



**MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 17, 2009
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Domenico Chieffalo
Raymond Yamin
Stanley Watkins
Mary Teicholz
Jim Zeh

ATTENDEES:

Carolyn Sistrunk
Colleen Madson
Jackie Elam
Deborah Gottschalk
Richard Knapp
Everette Spencer
Kim Nolan
Jessie Marengo
Rodney Stevenson
Iris Hernandez
Rose Morrison
Floyd Banks

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Board of Commissioners Meeting for the Housing Authority of the City of Danbury was called to order at 5:30 p.m. at HACD Main Office, 2 Mill Ridge Road, Danbury, Connecticut. Upon motion by Jim Zeh and second by Mary Teicholz the meeting was called to order.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: No public comments

RESIDENT COUNCIL REPORT

Resident Commissioner Jim Zeh presented the Resident Council report for Ella Fraser, September 17, 2009. Five members will be attending a state-wide PHRN Resident Leadership meeting on Saturday, September 19th in Hartford. Five members are registered for the New Day for Housing Conference at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford on Wednesday

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October 7th. We thank the staff for getting the reservations for us. Our representative Lorraine Coffey has moved to the Waterbury area and we need to fill her vacancy at Wooster Manor. We did have a possibility of a couple of names there. The committee comprised of Kevin Barry and Deborah Gottschalk from HACD and resident council member, Ella Fraser and myself have agreed on a consultant choice. We had the committee meeting here on Tuesday, and we are all in agreement that what we did receive was very good from the Danbury Volunteer Center. The committee will be negotiating a price for them. We will be having extensive help with the upcoming election process, annual meeting and the memorandum with the Housing Authority, City and Resident Council.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon motion by Mary Teicholz and second by Ray Yamin the minutes of the August 20, 2009 regular meeting were approved.

DEPARTMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS

Jackie Elam, HACD, I would like to just talk about our new internal software program upgrade. In 1994 converted to a DOS based system for retaining tenant records and tenant accounting. That system has become antiquated. Now we have transitioned into a web-based system. We still have the same software provider, who is Management Computer Services, based out of Wisconsin, but they do have reps on the East Coast, they are just a click away. Our Phase I transition happened just last week, September 9th, where we converted our tenant records. It has been a seamless transition and our property coordinators and management team are up and running. I haven't heard of any complaints yet. We are fixing a few errors, but very minimal. Some of the cons of the old system are that we were very dependent upon the support team from MCS, but with the web-based system we are able to fix our own errors. Basically the system will flag the errors for us. If you enter something wrong or something is not quite right it will flag the error. There is less room for errors. Also, with the old system you couldn't define default printers, now with the web-based program we can use any printer in our network or local printer. We don't need MCS to assign a printer for us. With the old system we couldn't change letters. The form letters in the system and one in particular in the system, the wait-list, had my name on it and I haven't handled/managed the wait list in quite some time. We are now able to put the correct signers name on it and do our own letters and change them as we need to. Also with the old system, it only retained the current record, it didn't retain any history. With the new system it will have historical records and go back beginning 9/9/09. We can go back and look at all the actions that have happened, for example if it were an annual exam, or interim change in rent. It holds all the historical data and it has the ability to see who has worked on that file. If it is my file and something has changed and I didn't make the change I'll be able to tell who made the change. The biggest thing is that it mirrors HUD's reporting system. We have to report monthly to HUD through their PIC system (Public and Indian Housing Center) through REAC and this system mirrors that system. It allows us to have an improved reporting rate and actually make



our submissions a head of time through this system. The biggest bonus is that we can work from anywhere. With the old system a VPN connection was required on your computer to work from home, now with this web-based system you can work anywhere, or on any computer. There is no cost differential, there is still a monthly fee like before. We do own our own data. Cost savings will come in number one our time, and number two reduced support that is needed through the software company. A lot of the fixes can be handled ourselves. We just completed Phase 1 last week and we are excited about that and now we are gearing up the next phase. Phase 2 is tenant accounting and the target date for that, we call it an upload, an upload from Chas to Web is the beginning of October, October 6th. The final phase of our conversion will be our financial accounting which we expect will be just after the first of the year. Right now we are working on two systems because this is a phase in thing and we don't want to do it all at once. You would run into all kinds of issues. We are up and running and are pretty satisfied with the program. The Board Chairman asks how the security issue is since it is web-based. The Executive Director, Carolyn Sistrunk answers that it is user defined. We get to define the level of access. We don't know because there aren't a lot of housing authorities on it so we don't know of any breeches. There are a lot of audit trails which is good. We are just pleased that any time that we call the service company we aren't paying \$75 an hour even if it is just to get the printer. The standard fee of \$2500 a month will make this more cost effect for us and is a better system. The staff is excited about this.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

You have the Authority Management Report for the month of August for the three districts, and there is an uptick in rent collection and there is a reduction in the number of people on the wait list. The formal wait list is 600 or so Housing Voucher Program, 442, 300+ for the federal and state respectfully. In terms of big activities going on, we have kicked off the Neighborhood Stabilization Program which is our acquisition of new units. We have offers out on two units. You have in front of you, the procedural manual that we will use for the acquisition of property as well as the process of appraising those properties, inspecting those properties, requesting funds from the state, and the special conditions that are required. The reason why we had to put together this mammoth document is that right in the legislation for the neighborhood stabilization funds, there is a mandate that the Inspector General's Office conducts audits and they are out there with avengence. They have already conducted audits on both New London and Waterbury. They are auditing their capacity to manage the funds. What does that mean; do they have policy and procedures in place. Waterbury has actually had to pay money back already. Some of their acquisitions, they didn't do it in accordance of established policy and procedures. New London was found not to have the capacity although they had draft procedures, but because they had some difficulties with prior findings on Block Grant programs that the City had not resolved. They are out in California and that is the only state that they have found that has the capacity to manage these funds. We are trying to be proactive in putting the policy and procedures in place. We did a best practice search and looked at what California did to see



where it works and tailor it for us. We focused mainly though on Minnesota similar size state, demographics similar, though not as much welfare. We have developed everything from policies down to the actual forms that we are going to use. Our plan is that after that we approve the Annual Plan tonight which incorporates this we will meet with the City beginning tomorrow to make sure that we are all using the same forms that they agree with the process that is put into place preliminary discussions to say that there is probably not going to be a difference because what appears to be one of the standing findings that those Cities and Housing Authorities that do not use the Block Grant guidelines are the Cities that run into trouble. That is what they are looking for. We did incorporate Block Grant guidelines in how we want to run this program. That is what is in front of you, that I wanted to give you a preview before we got to the actual Resolution itself. What you have here in front of you is not only the procedural manual for the stabilization money again just to remind you that it is \$1.3 million, it also has our relocation policy just in case there are people that are holdovers in those properties. Our intention is not to get involved with those properties, but we have to have the policy in place. Lastly we need to have a tenant selection policy in place. What appears to be a trend with the Inspector General reports across the country, that as long the housing authority uses their own tenant selection policy they are fine. We took all of that and put it together and called it our Neighborhood Stabilization Program Policy and Procedural Manual. Beyond that we have been named to the Mayor's 2010 Census task force. Jackie attended on our behalf today which I meet with the Resident Council. I'm sure it went well and I'm sure there is some follow up and news. The kick off of the 2010 Census will be September 29th. October 1st is the Danbury Housing Partnership breakfast, we have acquired a table and all the Commissioners are invited we have 10 seats. I know we had a full house last year and are expecting the same this year. With that I will accept any and all questions.

Financials for July 2009, the budget where we anticipated a \$700,000 cash flow, we registered a \$652,000 cash flow, net difference of \$56,000. We did have scattered sites in there disposition but are backed out. The expense is offset by the book value on the expense side. We are holding our own. We have been fortunate in terms of receiving additional grants this year, which has allowed us to go out do work. The state programs are still suffering. We are planning for next year's budget and we could reduce staff by almost 70% and that will not affect the programs. We are not deterred by that. We just need to bring more revenue in on the state side. The last resort will be increasing rents. Because of this economy, there is not much to gain by that. Most of the residents at the state properties are making less than 30% of the median income. We have a couple thoughts about potentially federalizing our state program. We think it would be a challenge. We would be essentially asking HUD to subsidize our state program. The biggest problem would be that the inspection standards for the federal programs are very stringent and structural. We are making in-roads investing in the infrastructure of our state properties and they would have to pass that inspection and there are other issues related to the way those properties are constructed that we may have some issues. New York has done it and they are the largest



housing authority in the country. New York has about 500,000 units and they were able to get HUD to subsidize their state programs and that includes not only operating subsidy, but also capital. I would love to do that for Danbury. The State has been pushing it and wants us to get HUD to federalize and take on the units. The federal programs don't want these units. If we get those properties where the outside is fine, done the roof repair, gotten quotes on power washing that should commence soon, have begun inspections on the inside, to decide in priority order what will happen next. We think we can get those units in condition to make a good argument to federalize them. It would be a tough project, but we can do it. The nature of how the state works these properties will continue to lose. We are not the only ones. It is all housing authorities who have state programs in the state. While are federal properties are getting all the stimulus money, our state programs are not. We cannot use the stimulus money for the state properties. Financially we have turned a profit, if that is really the word to use. We are to continue the sales and reduce the debt and sustain the properties until we find a way for these state properties to carry themselves.

RESOLUTIONS AND INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. Resolution 809 authorizes the Executive Director to submit to the Department of Housing and Urban Development the HACD's Annual and Five Year Agency Plan. Upon motion by Ray Yamin and second by Stan Watkins the Resolution was adopted and approved.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS: NONE

NEW BUSINESS: NONE

ADJOURNMENT:

Upon motion by Jim Zeh and second by Stan Watkins, it was approved to adjourn the meeting at 5:53 p.m.