

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING

Willington Housing Authority
Monday, May 20, 2019 – 4 p.m.
20 Senior Way – Senior Center
Willington, CT

Present: Chairman Don Berg, Treasurer Claudia D'Agata, Members William Bunnell and Mark Forkey, ACCESS Housing Management representatives Alex Fuentes and Melanie Savage. Absent: L. Millix.

- 1. Call to order** – The meeting was called to order at 4:07 p.m.
- 2. Present to speak** – opportunity for members of the public to speak.

No public present.

3. Old Business – Button Hill Senior Housing

A Fuentes reviewed Button Hill finances as of April 30, 2019 and projections for the remainder of the fiscal year which ends June 30, 2019.

A. Fuentes said the revenue figure indicated in the red is the amount still to be collected for this fiscal year. He said that at the end of the fiscal year, the budget could have a small positive balance.

Under expenses, he indicated some of the budget overages, such as legal fees (\$2,000 versus the budgeted \$1,000), advertising, office expenses, and telephone/answering service.

Regarding phone service, he noted the budget projects \$708 for May and June. He also said he is expecting a credit from Frontier for the last two months, for an extra phone line (about \$80 a month). He noted \$4,208 has been paid to date, while \$3,500 was budgeted.

A. Fuentes pointed out that propane costs also exceeded what was budgeted. And HVAC repairs also were over budget. As for snow removal, while costs exceeded the \$8,400 budgeted, the final bill was about \$2,000 less than it would have been before changing from a per-season contract to a per-storm contract.

W. Bunnell expressed concern that the way the figures are presented in the financial documents seem inconsistent, particularly when projected expense totals for a 12-month period result in a negative balance but aren't indicated in red.

A. Fuentes explained that the figures on page 1 are actual expenses and revenues for the first 10 months (as of April 30), and page 2 are 12-month totals that include projections of expenses and revenues for May and June.

M. Forkey also felt that the projected figures didn't seem to add up, that some projected deficits will actually be more by the end of 12 months.

C. D'Agata said it would have been less confusing if the information on page 2 had been included as a fourth column on the first page instead of on a separate page. She noted the middle column on page 2 shows the actual revenues/expenditures for 12 months.

D. Berg asked if the cost of spare parts for HVAC (\$1,200) was included under janitorial supplies. A. Fuentes said they were. He said "HVAC Repairs" is only for contractor costs.

A. Fuentes noted that the first Button Hill budget was "way off," so big adjustments had to be made to the second budget and then, to meet Putnam Bank's requirements to achieve a certain debt service ratio meant some line items were further adjusted.

A. Fuentes next reviewed work orders for April. There was discussion about replacement air filters. A. Fuentes said the new fiberglass filters improved air flow, which addresses problems with freezing up. D. Berg said he's concerned that they also may not be adequately filtering the air, and asked A. Fuentes to compare the MERVE (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value) of the old versus new filters.

There was discussion about work that had to be done to some carpets that had bumps. M. Forkey said a worker making the repairs commented that the carpets had not been stretched correctly by the original installer. He asked if all the units should have their carpets properly stretched since they will likely end up with the same problem eventually.

D. Berg reported that Fox heating circuit board installation cost \$819. He asked if they should install surge suppressors in all the panels.

D. Berg asked A. Fuentes to send him the quotes and results of the load test analysis for generators for the utility rooms.

There was discussion about landscaping. C. D'Agata said she's been asked if the Housing Authority is responsible for replacing dead bushes and trees. W. Bunnell said that if they want to bill the snow plowing contractor they would have had to document the damage at the time it happened, which wasn't done. Other members said it wasn't always evident at the time that something had been damaged. A. Fuentes said that Parker Stevens, at a previous meeting, did ask if the Housing Authority had any issues with the contractor before authorizing him to pay the final bill and none were mentioned. M. Forkey said that it isn't necessarily clear if damage was done by the contractor or the town plow. D. Berg asked ACCESS to make an inventory of what landscaping needs to be repaired/replaced.

There was discussion about a request made at a previous meeting that D. Berg approach the Board of Selectmen to ask if the town would plow the Button Hill parking areas. It was the consensus of the members to cancel that request.

M. Forkey, commenting on repairs made to vacated unit 12C, said the cost of carpet replacement seemed excessive. He compared it to Home Depot prices, including installation. A. Fuentes said the quality isn't comparable and that there can be up to a 30-day wait time, which would affect how quickly the unit could be re-rented. He added that Home Depot subcontracts this work, so they wouldn't know what kind of company would be doing the job.

D. Berg reported that he's waiting for a response from Whittlesey Forward Advising, the company hired to do the Button Hill cost certification. He asked them to expedite this project as soon as possible. The certification is required by the Department of Housing (DOH).

There was discussion about any DOH requirements regarding the Button Hill call-for-aid system. A. Fuentes suggested asking D. Berto if there are such requirements. D. Berg said the current plan is to install a louder exterior alarm and a blinking light. They will start with one unit, test it, and if it's satisfactory, install the equipment on all the units. The cost would be about \$62 per unit, plus labor (by ACCESS staff)

D. Berg said the Fire Marshall is opposed to tying in the call-for-aid system with a dialer to the fire department because they're prone to false alarms, i.e. when the pet cat plays with the cords.

There was discussion about how much it would cost to contract with the answering service to add taking emergency calls. A. Fuentes said the company wants to know how the calls would be delivered. He said there's an email option, which is likely the least expensive. D. Berg asked A. Fuentes to get quotes for phone call, email and text options.

D. Berg was asked to find out what the town's emergency plan is in case of natural disasters such as a tornado.

There was discussion about the snow removal contract and whether (1) someone from ACCESS property management could come out when there's a storm, meet with the contractor and measure the depth of the snow, since the contract specifies different charges based on the depth of the snow, and (2) could the billing increments be changed from the current 3 inches to 2 inches (ex. 1-4, 4-6 inches, etc.)

There was discussion about the policy the Housing Authority previously approved concerning requests from existing tenants to move into a different unit.

C. D'Agata said the policy doesn't address the need for the tenant to pay another security deposit if the original one is depleted by the costs of repairs to the first unit. D. Berg read a draft revision that states the tenant is required to pay the new deposit upfront with the understanding that any amount remaining after repairs to the previous apartment will be refunded to the tenant. [No action was taken on this proposed revision.]

There also was discussion about removing the specific reference to B units (regarding requesting to move from a smaller to a larger unit), and having the policy apply to all the units. D. Berg said his concern is loss of rent revenues every time a tenant switches apartments, so he'd prefer a less liberal policy. C. D'Agata said limiting the policy could constitute discrimination.

It was agreed to table a decision on a revised policy until a future meeting.

There was brief discussion about returning to the Board of Selectmen to ask about using town land for a solar installation, but not in the near future. D. Berg said the Selectmen didn't respond to the last request because the transcript of the minutes he presented (the a resolution authorizing him to make the request) didn't include the vote (which was unanimous).

4. New Business –

A Fuentes discussed the ACCESS Agency's offer for continued management services. He gave an overview of employee expenses.

He said that medical insurance premiums increase every year (which also affects the employee contribution for their benefits). He said ACCESS provides a debit card to offset some or all of the medical deductible expenses employees incur. He noted that all employees work 35 hours a week, with the exception of one employee scheduled for 40 hours.

A. Fuentes said \$3,010 could be cut from the operations budget by reducing the Button Hill property manager's hours from 15 to 10 hours per week. D. Berg asked for clarification on the savings calculations, i.e. does this include reduced workers compensation, etc. M. Forkey also asked for an explanation of the disparity between the \$3,010 figure and the staff member's actual salary. A. Fuentes said he will ask ACCESS Director of Finance Parker Stevens to address this and other questions when he attends the June meeting.

D. Berg asked if the \$3,010 included any of A. Fuente's time. A. Fuentes replied that it did not, nor did it include any other maintenance salaries.

D. Berg calculated the potential savings if the Button Hill property manager's hours were reduced from 15 to 10 hours would be 1/3 of \$2,525 (the monthly bill for property management services). The reduction in hours proposed represents 5/15's (i.e. 1/3), which would be less than \$2,525 (resulting in \$841/month) as well as some reduced workers compensation and payroll taxes.

D. Berg brought up an additional concern with the existing contract clause that includes a 5 percent surcharge for projects in excess of \$5,000. And with a clause he said allows ACCESS "exclusivity" to make repairs on the property (the possible exception of a WHA member making a repair.) A Fuentes replied that the clause is more about the property management's role with contractors when resolving issues and reporting those repairs to ACCESS.

They discussed as an example lawn repair in certain areas (like near the lower dumpster). A. Fuentes said this wouldn't be a contract issue; the clause is more about avoiding a lot of hands on Button Hill equipment and accountability for the repairs.

D. Berg thanked ACCESS for their 2019-2020 proposal.

C. D'Agata asked if cutting the property manager's hours is a requirement of the contract proposal. A. Fuentes said it is the Housing Authority's option. He said the proposal also includes reducing the management fee from the current 7 percent to 6 percent (of rental incomes).

D. Berg asked if any portion of Button Hill's monthly management fees include "fixed pay" to A. Fuentes. He said no and added that he no longer is "on call," since it is less expensive for a technician to do the work.

5. Correspondence – C. D'Agata gave D. Berg a letter from Eversource asking whether the Housing Authority, as a "supplier" (of solar power), will cross their picket line during upcoming contract negotiations. Members agreed that this issue doesn't apply to Button Hill.

6. Treasurer's Report – C. D'Agata distributed the report and noted \$91.50 was paid for secretarial services, leaving a balance of \$3,067.70. The report was accepted by consensus.

6. Approval of minutes –

C. D'Agata noted that the policy regarding a tenant having a freezer that was approved at the April 25 meeting replaces the policy previously approved at the March 18 meeting, but this isn't indicated in any of the minutes. M. Forkey added that he would like to see the reference to a "chest-style" freezer deleted from the policy since that kind of freezer won't fit into the kitchens in smaller units, whereas an upright-style would.

C. D'Agata moved to accept the March 18, 2019 minutes as written. W. Bunnell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

M. Forkey then moved to accept the April 15 minutes as written. C. D'Agata seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

C. D'Agata moved to accept the minutes of the April 25 Special Meeting held at the library with the following modification:

That the minutes be modified to reflect that the original motion passed on March 18, 2019 is replaced by the motion passed at the Special Meeting of April 25.

D. Berg seconded the motion. After discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Returning to "Old Business" on the agenda, there was further discussion about the freezer policy. The policy was further revised by removing the stipulation of a "chest-type" freezer and replacing the word "installed" with "located." W. Bunnell made the motion to accept this revision, C. D'Agata seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The official policy now reads:

Allow one new freezer with a listed size of 12 cubic feet or less to be located in the kitchen area of an apartment. The apartment's resident will be responsible to pay for the cost of the energy for the freezer based on the kilowatt hours consumed (as stated on the Energy Guide label) times the present rate for power, plus an additional 10 percent. The additional 10 percent is to accommodate for the estimated amount of energy to offset the heat released into the apartment by the normal cooling process of the freezer. The cost for energy will be reassessed annually based on the formula above.

Action on the May 9 meeting minutes was tabled.

7. Executive Session

Members then agreed by consensus to enter Executive Session. A. Fuentes was invited to join the session. M. Savage left the meeting.

The Executive Session ended at 7:05 p.m. During the session, the Housing Authority discussed savings opportunities with the ACCESS Agency regarding the proposed 2020-2021 contract and asked A. Fuentes to provide additional information. No action was taken.

There was more budget discussion. D. Berg noted that P. Stevens will attend the June 17 meeting, so there will be an opportunity to ask more questions.

D. Berg noted that about \$2,000 could be saved on fire alarm panels by switching systems. Also, there could be some savings on propane costs by insulating the tanks. He also suggested installing new circulation pumps this year and have them run 100 percent of the time instead of cycling on and off, so that hot water is always 120 degrees at the distribution panel.

There was discussion about rent revenues. M. Forkey asked if the Housing Authority can get figures for the actual rent for each apartment so they could calculate real numbers. D. Berg said he isn't sure that would be helpful. He also noted that they can expect a \$3,000 drop in rent revenues because of rent reductions made to comply with HUD guidelines.

M. Forkey said he'd like to adopt a policy that when a tenant moves out mid-month, their rent is not reduced for the remainder of the month, because Button Hill will lose rental income as property management prepares the apartment for the next tenant. C. D'Agata said she agreed. D. Berg said that if that becomes the policy, it should be specifically stated in the lease.

8. Adjourn – The meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Recording Secretary Brenda Sullivan. Please note that minutes are posted prior to being officially approved – changes/corrections are normally indicated in the subsequent month's meeting minutes.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Brenda Sullivan", is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.