

**Trumbull Housing Authority
200 Hedgehog Circle
Trumbull, CT 06611
7:00pm
Special Meeting
Wednesday, February 13, 2013**

**Members Present: Russ Friedson, Acting Chairman; Joanna Leone; Joy Meehan; Diane Pomposello
Also Present: Harry Wise, Executive Director and Town Attorney Darrin Callahan**

The meeting was called to order by the Acting Chairman, Russ Friedson, at 8:00pm.

Mr. Friedson thanked Ms. Leone and Mr. Wise for getting additional support to clear the snow from the recent blizzard. He also thanked Paul Littlefield for keeping him informed of the conditions within Stern Village.

Mr. Friedson noted there was some confusion regarding the Executive Session held at the last meeting stating that he was not at liberty to state all information that was discussed at this session. They may have been able to give more information at the time but they were unsure if that was permissible. More information will be given later in this meeting.

Tenant's Association Report

Mr. Friedson commented that any public comment must be directed to Stern Village concerns. Personal or political attacks will not be allowed.

Paul Littlefield commented on the following:

1. Maintenance staff worked very hard.
2. Timing of the meeting at 8pm was not a good time for the residents because of the conditions of the walkways, etc. which may be covered with snow and black ice. He noted 6:30pm would be better for attendance. Mr. Friedson noted this was a special meeting and this was the only time available but all regular meetings will start earlier.
3. Minutes of the last meeting were not posted on the website within 7 days as required by the town. Mr. Friedson noted the time stamp on the minutes indicate they were posted properly.
4. Requested the names of the commissioners be posted on the bulletin board for all residents. Mr. Wise will post the information.
5. Commissioner appointments – stated they should be appointed consistent with State Statute 841. Impression and comments were that this was not done appropriately. Mr. Friedson noted this was addressed at the December meeting. Mr. Littlefield was called out of order on this issue as it was considered a political issue not an operational issue as set forth in the directions for the public comments.

Public Comment

Mr. Littlefield commented on the legal agreement with Town Attorney Darrin Callahan. He noted the residents pay rent and all expenses are paid out of this money. The residents had a concern regarding the arrangement that has been proposed by the Board. He requested the Chairman to either vote “no” on the matter or table it and have it revisited. He noted the compensation rate is comparable to the rate of the prior attorney and residents do not feel he has the experience to equal the value of Mr. Musto. He does not have the experience to address issues at the state level whereas Mr. Musto was very well qualified in these matters. Attorney Callahan has five years of experience which is less than the minimum standards set by the town. It would appear he is not a fit for the housing authority. Mr. Friedson stopped the comments as they were considered a personal attack on Attorney Callahan.

Discussion of Attorney Callahan’s role to date with the housing authority was held. Mr. Friedson noted Attorney Callahan has been mischaracterized when he has been asked by the board to work on specific issues. Mr. Littlefield noted there has already been a \$4,000 statement which is almost the entire legal budget which could amount to \$60,000 per year. Mr. Friedson reiterated that Attorney Callahan works at the will and request of the board. He is on a retainer so work done is at the will and pleasure of the board. Attorney Callahan worked pro bono for the benefit of the residents of Stern Village prior to the approval of the agreement. Mr. Littlefield commented that as a member of the law firm of Owen, Schine and Nicola, he could be told by the senior members of the practice to work against Stern Village residents. Mr. Friedson stated that this was a comment against Attorney Callahan’s integrity. Discussion continued with Mr. Littlefield asking if the board was aware of the state regulations on retaining professional people. Mr. Friedson has discussed this with counsel; Mr. Littlefield noted the residents would like an independent attorney to review the matter. It was noted that independent counsel can be retained if the residents wish.

Discussion was held regarding communication that specifies the level of expenditures that need to go out for a bid. It was noted that it is a recommendation of the state to have 3-5 bids for amounts that approach \$100,000. Mr. Friedson noted this will be discussed in Executive Session.

Carol Hudak commented that she is not a resident of the Village but does have compassion for the elderly. She is concerned about the retainer agreement and the election procedure for tenant commissioner. She also felt that the personal attacks should be heard by the First Selectman as concerns of the residents. Ms. Hudak commented on the bill submitted by counsel which was 25 hours of pro bono work. Questioned who would be paying for additional legal work this since the money comes out of the resident’s rent. Concerning the election procedure for the tenant commissioner, the bylaws call for a village vote for a member to sit on the board. There was a concern that the first selectman would override this election and appoint his own commissioner.

She requested 1) to publicly state that he will not override the choice of the villagers. Mr. Friedson stated he would follow the process and review with counsel. It is his expectation that the village elected

commission will serve on the board. Concern that the first selectman would appoint someone in the interim until the election is held. Mr. Friedson stated this was not the boards understanding.

Mr. Callahan discussed with the residents the state statute for the electoral process for the housing authority. Additional research was requested because it is not clear.

Michael Harris noted he considers the residents of Stern Village as relatives. Asked the commission to protect the audience they represent. He worked many hours and feels the community needs to take care of the residents. Mr. Friedson thanked him for his hard work.

Patricia Lungi commented on Hurricane Sandy and the recent blizzard noting that the comments made about Mr. Wise not checking on people were lies. She stated the town was anxious to own us, now you got us, what are they going to do with us. Lengthy discussion regarding the snow removal last weekend was held. Residents were unhappy with the lack of support from the town. Mr. Friedson noted he was in contact with the first selectman regarding various issues as they came up and the town made arrangements so that emergency services could get through. Overall tone was that the residents were concerned about being trapped in their homes for days before someone came to shovel them out. Many people were in the village to clear the snow. The town clears the streets but does not clear sidewalks and doorways. Nothing has changed in that respect with the last storm but the severity of the storm and the amount of snow to be removed was a factor in clearing quickly.

Dan Cronin asked if the board was going to join them in the election. Mr. Friedson stated it would be one harmonious election.

Insurance

Mr. Friedson discussed the insurance coverage noting that when it was renewed, a particular umbrella was not included which protects the association from financial risks. It is separate coverage now which costs an additional \$260.00 for one million dollars of protection. It was moved by Joanna Leone, seconded by Diane Pomposello to approve the purchase of the EPLI insurance rider for a total of \$260.00. Approved unanimously.

Executive Session

It was moved by Ms. Pomposello, seconded by Ms. Leone to go into Executive Session at 8:45pm to discuss personnel matters. Attendees include all members of the board and Attorney Callahan. Approved unanimously. Motion made by Ms. Pomposello, seconded by Ms. Leone to come out of Executive Session at 9:25pm.

Mr. Friedson reported the following:

1. Appoint an interim executive director. This individual would be Harriet Polansky.
2. Appoint a search committee for a permanent director. This committee would be comprised of all members of the board. All villagers would be invited to provide feedback on the finalists. Everyone will be in agreement before anyone is hired.

Ms. Leone moved, seconded by Ms. Pomposello that Harriet Polansky be appointed as interim acting director effective 2/19/13. Approved unanimously.

Ms. Pomposello moved, seconded by Ms. Leone to establish a search committee consisting of all members of the commission to hire a full time permanent acting director and that committee would include as part of its process solicitation of feedback from all residents of Stern Village. Approved unanimously.

Retainer Agreement

Mr. Friedson noted the retainer fee reflects work done by counsel not a flat fee. Ms. Pomposello moved, seconded by Ms. Leone to authorize signing of the proposed retainer agreement as noticed. Approved unanimously.

Interim Acting Director

Ms. Polansky introduced herself noting her background is management and marketing. She will be working with Mr. Wise to transition into the position and will be available in her office for any resident that needs to speak with her. It was noted that a permanent executive director will be appointed at the end of the search process and that Ms. Polansky is not guaranteed the position. Time frame for the search is 2-4 months.

Election Procedure for Tenant Commissioner

Mr. Friedson noted he has been working with Mr. Littlefield on this procedure. The tenant association has done a lot of work to organize the election. Mr. Littleton discussed a notice to the residents informing them of the election with appropriate attachments. He noted that nominations will close on 2/28 with a kick-off for nominations held on 2/15. Discussion of qualifications was held. He felt it was important for the nominees to know what is required of them. Mr. Friedson noted the time may work but there might be legal issues that need to be addressed. He wants to make sure the election is legal and cannot be challenged. Absentee ballots were discussed with Mr. Littleton outlining the process for obtaining and how they will be handled if used. All ballots will be counted by the League of Women Voters supervisor and the results of the election will be given the same day. This name will be then submitted to whoever needs to be notified. Mr. Littlefield thanked his committee for their work.

It was requested that the information be presented in clear language to all tenants. Attorney Callahan noted it was a well thought out process. He also noted there is nothing in the statutes that require qualifications so that information should be removed. Discussion of how they were going to verify if the absentee ballots were being filled out by the correct individual.

Old Business

Update was given on the status of the generator. Three bids have been received but no word has been received from the State as to when they will give them one. The bids are different but cover different size units and we do not have requirements needed for the village. Ms. Polansky and Mr. Wise will work together on this project so make sure the village has the appropriate coverage.

New Business

There was no New Business.

Motion made by Ms. Leone, seconded by Ms. Pomposello to add an additional public comments session to this meeting. Approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Hudak spoke more on the storm and encouraged the commission to be proactive to set up ideas of what to do in the event of another weather incident by working on a detailed plan. It was noted that the emergency plan that had been in place was approved to be implemented at the last meeting.

Mr. Wise was thanked for his work in the village. This will be his last meeting.

Commissioners were requested to introduce themselves since they are new to the villagers. Mr. Friedson noted he is only acting chair until the commission is complete and then there will be an election for a chairman.

Question as to whether there would be a run-off second election if the voting was close. It was noted that the individual with the most votes would be elected but there might be a need for a tie-breaking procedure.

Gary Raytar from the Senior Commission noted he was in attendance to recognize the committee that was representing the seniors.

Attorney Callahan noted that he has been doing pro bono work on an interim basis until the commission knew what they needed. Now he has the retainer for work done.

Dan Cronin spoke regarding the generator and what areas it would power noting that the residents would rather stay home during events than be moved to other areas.

Adjournment

Motion made by Ms. Leone, seconded by Ms. Pomposello, to adjourn the meeting at 10:17pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Crandall, Clerk