, since assuming her new role, she has been made aware that there are large misconceptions on who we are, what services we provide, etc.. so there is a need to educate the public, town officials, state legislatures etc... This education effort ties into both our external communication as well as our internal staff communications, and collectively into our “Brand DNA”. We are working with a marketing company, BuzzEngine who is helping us with this, and our social media identity, a trusted partner who has worked with us in developing logos and websites.

Executive Session – Ms. Dowd asked for an Executive Session with the Commissioners, Ms. Corrado and Ms. McGrath.

Committee went into Executive Session at 6:48 pm by Ms. Reynolds seconded by Mr. D’Addabbo.

Committee came out of Executive Session at 7:06 on a Motion by Mr. D’Addabbo seconded by Ms. Reynolds.

Chairperson’s Comments - none

Old Business - none

New Business - none

Meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m. on a motion by Ms. Acosta and seconded by Ms. Reynolds.