

## **Town of Fairfield Housing Authority**

The Housing Authority of Fairfield held a meeting on August 10, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room at 15 Pine Tree Lane.

PRESENT: Carol Landsman, Chair  
Rita Waterman, Vice-chair  
Dorothy Anderson, Treasurer

ALSO PRESENT: Elizabeth Gutierrez, Executive Director  
Carolyn Durgy, Resident Services Coordinator  
Residents: Barbara Krug, Nancy Dills, Carol Kuhl, Norine Zalemski,  
Elizabeth Murray

DISTRIBUTIONS: Draft minutes of July 13, 2010

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Landsman called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

MINUTES: The minutes of July 13, 2010 were approved as amended.

### **PINE TREE RESIDENT'S CONCERN**

A Pine Tree resident had been expected to make a formal complaint regarding damage to her garden to the board this evening, but sent a message that she was not feeling well enough to attend the meeting. Ms. Gutierrez said the resident feels she is the victim of harassment by a contracted employee of the FHA and claims to have some proof. Ms. Gutierrez spoke to Mentor Amenti of the Connecticut Housing Authority about the situation. Pine Tree resident Ms. Kuhl said she had observed Paul's truck parked at an angle and thought he was picking up something and putting it in a pile. She says she has an alarm and that it went off after hours and that she saw someone dressed in black move away from the area. Resident Ms. Dills said she saw some damage to the garden in question that could have been caused by a person or an animal. She also noticed a pile of cigarette butts that were not the brand smoked by the complainant. These residents said they had never had problems with Paul. The resident with the concerns will be encouraged to attend the next meeting. Resident Ms. Murray noted that the landscapers were destructive, removing plants and statues from garden areas. Ms. Gutierrez noted that the work of the landscapers was a prominent topic at the recent Director's Chat.

### **REPORT OF THE CHAIR**

Ms. Landsman said that she and Ms. Gutierrez met recently with Mary Carroll Mirylees regarding the relationship of the employees of the FHA to the town's compensation plan. They were told the FHA employees couldn't participate in Fairfield's benefits plan. Ms. Landsman sent an e-mail to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party administrator asking for a bid on health, life

insurance and short and long term disability benefits for present and future employees of the FHA. Ms. Gutierrez is also looking into this.

Ms. Landsman complemented Ms. Waterman on the publicity announcing the appointment of Ms. Gutierrez as the new Executive Director of the FHA. Ms. Waterman said there would be an interview with Ms. Gutierrez in the Fairfield Citizen News at a later date. She will follow up with the Danbury paper.

Ms. Landsman made a motion to authorize Ms. Gutierrez to get estimates for new furniture for her office. The motion was seconded and passed. The board members stressed that the Executive Director should be able to organize her space to accommodate her work efficiently and to provide an area for private consultation with residents when necessary. Ms. Gutierrez will e-mail estimates to the board for approval. The commissioners suggested engaging a locksmith to change the locks on doors and file cabinets.

Ms. Landsman ascertained that performance reviews were not done as per their request. She suggested this matter be reviewed within 6 months. Ms. Landsman said she has not received a report from Ms. McNee detailing her time taken and time owed for vacation and sick days. Ms. Landsman asked Ms. Gutierrez to begin to prepare some short and long-term goals for the FHA. She asked if the FHA owes the town money for past payroll. This issue is still being examined. Ms. Landsman said she hopes the FHA can get on a regular schedule of payments to the town. Ms. Landsman also requested that Ms. Gutierrez contact the town to assure that the delayed salary increases for Mr. Gurge and Ms. Durgy were implemented retroactive to August 1, 2010.

#### TREASURER'S REPORT

There was no Treasurer's Report for this month.

#### REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ms. Gutierrez has asked David Belcher to do a HAP report.

She said that FHA has failed the Management Review for 2 consecutive years. Deficiencies noted were lack of response in closing out 2009 findings; missing information in resident and applicant files for 2010. The team leader for the oversight company, JeffCo, has agreed to extend the time for a response and to work with Ms. Gutierrez in putting missing policies and information in place. Ms. Landsman said the board was never alerted to the status of the Review.

Ms. Gutierrez detailed the waitlist as 64 individuals for studio units and 13 for 1 bedroom. 27 applicants were removed from the waitlist on 8/9/10 for failure to respond to the annual questionnaire.

Mentor Amenti from CHFA has begun to work with Ms. Gutierrez on a plan to raise rents for the Pine Tree complex. (Trefoil is a federally subsidized Section 8 site based program and has the rates set by the region.) There are two options for raising rents: raise

the rent rate currently established (although Mentor says that we could only raise it by \$50.00 per year, so as not to cause a hardship to existing tenants), or establish a base rent set at a reasonable amount. Ms. Gutierrez said that a public hearing would need to be held to discuss the plans. She said rent histories show that the base rent for the Pine Tree complex, if raised to \$250.00, would affect 10 existing residents.

Ms. Gutierrez presented a vacancy log to the board. She noted that there was no documentation for some of the units and that some residents had been moved to other units as their original ones were undergoing renovation. She intends to establish policies to apply in the future. Ms. Landsman said most of the units have received no improvements. Ms. Gutierrez said many units had received no up grades for 20 years and there are safety factors that must be addressed. She is now requiring vendors to complete rehab work in 3-5 days. Currently, Paul (Country Time Plumbers) is making some repairs to units. The board indicated there was no reason for apartments to be vacant for as long as they have been. Ms. Gutierrez assured the board that this policy would be changed.

Ms. Gutierrez said HUD is asking for the Annual Management Plan Report. Ms. Landsman said Ms. Perham had taken it for review and not returned it yet. She will contact her and ask that it be returned by 8/11/10. Ms. Landsman said Ms. Perham had not contacted anyone to say she would not be at this meeting.

Ms. Gutierrez submitted a bid from Diversified Property Improvement LLC for painting in the office/community room building. Ms. Landsman asked her to get two more bids.

Ms. Landsman and Ms. Gutierrez asked the town for a detailed account of funds owed to the town in payroll, insurance and benefits. The amount is \$105,733.75. They said a monthly payment plan would be established going forward.

Ms. Gutierrez sent Demand letters to 11 tenants. She said that 5 Trefoil residents had balances which totaled \$3925.00 and 6 Pine Tree residents had outstanding balances totaling \$3842.00. She said notices are sent out the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month and are due on the 10<sup>th</sup>. There are some problems with the Quick Books program and she has asked Mr. Belcher to make the necessary changes. Another consultant has been asked to bid on the work currently done by Mr. Belcher. Ms. Landsman emphasized that the proprietary programs developed by Mr. Belcher belong to FHA.

Ms. Gutierrez said that Paul of Country Time Plumbing was making repairs to some units, getting them ready for occupancy.

Ms. Gutierrez said annual inspections of the property have not been performed and are a requirement of HUD. She will schedule them for September at Pine Tree.

Ms. Gutierrez mentioned the need for cell phones for Mr. Gurge and any other staff members who will be working on the site. Ms. Landsman said the web site should be expanded and made interactive. Ms. Gutierrez presented a proposal for BlackBerrys, which seems to offer a good solution to the needs of the staff at a reasonable cost. Ms. Landsman suggested they accept the proposal.

Ms. Gutierrez suggested that employees have official badges or some sort of identification to aid themselves and the tenants when they are in the field. She will see if they can obtain photo ID's through the town.

Ms. Gutierrez ended her report by saying that her short-term goals included organizing her office space developing policies. She would like to see beautification work on the Pine Tree property, perhaps by securing grants. She would also like to increase community contact between the FHA and town residents. Long term, she would like to explore ways to maximize affordable housing in Fairfield. She said all town departments have been very cooperative when she has asked for assistance.

Ms. Landsman commented on the need for expanded space for the professionals' use. She suggested the board look at the garage to see if it could be adapted as additional office space.

Ms. Kuhl asked if she could put a card table in the community room to use for puzzles. Ms. Gutierrez said this was possible but that the space belongs to all the residents.

#### REPORT OF THE RESIDENT SERVICES COMMISSIONER

Ms. Durgy said the response to the revised Newsletter has been very positive. She and Ms. Gutierrez will continue to make improvements in it. Ms. Durgy now has a brochure she can distribute to residents that lists the responsibilities of the Resident Commissioner. She said the music programs have been very successful and she is hopeful of securing further grants from the Fairfield Arts Council for more such programs. The picnic was well received. The Fire Department did a fine job is assisting. Events to be scheduled are a visit to Captain's Cove, a Port Jefferson trip and an ice cream social. Board members made suggestions of vendors who may be willing to supply ice cream. Ms. Durgy said that both complexes held retirement parties for Ms. McNee. She is talking to the Fire Department about doing a program in September and the Department on Aging will make a presentation in October. The seniors' Farmers market vouchers have been very well received. Ms. Durgy has made visits to some of the homebound residents in Trefoil and Pine Tree and has sent cards to some of the other residents. She will be aiding tenants with renewal of Medicaid forms and rental assistance forms, and assisting frail residents with asking for services. Ms. Zalemski asked if flu shots would be available in October. Ms. Durgy will find out.

#### HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER/SECTION 8

Mr. Gurge reported that a Resident Advisory Meeting was held on August 5, 2010. Four families attended the meeting. Farmers' Market vouchers were distributed. Under discussion were new EIV requirements, debts owed to PHA's (HUD-52675), OIG Audit Report #2010-FW-0001 (Deceased Tenants) and the newly created child support verification system through Support Enforcement Services.

Ms. Gutierrez and Mr. Gurge attended a HUD Round Table on August 30, 2010. Topics discussed were the electronic submission system for child support/alimony verifications,

EIV updates, Occupancy Utilization, Homeownership programs, Capital Improvements and Dodd Funding (7/21/10).

An informal hearing was held for a participant on 8/9/10. As a result, the participant must supply the staff with information requested and enter into a repayment agreement due to income that was earned but not reported to the FHA.

HAP payments for July 2010 were approximately \$66,133.00. Monthly disbursement is \$67,450 until October 2010. The FHA's NRA balance is approximately 13,000 (recorded since April 2010). The UNA balance is approximately 3,000.

HUD has requested a copy of the Administrative Plan for the HCV Program. Ms. Gutierrez was notified of the request.

Ms. Gutierrez reported that a HCVP resident had made a sexual harassment charge against Mr. Gurge. Ms. Gutierrez took the file and will seek the advice of the housing authority's attorney. She advised Mr. Gurge to discuss the matter with his wife and family. The tenant has been advised that if she wishes to file a new complaint, to do so.

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Norine Zalenski will assume her position on the board next week.

Ms. Gutierrez will send the necessary information to the bank in order to be considered a signatory on the accounts.

A board member said a previously court evicted tenant has been given a key to her unit by his ex-wife. Ms. Gutierrez is handling the situation. She will emphasize that the rules of the projects must be followed. The board members allowed 30 days for a resolution of the problem.

The outdoor fish tank maintained by a resident was discussed. Ms. Landsman said it could be a hazard. Ms. Gutierrez will investigate.

Ms. Waterman apologized for not following through on the mailboxes. She would like a plan before approaching the Postmaster. Ms. Gutierrez said exterior cluster boxes are available and would eliminate the need to leave the door on the laundry room open unnecessarily. Ms. Gutierrez suggested the FHA purchase and install the boxes and then ask the Post Office to service them.

Ms. Anderson questioned the payments due contractors on the recent work and the role of Tom Cristiano and his fees. Ms. Landsman said his contract has been extended because legally he needs to certify the completed work. Ms. Landsman asked if the work has been completed. Ms. Gutierrez said she had authorized some of the remaining work and that she asked the contractor to go door to door, checking on completed items. All agreed that all the work must be done before any remaining checks are written.

There is still a problem with bed bugs at a section 8 facility. The landlord has hired an exterminator as required but it is difficult to get full cooperation of the tenants. Ms.

Gutierrez is helping to handle the problem. She and Mr. Gurge will be attending a conference soon at which she is sure they will be able to avail themselves of some helpful information on the subject.

On behalf of the board, Ms. Landsman applauded Ms. Gutierrez on her accomplishments in these first weeks of her employment.

The regular meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m. The commissioners adjourned to Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen Goethner