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**Branford Housing Authority  
Board meeting 11-19-24  
Meeting Minutes**

Holly Hackett, Tenant Commissioner, recorded the meeting minutes.

The meeting was held at 3 Block Island Rd in the Community Room.

The meeting was called to order at 4:06 pm.

Branford Housing Authority Board Members present: Nadim Matta, Chair, Lori-lynn Ross, Treasurer, and Holly Hackett, Tenant Commissioner

Branford Housing Authority Board Members absent: Jerry Mastrangelo, Vice Chair

Nadim Matta, Chair, asked that guests other than residents and the Beacon team to introduce themselves with a little bit of background: Ellie, Jen, and John all from Beacon, Carolyn Sires (community activist), John Hartwell District 5 RTM Representative, Larry Kleutsch (consultant to BHA Board), Terry Elton (volunteer with BHA Board), and several tenants of Parkside Village II.

**Highlights of the discussion and next steps are outlined below:**

**1. Welcoming the New Tenant Commissioner**

- The residents of Parkside Village II elected Holly Hackett - 31 residents voted which was a large turn-out compared to the number of people who usually attend tenant meetings
- Holly thanked the residents for voting their faith in her. She promised residents that she would be their voice on the Branford Housing Authority (BHA).

**2. Review and Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting.**

Nadim shared highlights of the previous meeting, including the election of officers, appointments of consultants, and approval of the CHEFA budget. A motion to approve the minutes was unanimously approved.

**3. Status of open action items**

a) Management contract -

There was an apparent misunderstanding about the need for this. The Board had shared with the management team written expectations that it would like included in the contract. It is not clear that the management company lawyers would be comfortable including these in their standard template contract.

Next Steps

- John Elliott will check with the Beacon lawyers, and if it is appropriate, he will prepare a draft contract that will be discussed with BHA Board members before the next meeting. The aim is to approve this at the December meeting.

b) Restoration of the area between Parkside Village I and II

- Larry inspected the area with John Elliot. His initial observation is that topsoil and vegetation need to be added in the gully and catch basin.

Next Steps:

- Holly and Lori will share with Larry photos and other pertinent information about this, including study by Dr Shirley McCarthy from Yale University.
- Larry will coordinate with the Beacon Development team about the needed changes. If all goes well, a letter will be sent from Beacon to BHA outlining the work to be done and the timing for that.

c) Status of CHIFA grant implementation

- Lifts: The money has been approved. We are waiting for formal permits to be issued so the contractor can order the lifts. Given the lead time for delivery and the onset of winter, the work on the lifts will begin in March. In the meantime, Ebony will make sure that lights inside and outside the existing lifts are working.
- Concrete walkways: the contractor will come out the week of November 25 to make an assessment, and they will complete the "repair and make safe" work before the end of the year.

Two related things came up:

- The rotting away of the wood and siding near where concrete has been pulling away. Some of this will be repaired as part of the walkway project, and some falls

under routine maintenance that should be handled by the management company

- Unsafe steps in front of some doors that require special treatment.

#### Next Steps

- Larry will inspect the unsafe steps above, and he will suggest to the management company a technically creative and inexpensive solution.
- Holly will ask residents about issues related to their walkways so these can be pointed out to the contractor when they do the assessment.
- Holly will keep tenants apprised of the schedule for the work on both projects.

#### **4. Financial Audits for the Past 4 years**

- BHA just received 2021-22 audit reports, and 2022-23 in draft form. It is not clear why the 2021-2022 were not made available to the previous BHA Board.
- In all cases, the opinion of the auditors is favorable. No significant financial discrepancies were identified.

#### Next Steps

- There will be a special BHA meeting with the auditors on January 14 at 4 pm, to go over the audit reports. This will include walking through the financial flows between Parkside Village I & Parkside Village II when the two properties were separated out. Board members are encouraged to share their questions about the audit report with Nadim by mid December, so these can be consolidated and shared with the audit firm prior to the meeting.

#### **5. Financial Report**

- Significant variances from budget include:
  - Revenue from rental is off by 40%. Much of this is due to the revised budget to CHFA which reduced rentals from the initially budgeted amounts.
  - There is a budget overrun of \$4K for the year on miscellaneous expenses (already 80% above what has been budgeted). BHA will ask for big ticket items driving this to be itemized in the next report.

- We are running 46% ahead of budget on electricity bills. It appears that this is due to invoicing errors. The management company will reach out to Eversource to clarify this. We suspect that we may have an additional \$4,000 liability to Eversource.
- There is an issue with trash removal billing - where Shoreline Grove has paid most of the invoices since August. This will be sorted out in the next financial report.
- We have budget overruns on repair payroll and repair overtime.
- Capital expenditures are generally running below budget. The big ticket item in 2024 was carpeting and flooring of apartments - with a significant budget overrun (\$14.K so far versus budgeted \$5.7K)
- At this rate, we expect to end the year with about \$12K in cash (and net assets).

#### Next Steps

- Nadim will inquire with Beacon Accounting and the management team about some of the variances above, and report back at the next Board meeting
- The management company and BHA opened a joint account at KeyBank. This will be used as a reserve account for Parkside Village II. We will use this to manage the CHFA grant. And we will try to build it out with money transfers from the operating account, starting at the end of December, 2024.

#### **6a. Management Report - Rent Changes**

The notices of rent schedules caused a lot of anguish and confusion among tenants. The source of this was explained to tenants:

- In the July estimates, Beacon used an updated HUD schedule for utility credits. So instead of the historic \$50 per month credit, they indicated higher credits, in excess of \$150. HUD, even though they had approved this earlier, backed off and asked Beacon to go back to the \$50 credit. This set the wrong expectations with tenants.
- The way medical expenses are used to offset gross income is confusing. If these do not add up to more than 3% of gross income, they are not counted. And if they are more than 3%, then the 3% is netted out, and the residual divided by 12 and subtracted from the gross income before applying the 30% cap. The way this is laid out on the calculation sheet is bound to confuse tenants.

Tenants were reassured by the Board about the following:

- No one will have to sign the rent agreements until they fully understand the rationale for the changes from last year - based on the HUD-set formulas and the documentation each resident submitted to the management company.
- Next year, this process will happen once a year only. This year was an exception because of the back and forth with CHFA about rents and utility credits.
- New rents will be effective as of December 1. They will NOT be applied retroactively as of July 1.
- Tenants can ignore the 5-day deadline to sign the new schedule, as indicated in the rent increase notices. This was a pro-forma sentence that should have been removed from the notices, given the situation.

#### Next Steps

- Ebony and Holly will coordinate to set up a resident meeting to explain the calculations, and they will set up follow up meetings with individual residents, as needed.
- Holly will communicate the above decisions to residents who were not at the meeting
- The management company will contact Eversource asap, so a utility consumption study can be completed, as required by HUD, so we can adjust the utility credit upward and reduce the rent burden on residents.

#### **6b. Management Report - All Else**

- Emergency calls to the maintenance line have been responded to within the hour. All other calls were responded to within 24 hours. Actual repairs at times take longer if supplies need to be ordered.
- Fire alarms:
  - Several companies are responding to the RFP
  - Ebony will coordinate with the fire marshal to schedule a fire drill
- Striping of parking lot
  - Several companies are responding to the RFP
- Landscaping/snow removal:
  - Several companies are responding to the RFP
- Gutter cleaning has been completed. Residents should report any lingering issues on the maintenance hotline
- Power washing of all the buildings has been completed.
- Automatic Laundry will service the laundry machine as of 2025.
- Jen was able to secure donations from Amazon in North Haven, and she procured donation boxes that will be distributed to residents. This in

spite of the fact that BHA could not yet certify its status as a tax exempt entity.

#### Next Steps

- Ebony, Holly, and Nadim will have a special meeting to go over the management report in more detail.
- For the next meeting, Ebony will email the management report to the BHA Board by Friday the week prior to the Board meeting.

#### **7. Tenant Commissioner Report**

- Updating resident list on mailboxes: Ebony & Jen will handle this.
- Signage for building to facilitate delivery of packages. Ebony & Jen will handle this
- Budget for tenant events:
  - Ebony will issue a check of \$600 to Holly in her capacity as tenant commissioner, once Holly advises that an account has been opened for these types of expenses.
- Security cameras:
  - The quote the management company received was too expensive - \$50K. Holly will suggest alternate vendors to the management company.
- Community Room
  - Holly will organize a volunteer-led effort to improve the look and feel of the community room. No budget will be required from the management company for this.
- Nonprofit status at PV2?
  - Holly spoke to an attorney who said we need to get a certificate of existence. Holly will look into getting it from the Town Clerks records or the CT Secretary of State.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.