

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING OF
THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF STAMFORD
JANUARY 26, 2022

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 26, 2022.

Commissioner Rutz called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

A. Attendees

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

Advisory Board Member: Ronice Latta

Present: Vin Tufo
Natalie Coard
Jon Gottlieb
Lisa Reynolds
Sam Feda
Jackie Figueroa
Ken Montanez
Darnel Paulemon
Jamie Perna
Peter Stothart
Jan Tantimonico
Christine Young

Public: Ms. Frances Lane

B. Approval of Minutes

- Approval of minutes of the Special Board Meeting of January 6, 2022

➤ Commissioner Ostuw moved, Commissioner McKoy seconded

The minutes were approved.

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

C. Public Comment – Ms. Lane inquired about the new third-party resident contact service to the residents. Ms. Perna explained that the new mass notification service, *CallMax*, was used 1/18/2022 to inform all residents of the availability of free COVID-19 test kits by mail. Ms. Perna stated that the system will continue to be used to reduce frequency of paper notices to residents.

D. Board Committee Reports

Human Resources Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, McKoy, Shinn-Desras and Williams-Brown, Advisory Board member Latta, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Montanez, Ms. Tantimonico, Ms. Coard, Ms. Figueroa, Ms. Perna and Ms. Young attended the HR Committee meeting on 1/25/2022. Ms. Tantimonico

provided an update on promotions, new hires and open positions as well as incentive options for recruitment and retention. Ms. Tantimonico referenced the Employee Quarterly Newsletter – Edition 3, which is part of COC’s communication and engagement initiatives. Ms. Tantimonico gave an update on the Vaccination Policy and COVID-19 workplace protocols.

Finance Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, McKoy, Shinn-Desras and Williams-Brown, Advisory Board member Latta, Mr. Tufo, Mr. Gottlieb, Ms. Coard, Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Fedra, Ms. Figueroa, Ms. Perna, Mr. Paulemon, Ms. Luzietti, Ms. Young and Mr. Montanez attended the Finance Committee meeting on 1/25/2022. Ms. Reynolds introduced the MAE/Rippowam Corporation Financial Model outlining that it is a longer-term projection and planning model for the unrestricted COC and Rippowam Corporation cash accounts available for discretionary use in accordance with our mission. Ms. Reynolds noted that the annual review of this model is recommended by the Fiduciary Committee and included in the Fiduciary Checklist. Mr. Fedra presented an overview of the Financial Model, including how the projections are developed, the assumptions that are built, and the significant events and variables reflected.

Mr. Paulemon provided an overview of three audits in progress, which include COC Y/E 6/30/2021, Scofield Manor Y/E 9/30/2021 and Tax Credit Properties Y/E 12/31/2021. Mr. Paulemon stated that the audits will be completed and presented to the Board with approval at the March Board meetings.

Operations Committee – Commissioners Ostuw, Rutz, McKoy, Shinn-Desras and Williams-Brown, Advisory Board member Latta, Mr. Tufo, Ms. Coard, Ms. Reynolds, Ms. Figueroa, Ms. Perna, Mr. Fedra, Ms. Tantimonico, Mr. Montanez, Mr. Paulemon, Mr. Stothart and Ms. Young attended the Operations Committee meeting on 1/25/2022. Ms. Perna reported on UniteCT Rent Relief program activity, noting that the program has a total of \$30 million in available funds remaining. Ms. Perna noted that UniteCT is prioritizing applications most at risk of eviction; and currently, COC has 21 applications being processed where non-payment action was pending. Ms. Perna reported that COC has 103 applications in its UniteCT portal with 37 paid for a total of \$286,000. Currently, one is approved pending payment of \$13,000, and 33 applications are in progress; four of the paid applications received at or near the full program benefit of \$15,000. Ms. Perna reported that the Stone Harbour portal has 34 total applicants with 14 having been paid for a total of \$150,000.

Ms. Coard reported that over 1,000 COVID-19 at-home test kits have been distributed; 10,000 surgical masks to the East Side residents are in distribution. Ms. Perna reported that the *CallMax* mass notification service was used 1/18/2022 to inform all residents of the availability of free COVID-19 test kits by mail.

Ms. Perna reported that, in light of the recent tragic apartment fires in New York and Pennsylvania, COC routinely takes proactive steps regarding fire safety. A detailed flyer was distributed to all residents reviewing space heater safety, the importance of having an exit plan, oven safety, smoke alarm awareness and the COC maintenance phone number. Also, additional guidance on fire safety was posted in all common areas. Ms. Perna stated that the COC maintenance team regularly checks smoke alarms and self-closing doors each time they are in a unit, and that an email reminding staff of this practice was recently distributed. Ms. Perna reported that COC is ordering range hood fire suppression cans for all properties where they are not currently installed. Ms. Perna reported that the Quintard Manor lobby will be refreshed to include paint, new ceiling tiles, furniture and décor. The quotes for the lobby package concierge are being reviewed.

- E. **Report from Executive Director** - Ms. Coard provided a timeline for the 2022 Agency Plan, which included the Special Board meeting date of 4/6/2022 and the submission deadline date of 4/15/2022 to HUD. Ms. Coard discussed the reorganization of the Intake Specialist position. There will be four Intake staff to handle the 28-wait lists and approximately 11,000 people on the lists. Ms. Coard stated that adding more staff will allow for more efficiencies and improved customer service in managing the wait lists. Ms. Coard noted a training plan to include approximately 12 modules is being developed for the staff that describes each task/function of managing wait lists effectively.
- F. **Strategic Overview from Chief Executive Officer** - Mr. Tufo stated that the Year-End Progress Report presentations by the Senior Staff is scheduled 2/15/2022 that will help in moving our Strategic Goals forward. Mr. Tufo asked for Board members to review the written presentation document prior to the meeting. Mr. Tufo discussed

a grant submission to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community Food Projects 12/2021 to develop a commercial-grade demonstration kitchen that will help meet the food needs of low-income and minority residents in Stamford; and an upcoming application to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture that will focus on key aspects of community education.

Mr. Tufo discussed the *Vita* Equitable Economic Recovery (EER) pilot initiative with Family Centers to help individuals achieve goals of improved financial security by attaining substantive employment. Family Centers is working with COC residents to assess whether they are interested in additional trainings and education to seek better employment opportunities. Grants are being pursued for a position to train and mentor residents on a one-on-one basis.

Mr. Tufo stated that COC has been asked by the City of Stamford Department of Health to collaborate on a coordinated initiative to deal with the Youth Mental Health (YMH) crisis with emphasis on service/care coordination, prevention and early intervention and improving the clinical infrastructure.

G. Board Discussion – What Can We Learn From Recent Apartment Fires?

Commissioner Rutz raised concerns regarding the tragic high-rise apartment fires in Philadelphia and New York. Commissioner Rutz discussed the proactive measures that COC undertakes to educate residents with fire safety flyers, maintenance checks and maintenance of building heating systems. Commissioner Ostuw stated that he is pleased with how COC has taken proactive measures to mitigate fire risks; Commissioner Shinn-Desras echoed the sentiment.

Commissioner Williams-Brown asked if the complexes have regular fire drills. Ms. Perna stated that no fire drills are conducted, except for Wormser Congregate. Ms. Coard stated that there is no guidance from HUD on fire drill safety, but COC takes every opportunity to educate residents on responding to fire alarms and building evacuations. Ms. Coard noted that the fire panels at the buildings contain a list of immobile residents, and the list is updated annually every fall. Mr. Stohart stated that COC ensures that all fire suppression systems in high-rise buildings are functioning properly, a major element of safety.

Mr. Tufo stated that COC takes all available preventive measures for safety: buildings are up to code, smoke detectors and fire suppression systems operate correctly, and doors close properly to prevent injury and unnecessary loss of life.

H. Resolution:

22-02 Approval of Updated Allocation and Services Agreement Between Charter Oak Communities and Rippowam Corporation

➤ Commissioner Ostuw moved, Commissioner McKoy seconded.

Be it resolved by the Commissioners of Charter Oak Communities that the allocation and services agreement between Charter Oak Communities and Rippowam Corporation be approved and that the Chief Executive Officer of Charter Oak Communities be authorized to execute and implement the agreement.

The resolution was passed.

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

I. Executive Session

No Executive Session was held.

J. Adjournment

At 6:57 p.m., after a motion duly made by Commissioner Rutz and seconded by Commissioner Shinn-Desras, the Board meeting was adjourned.

Natalie Coard
Executive Director