

**Stonington Housing Authority
Board Meeting Minutes
January 11, 2024
4:30 PM 45 Sisk Drive
Pawcatuck CT 06379**

Call To Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4.42 pm

Roll Call

Those in attendance were Chair, Kate Careb, Vice Chair, Julie Savin, Executive Director, Marcia Sullivan, Commissioner Kathy Wahl and Laura Davies.

Approval of Minutes

Marcia stated there was a misprint in November meeting minutes and clarified that she is working on the 2022-2023 audit instead of the 2021 audit listed in November minutes. Commissioner Savin made a motion to approve the November minutes as corrected; Commissioner Wahl seconded and the minutes were unanimously.

Election of Officers

Commissioner Careb motioned to table the election of officers until the March meeting and continue with current officers until then. Commissioner Wahl seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurers Report

Commissioner Savin read the Treasurer's Report. Liberty Bank Security Deposit: \$22,265.09, Liberty Bank Repair/Maintenance Reserve: \$32,639.69, Berkshire Bank Business Checking: \$90,717.17, Berkshire Operating Reserve: \$202,296.01, Westerly Community Credit Union CD: \$154,753.89, Westerly Community Credit Union Savings: \$7.05. The total as of 12/31/2023 (excluding security deposits) is \$480,413.81.

Marcia Sullivan noted that our savings/reserve balance has been growing.

December 31 balances (excluding security deposits): FY 2020: \$361,610; FY 2021: \$389,906; FY 2022: \$429,460; FY 2023: \$480,413

Maintenance & Asset Management Report

Marcia reported that we spent approximately \$15,000 on capital improvements in FY 2023. These included fire system upgrades, laundry room floor replacement, fencing around dumpsters, appliance replacements. Fire panel repair was the largest capital improvement expense.

Marcia reported that we had a loss of power in building 8 that seemed to be caused by the heavy amount of rain we received. Eversource repaired the damage at no charge to SHA. The fire alarms in the community room also alerted. The Fire Marshal believes this was because of heavy moisture accumulated in outside alarm pulls.

There was a storm drain backup over New Year's weekend. We had the drainage unblocked on January 2nd.

Commissioner Wahl reported that residents in Building 8 have had an issue with lights dimming in their units for over a year. Marcia Sullivan will hire an electrician check the building to find the root cause.

Commissioner Savin had a question about money spent on capital improvements from January-June 2023. Marcia stated that no capital improvements were made. There were funds spent on maintenance. Julie asked for a report in the future on just regular maintenance finances. Marcia will include all maintenance expenses on future reports.

Executive Director's Report

Marcia reminded commissioners of the State of Ct training requirement. Marcia gave several options for training, virtual and live.

Marcia reported that the complaint of inadequate lighting at the Sisk Drive entrance has been addressed. All SHA owned lighting is operational and Eversource responded to our request to repair the street light on Courtland.

Dumpster fencing is complete.

Marcia informed the board of a parking situation on Connecticut Avenue. A neighbor's mail was not getting delivered because our residents were blocking her mailbox with their cars. Marcia explained that we have asked residents to stop parking in front of mailboxes. Marcia explained to the neighbor that we cannot require residents to park in our lot, but that we can encourage them to. A letter was sent to all residents currently parking on Connecticut Avenue asking them to park in our lot and to stay at least 15 ft. from mailboxes.

Marcia presented an annual report for 2023. It included demographics of current residents, including average income and ages. She stated that 43% of our residents are now under the age of 65, generally leading to longer tenancies and slower movement of the waiting list.

Marcia reported that Laura and Ron have started implementing small, low-cost events for the residents each month, such as chicken noodle soup day which is scheduled for February. These events seem to make a positive difference for the residents.

Marcia is actively looking for contractors to price work for the completion of HTCC grant projects. Julie gave Marcia the name of a company that may be able to complete the work.

Marcia presented plans for the planned patio and gazebo. Plans are that half of the patio will be covered.

Marcia proposed three options for base rent increases and their impact financially. The proposed increases are 4%, 4.5% or 5%. She stated that we have not had an increase since 2022. Currently, one third of our residents pay the base rent. The other residents are paying an income-based rent. Because income from Social Security has increased the last two years, those residents have seen rent increases. Base rent residents have not had an increase. CHFA encourages base rent increases so that housing authorities can fund some of their own

improvements. Julie stated that annual increases are the standard and that we should have done that in the past. She supports a 4% increase this year and revisit next year instead of implementing a higher percentage increase because of past errors. She stated that while we need to do some catch up, it should be done slowly. There were not enough commissioners in attendance to vote on a base rent increase. It was decided on a special meeting via Zoom or telephone for a vote.

Resident Commissioner Report

Tenant meeting held on December 13th, 2023. Topics of discussion included the proposed base rent increase and its impact on residents. Resident participation and social events and ways to have events that can include all residents. The demographics have changed and it is a challenge to blend events for both the younger and older residents at the same time. Residents are excited about the upcoming work on the pond. They expressed the need for open communication between office staff and residents while the project is being completed. Marcia thanked Kathy for starting a Friday night movie night. There was discussion about funding available to finance resident events. Marcia stated that we are able to have some events from items we receive from the food pantry. Laura stated that she is going to write a grant to purchase a lockable freezer so that we can store more healthy meals and frozen vegetables for our residents. Julie graciously agreed to have ECHO Homes purchase a freezer for the community room.

Staff expressed an interest in acquiring a golf cart for moving around the site, especially for door to door noticing or work in unit involving larger equipment.

New Business

No new business

Public Comment

Joan Driscoll thanked the Board for the dumpster enclosures.


Jen McEwen said she thought proposed base rent increase was fair. Many other places increase at a much higher rate. She appreciates that we are trying to keep rent as low as possible for our residents. She also expressed appreciation for the things we do here for the residents; especially the food pantry. She looks forward to having frozen food available.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Wahl, Commissioner Savin seconded and the meeting adjourned at 5.29 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Kate Careb


CHAIR