

MINUTES
WEST HARTFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY
Regularly Scheduled Monthly Meeting via Teams and Dial-In
January 9, 2024

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Mark D’Addabbo, Clare Dowd, Abdul Rahman, Lee Reynolds

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Milagros Acosta

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.

Ms. Dowd called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The following meeting minutes were collectively approved on a motion from Mr. D’Addabbo and seconded by Ms. Reynolds:

- *Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting on September 12, 2023*
- *Minutes of Special Meeting of October 16, 2023*
- *Minutes of Special Meeting of December 7, 2023*
- *Minutes of Special Meeting of December 20, 2023*

Financial Report

- FYE for Faxon and 616 New Park, audits completed
- Upcoming audits for AEP and 540 New Park (12/31 year ends due in February)
- Budgets completed
- March 15 deadline for consolidated financial reporting to HUD

Trend data was presented on average HAP, Number of HCV units and Per-Unit-Cost for the full 2023 calendar year. Increase in HAP paid is largely attributed to the increase in the payment standard to 120%. This helped more people find housing more quickly than what we experienced previously.

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. 2,141 JDA program vouchers were administered on average over the last 12 months. Most of our vouchers are HCV, followed by RAP contracts.

Occupancy and collections trend data were presented for managed properties for the full year. Rent collection and occupancy rates on average are in the 90% ranges across the board. Our goal is 95% for the portfolio, through December we are tracking at 94%. Our property management team continues to work hard towards metric.

Financials were presented for the ten months ending October 31, 2023. Things are performing as expected with the exception of HCV which is performing better than anticipated. We received some extra money from HUD and the new HQS inspection contract has brought some program efficiencies as well.

Our management fees come from our managed properties and our admin fees come from administration of voucher programs. Ms. Dowd asked about Contributions from Cash Reserves, Ms. Corrado confirmed this account serves to balance the budget given the imbalances or time differences in programs. This year the DOH program in particular has been struggling given the amount of labor required, the ever-increasing amounts of legislation that adds to this burden and the limited amount of admin fee we are allowed to collect which pays for this. We foresee this is an issue we will be discussing more in the future, as while our staff is great, the economic challenges of administering this program are definitely being felt by other Housing Authorities as well.

HCV & FSS Report

Ms. Mora reported we have 576 HCV participants including port-outs. We had 8 port-outs, we continue to absorb port-ins. Average HAP is \$1,094.

The DOH program is at 2,126 accounts comprised of 743 RAP certificates and 1,383 State voucher holders.

Wallingford is at 13 units with two current vacancies which we are waiting on referrals for.

FSS Grant Application was approved for 2024. We plan on using the grant funding to bring on additional staff and grow the program in accordance with our strategic goals. Ms. Mora elaborated on how the program works for the benefit of Mr. Corrado. It is a five-year program that we can offer to our existing West Hartford program voucher holders. New applicants meet with our coordinator and establish initial goals, whether that is gaining employment, financial self-sufficiency, a degree etc. Our coordinator works with them to link them to resources, including child care, develop resumes etc., anything that can be feasibly obtained within 5 years. The family has to follow on the goals with escrow contributions calculated on the difference in HAP and funded by HUD. For example, if they get a job and our HAP goes down as a result, that difference goes into a personal escrow that participants can access if they successfully graduate from the program. In the past we have had many participants graduate – one person recently graduated with \$30,000 in escrow they used to fund their downpayment for a new home.

RESOLUTION 2024-1 TO ADOPT 2024 EXECPTION PAYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Mora introduced Resolution 2024-1 to amend our payment standards in accordance with our recent discussions with the Board. HUD did respond to us allowing us to extend the 120% payment standard through 12/31/2024, which we are seeking approval for with Resolution 2024-1. HUD has given us the discretion to implement the revised 120% standard during interims, allowing us to cover families who had an annual recertification at the lower standard. Ms. Mora reminded the board that there are other variables that can play into the approved amount, including rent reasonableness criteria and utility allowances. Ms. Dowd asked if that was approved locally or regionally, Ms. Mora replied that all waivers are approved by the regional offices rather than local offices. **Resolution 2024-1 was approved on a motion by Ms. Reynolds and seconded by Mr. D'Addabbo.**

Operations Report

Occupancy is at 95% or more for all the properties, except for 540 New Park and Faxon.

We have resumed resident functions at buildings, notably our elderly properties.

CHFA has restarted annual site visit to properties where they have an ongoing debt interest.

A portfolio wide tenant survey was completed over the summer. Mr. Berwick presented aggregated survey results which showed a 38% survey response rate with 88% of respondents indicated they planned to renew their lease. Average tenancy duration is over five years, compared to national averages of 2.2 years, and sentiment was overwhelmingly positive in terms of building upkeep, staff courteousness and responsiveness and pride-of-residency.

Building inspections have been introduced and completed for each of the last two quarters of 2023, and cross-walked against tenant survey results for each property. Meetings were held with all property staff to discuss the results and goals for 2024, resulting in the formation of short-term operational plans for each property as well as the beginnings of a five-year capital plan for each property.

Annual LIHTC continuing education requirements were completed by staff (3 hours per year are required for annual credentialing.)

All drivers of company vehicles received National Safety Council 4-hour defensive driving certificates.

All maintenance technicians received OSHA10 Certification training.

The West Hartford Garden Club is active at our elderly properties, maintaining the central bed in the rotunda at AEP and planters at Elm Grove. We met with members several times over the fall to coordinate their generous donation of over 70 plants as well as their expertise and time toward the rejuvenation of the central garden at Elm Grove.

We partnered with Liberty Bank to increase financial literacy among our residents. A building social event was held at 540 New Park on November 28 and attended by 23 households. Liberty representatives attended, discussing financial literacy and self-sufficiency among other topics on a one-on-one basis with residents.

Development Committee Report – Committee met, Ms. Reynolds and Mr. D’Addabbo indicated they will have more to share with the WHHA Board after the next TBRA Board meeting. Ms. Corrado indicated that permitting has been approved for the Elle and the Development team is working toward meeting the CHFA submission deadline this month.

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:

- MTW application submitted to HUD
- Full PBV package submitted to HUD and was approved for 15 vouchers.
- HUD granted our request for an exception payment standard up to 120% through 12/31/24
- Pulled a large number of applicants from the HCV waiting list, the AEP PBV waiting list, the Elm Grove PBV waiting list and the Faxon PBV waiting list
- Staff is in process of reviewing HUD’s two-year forecasting tool for upcoming leasing

We continue to:

- Focus on filling vacancies and rent collections
- Utilize our new Yardi software to find greater efficiencies
- Hold outreach meetings with public officials, state agencies and other entities
- Continue to look for development opportunities
- “Brand DNA” is being refined with a meeting scheduled with management and our consultant after mid-January.
- Increase our social media presence

Reporting to NEF, NHT, CHFA and M&T bank is up to date with audits completed for Faxon and 616 New Park.

Ongoing Challenges include:

- Behaviors of the public
- Misconceptions about who we are
- Leasing
- Receivables

Mr. Corrado thanked her team for all their efforts and support to our mission.

Executive Session – none

Chairperson’s Comments – Ms. Dowd thanked the team for their contributions.

Old Business - none

New Business – Resolution 2024-1 was passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m. on a motion by Ms. Reynolds and seconded by Mr. D’Addabbo.