

Trumbull Housing Authority – February 22, 2016

Trumbull Housing Authority
February 22, 2016
4:00 pm
Community Room of Stern Village

Commissioners Present: Thelma Burr, Susan Fatse, Suzanne Donofrio

Also Present: Executive Director Harriet Polansky

Commissioners Absent: Janice Kopchik

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 pm by Mrs. Donofrio in the absence of the Chairman. Roll call was conducted followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Past Minutes

Ms. Polansky added under Executive Director's Report last paragraph the following statement for clarification – "TOVAH is currently educating residents about what constitutes a legitimate resident association which represents the residents as a whole and not exclusive to select residents and to be prepared for when elections take place so that they can make nominations and actively participate." Motion was made by Mrs. Donofrio to approve the minutes of January 25, 2016 as amended. Seconded by Mrs. Fatse and approved unanimously.

Resident Comments

Ed – Kim sent everyone a letter to join the current residents association. Many residents signed the letter and they were hand delivered to Mr. Littlefield. His comment was that you had to be voted into his committee. It is as if the residents don't have a choice. He reserved the right to speak later in the meeting. Mrs. Fatse asked for clarification whether the vote was to be on to a committee in the association or in the association. Ed verified it was the association.

Treasurer's Report

Mrs. Burr reported for the period ending January 31, 2016. Stern Village and Stern Center had an overall loss for the period of \$6,690. This was due to the various vacancies reducing rental income. The expense structure is being maintained. All of the vendors have been paid. The Current Accounts Payable amounts to \$37,904 which includes the PILOT payments accruing for the current year ending June 30, 2016. The case position is healthy at the present time. The Village current cash position is approximately \$8,860 and the Center's cash position is \$17,376. There have been some capital expenditures for this period. Repairs have been made to the sprinkler system in the Congregate and a new truck for the Village has been acquired. The solar initiative for the Congregate has been approved and will not cost the Trumbull Housing Authority any funds. Once implemented, a savings in our electrical cost for the Congregate will be recognized of approximately \$2,000 per year for the

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foreseeable future. Also, in the Congregate, a salad bar will be provided for a better dining experience. A convection oven for the kitchen was purchased to facilitate quicker cooking and additional menu items. These should be up and running by next week.

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Polansky noted the current reserve balance is over \$1,384,014 which is approximately \$6,239 for each unit in the entire complex after our purchase of a new truck for the maintenance staff. The overall cash position as of January 31, 2016 shows a balance of \$1,071,386 including our investment account. As of January 31, 2016, Accounts Payable is approximately \$37,904 including the PILOT accrual for the current year. For the Village, additional energy efficient refrigerators and some ranges have been purchased. For the Center, the sprinkler system was repaired and quotes are being obtained to replace some of the pipes. Quotes are being obtained for security cameras for the entrance/exit to Stern Village which will show and record the license plate, model and color of the vehicles. The Congregate will be receiving 15 new windows. Ms. Polansky noted the new salad bar would be available to all residents. It will be included in the fee for those in the Congregate and a fee for the remainder of the residents is being determined. She is looking for other projects to further improve the facility within the realm of affordability and need.

Ms. Polansky is working very closely with the Development Team and CHFA and DOH for the Redevelopment of Stern Village. CHFA has asked us to bifurcate the property into two phases. Last week the Advisory Committee for the Redevelopment held a meeting with the residents to provide updates.

New kitchen equipment was delivered and will be operational shortly.

All THA residents will be recertified starting in March. Neil and Paulette will be recertifying the residents for Stern Village. Letters with time slots will be going out to the residents this week.

Ms. Polansky noted she is starting her third year as Executive Director and that it has been a pleasure and honor to work for the betterment of Stern Village and serve the needs of our wonderful, vibrant residents.

The second grant has been received from the state to have Kim from TOVAH on board. Kim is currently educating residents about what constitutes a legitimate resident association which represents all the residents, not select residents. She is also preparing the residents for elections that will take place soon so that they can make nominations and actively participate.

Ms. Polansky recognized Kim Pietrorazio, Executive Director from TOVAH (Transforming Outcomes For Vibrant Affordable Housing), who provided the Commission with her Project Reach Update: Stern Village. Kim reviewed the update which is attached to the minutes. She noted that there has been a divide among the residents with regard to the current association including how to join the association

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and the requirement that bylaws be reviewed to make certain the association is following their own rules. She noted she provided a sample letter to the residents to complete and submit to the Association because that is what it states in the current bylaws. Those letters submitted were brought to Mr. Littlefield for consideration of membership who stated the board would have to take a vote. There is no public information regarding the association. She noted that no resident should need to request membership because they should be in the association by virtue of residency.

Kim requested that “the Trumbull Housing Authority Board of Commissioners engage the legal counsel of the Trumbull Housing Authority to act upon the interests and desires of the residents who wish to participate in their community via the Tenant Association and ensure that they are provided with equal opportunity to do so. The resident association should exist and be open for all residents not a selective few. Although I am not a legal expert, I find this to be highly discriminatory.” Kim noted she has not ever seen this before even in places where there were problems. Sometimes these associations were formed many years ago and were developed without guidance and support. However, in speaking with the association members, they were willing to make sure everything was done properly. Kim was placed at Stern Village by the State because they knew Stern Village was applying for funding. At that time she tried to engage the current tenant association through the only known officer but was unsuccessful. Rather than delaying the process for residents to be able to participate, she developed a Resident Development Advisory Committee which was an avenue for the residents to be engaged in the revitalization of their community. This is a short-term committee that will be in place as long as the revitalization occurs from the point of the initial plans and pre-development phase, through the financing and construction phase and post development.

Kim is concerned about the number of residents who feel they are not being represented because it is an injustice not to be represented and not be able to participate.

Discussion was held regarding the original tenant association and its bylaws. Mr. Lewis noted he was a member and was actually voted in as president but did not like the lies being spread about Ms. Polansky and he thought the organization should be closed because it was causing problems. Collection of dues was discussed. This may be okay for some residents but it may be a hardship on others. The residents should be receiving information about the association including how the money collected is being used.

Mrs. Fatse questioned if there is a tenant association that is functioning, would the Board recognize it? Kim described the election of officers for the association and what is expected of them if they are elected. She reiterated that residents do not have to be voted in due to the fact that they are residents of the community and are already members. Once an election is held, the association would be recognized by the Board when they have filed appropriate paperwork with the State of Connecticut. At this time, the Board should be recognizing the association but there is a problem. That is why she went down the other route. You cannot have two competing organizations. Once she finds out an organization exists, she will work with them over time to make the organization function properly. Unfortunately, that process didn't work at Stern Village and that is why they developed the Advisory

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Committee. Legal counsel should be involved at this point to find out what needs to be done to be able to move forward in a productive way.

Mr. Horan stated that Mr. Littlefield changed the bylaws himself which he cannot do. Mr. Littlefield stated there cannot be two sets of board of directors. He has stated that his association has an attorney and his association will be the one that will be in charge. It was felt by the Board that his attorney and the Trumbull Housing Authority attorney must work together on this. Kim feels she has done all she can do without the advice of legal counsel. Mrs. Fatse recommended a meeting be scheduled to discuss this topic with Kim invited to share her information.

One resident stated that Mr. Littlefield is intelligent and has a lot of expertise and it would be helpful to have him on the board as long as he is cooperative.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

None.

Adjournment

There being no further business, motion was made by Mrs. Donofrio, seconded by Mrs. Fatse, to adjourn the meeting at 4:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Crandall
Clerk

These minutes are considered a draft until approved at the next meeting of the Trumbull Housing Authority.



TOVAH, Inc.
Transforming Outcomes for Vibrant Affordable Housing
342 North Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06117
860-760-9170



Trumbull Housing Authority Board of Commissioners
200 Hedgehog Circle
Trumbull, CT 06611

PROJECT REACH UPDATE: STERN VILLAGE

TOVAH, Inc. has been facilitating the PROJECT REACH - Resident Empowerment Achieves Community Building in Housing Resident Leadership Training Program for the residents of the community to identify, strengthen and enhance leadership capacity in an effort to prepare residents to actively participate in expanding and sustaining quality of life programming initiatives, facilitate resident involvement in resident association and future revitalization efforts of this community and strengthen and enhance partnerships between the Housing Authority and Resident Association.

Our first PROJECT REACH Meeting was held on November 10, 2015 and we discussed the Power of Teamwork and how everyone achieves more when everyone works together. We also discussed how a properly organized and functioning Resident Association could help to improve quality of life issues for residents.

Our second meeting was held on December 15, 2015 and we addressed how residents feel about the existing Tenant Association and steps that can be taken to ensure that the organization is adhering to its organizational by-laws and a process that residents can follow to participate in their community.

On January 24th, the third PROJECT REACH Meeting was conducted and we specifically discussed Resident Association By-Laws, distributed the last known executed copy of the Stern Village Tenant Association by-laws of April 26, 2013 and reviewed the Reynolds Ridge Resident Association By-laws as sample association by-laws. In addition, residents were encouraged to achieve unity by participating in their existing Tenant Association and to specifically request membership so that they can have a voice in their community.

On February 16, the fourth PROJECT REACH Meeting was conducted and the topic of Resident Association accountability was addressed. Residents were provided with a letter to complete and submit to the Stern Village Tenant Association requesting membership so that they may be permitted to attend Tenant Association Meetings and learn how and what the Tenant Association is doing for the community. Mr. Edward Horan offered to bring any membership applications to Mr. Paul Littlefield, an officer of the Tenant Association. Mr. Horan shared that he requested



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West Hartford, CT 06117
860-760-9170



membership himself and was informed that the board would have to take a vote. At this point he has yet to hear back.

Since February 16, 2015, a total of twenty-nine residents have requested membership, despite the fact that no resident should need to request membership but instead automatically by virtue of residency be a member of the Tenant Association.

Since August 2014, the residents of Stern Village have been trying to ensure that all residents are part of the Tenant Association and have the opportunity to participate in Tenant Association meetings, and nominate and elect of the Tenant Association Board.

At that time, a petition for recall was conducted whereby a total of 174 signatures, representing 81% of the Stern Village community (35 congregate and 143 stern village units) were obtained. The request for recall was presented to the only known officer at that time, Mr. Paul Littlefield. It was requested of Mr. Littlefield that he work with the community to organize and conduct new elections and to ensure that the organizational by-laws were being adhered to. Mr. Littlefield was specifically informed that no one is denying nor preventing his ability to remain actively involved in the Stern Village community nor as a part of the Tenant Association. Unfortunately, Mr. Littlefield did not respond nor comply.

It was never the intention to try and establish a separate Resident Association but instead ensure that the one which was created:

- 1) is open to all residents and represents all residents;
- 2) creates meetings notices which are distributed to all residents and publicly posts such notices on a Tenant Association bulletin board;
- 3) conducts monthly meetings with all members;
- 4) produces minutes and makes them available to all residents;
- 5) provides the opportunity for all residents to participate in nominations and elections of officers;
- 6) ensures that board members are replaced via special elections or at the scheduled election period and are not self-appointed;
- 7) ensures that if monies are collected that they would be done so on a voluntary basis and not be used as a requirement for voting privileges;
- 8) ensures that monies collected would be properly recorded, deposited into a financial institution, and reported at association meetings.



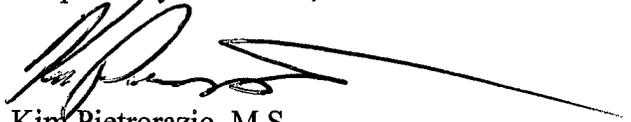
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Monthly I have heard from frustrated residents who are as confused as I am as to how the right to organize a tenant association, has impeded the ability for residents to participate in the resident association participatory process. The same right which is supposed to unify and protect residents, providing a collective voice, and a mechanism to strengthen communications between the housing authority and its residents has only divided this community and excluded the majority. How is it possible that due to the exclusionary nature the Stern Village Tenant Association was organized and operates today, the majority of residents are prohibited from participating? Where is the protection for these residents' rights? Why is their voice not equally as important as the few who claim the title of Tenant Association member or officer?

As such, I request that the Trumbull Housing Authority Board of Commissioners engage the legal counsel of the Trumbull Housing Authority to act upon the interests and desires of the residents who wish to participate in their community via the Tenant Association and ensure that they are provided with equal opportunity to do so. The Resident Association should exist and be open for all residents not a selective few. Although I am not a legal expert, I find this to be highly discriminatory.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kim Pietrorazio, M.S.
Executive Director