

Ridgefield Housing Authority
Ridgefield, CT 06877

Approved RHA Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 21, 2024
Ridgefield, CT 06877

**Meeting in person at Ballard Green Community Room and via Zoom– 305 224-1968
(266 192 1953)**

Commissioners Present: Vincent Liscio, Paul Janerico, Jan Hebert, Maree Macpherson (All present in person at Ballard Green Community Room)

Commissioner Absent: Ed Baird

REM Staff: Wade Rockwood, Monica Stromwall, Wesley Robinson

RHA Residents: Krisann Benson, Nancy Higgins, Barbara Beaulieu, Izette Brendza

A motion to approve RHA Regular Meeting Minutes from February 7, 2024, with no changes, was made by Ms. Hebert and seconded by Mr. Janerico, all present approved except for Ms. Hebert who abstained since she was not present at the meeting.

A motion to approve Management Report was made by Ms. Hebert and seconded by Mr. Janerico, all present approved.

A motion was made to accept Budget V2 that was recently sent to all Board Members by Mr. Janerico the motion was seconded by Ms. Hebert, all present approved.

A motion to approve Tenant Commissioner Report was made by Mr. Janerico and seconded by Ms. Hebert. All present approved.

A motion was made to move forward with MJM Paving to handle repair and replacement of walkways at Ballard Green for the amount of \$39K by Mr. Liscio and seconded by Mr. Janerico, all present approved.

A motion to adjourn the RHA Meeting was made by Ms. Hebert and seconded by Ms. Macpherson, all present approved.

Mr. Liscio called the meeting to order and read the Mission Statement aloud. First order of business was the Approval of Meeting Minutes of February 7, 2024, which was completed. Mr. Liscio called upon Mr. Rockwood to start with his Management Report.

Management Report: We continue to have no vacancies at Ballard Green and are at 100% occupied with no upcoming vacancies. We currently have 3 vacancies at Congregate with two move ins scheduled, one in February and one in March, and a third being processed with anticipated March move in. We are 100% occupancy for General Apartments with no upcoming vacancies. We currently have one vacancy at Meadows. Property management has been reaching out to applicants on the waiting list and have scheduled unit showings.

We are currently at 98% occupied for all developments. We continue to focus on our delinquencies and there was a slight increase in the overall aging for all developments by 7.7%. For January month end Ballard Green had an outstanding balance of \$3,452 which was down over prior month with a >90 balance increasing to \$1,399. General Apartments had an outstanding balance of \$10,270 which increased over prior month with a >90-day balance down to \$440. Congregate had an outstanding balance of \$5,914 which was down over prior month with at >90 up slightly to \$2,261. Meadows had an outstanding balance of \$13,580 which was up 2.8% over prior month with a decrease in the >90 day with a balance of \$5,514. Statements of account for those residents with debit balances were mailed last week. Property management is continuing to reach out to those residents with delinquencies to make payment arrangements. We continue to follow our accounting procedures with those residents who are unresponsive or who do not follow agreed upon payment arrangements, have and will be turned over to legal. The entire >90-day balance for all developments totaling \$9,614 has either been referred to legal or resident is on a payment plan. As of now, we have seven residents who are involved in legal proceedings. Among them, three residents are under court stipulated agreements, which collectively represent \$4,931 of the outstanding balance overdue by more than 90 days, accounting for 52% of the total 90 days amount. Additionally, out of these seven residents, three have been issued notices to quit and are moving forward with the necessary legal steps. Furthermore, one resident has recently been placed in a legal due to their unresponsiveness to prior communications and attempts to resolve outstanding amounts owed. Maintenance completed over 60 work orders this month. I am continuing to interview for another maintenance technician to assist Doug as we anticipate the number of work orders to increase as we continue to review the capital needs assessments and perform annual unit inspections. Property management completed the annual unit inspections in January for all 34 units at congregate which resulted in 30 new work orders.

Ms. Hebert asked some questions related to legal and the handling of our cases. Mr. Rockwood updated her on specifics as well as he could. Questions also raised about food costs and how we might give assistance to the residents. Ms. Stromwall spoke of the several agencies she works with and what type food offerings are anticipated and also offered suggestions as to who the Board may be able to solicit for additional food donations. Also focus on bus transportation for residents and some shortfalls. Ms. MacPherson will bring forward to Mr. Phillips.

Monica Stromwall's Report included: Program Overview: The Resident Service Coordination Program was established to address the unique needs of our residents by offering a range of supportive services. Our dedicated team works tirelessly to create an environment that fosters independence, well-being, and a sense of community among our residents.

Key Highlights and Achievements:

1. Collaboration with External Partners: I have strengthened partnerships with external service providers, such as the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DHMAS), the Department of Social Services (DSS), Connecticut Community Care, Western Connecticut State University, Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging (WCAAA), RVNA Health, and Ridgefield Police Department to expand the range of services for the residents at Ridgefield Housing Authority to provide referrals, supportive services, and educational opportunities.

2. Individualized Support Plans: I am implementing personalized support plans for residents facing various challenges, such as health issues, financial concerns, and social isolation. I began with the highest-needs residents. The individualized support plans ensure supportive care, resources, and referrals to our most at-risk residents.

3. Community Engagement Initiatives: In collaboration with local organizations, I have organized 30 community engagement events, workshops, and activities at Prospect Ridge and 27 at Ballard Green for our signature Ridge and Green programming. These initiatives aim to promote social connections and empower residents with valuable resources. This month, the residents celebrated with a Valentines Day party and a visit with our service dog, Stanley, from Exceptional Sidekick Service Dogs. We continue to utilize our community partners and have gained a new partnership with Ridgefield Bagels and Bakes through Food Rescue Fairfield County. I continue to work with the National Charity League, which provides baked goods weekly at Ballard Green, stock the pantry at Ballard Green, and volunteer at Prospect Ridge.

Challenges and Solutions: While we celebrate our achievements, we must acknowledge the challenges the Resident Service Coordination Program faces. Current challenges have stemmed from weather-related conditions and illnesses due to cold and flu season.

Rescheduling programming, reminding residents to stay home when ill, and encouraging good hygiene practices to ensure the well-being of all residents and staff, additionally, finding programming that can be done independently by telephone or zoom for those interested and willing.

Currently Working On:

1. Learning and Skill Development:

Goal: Encourage ongoing learning and skill development.

Strategy: Facilitate workshops, lectures, and classes covering topics of interest to residents, such as arts and crafts, technology, or lifelong learning courses, and partnering with Western Connecticut State University to provide residents who are 62 and older with free tuition for those interested in seeking a degree on a part-time basis or those interested in auditing classes.

2. Health and Wellness:

Goal: Promote physical and mental well-being among residents.

Strategy: Provide supportive services onsite through mental health screenings, mental health first aid classes at Ballard Green, and direct care and referrals through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DHMAS). The partnership through DHMAS will begin in March and can expand as needed, depending on responses from residents. Nuvance Health Community Relations is working on a Speakers Series for the Residents at Ridgefield Housing Authority, which I hope to have established by late April. Lastly, the Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging (WCAAA) provides residents with an opportunity to take part independently in their LiveWell programs by telephone or zoom.

3. Volunteer Opportunities:

Goal: Encourage residents to contribute to the community through volunteerism, empowering residents, increasing purpose, social skills, and self-esteem, and building community.

Strategy: In April, a volunteer fair will connect residents to volunteer opportunities within the town and the surrounding area.

4. Safety and Security:

Goal: Enhance the overall safety and security of the housing facility.

Strategy: Complete the emergency plan and provide instructions to residents through Resident Meetings. Additional programming through the Ridgefield Police Department is planned for March.

Conclusion: The Resident Service Coordination Program remains a cornerstone of our organization & commitment to residents & well-being. I express my gratitude to the board and my community partners for their ongoing support, which enables me to impact our resident's lives.

Financial Update: Four items of focus – 1) Jason working on Audit which is going well. This takes time to gather information and document properly; 2) Financial Analysis – Just received in January, will do first week in March; 3) Budget needs to be approved so numbers can be included in new version of Budget called “Budget V2”. **A motion was made to accept Budget V2 that was recently sent to all Board Members by Mr. Janerico** – accepted as printed by all Board Members present. 4) LP Exit – Renee, Jason involved with number of approvals on mortgages and creating a non-profit entity which would replace Boston Financial. Suggestions were made about naming the new entity but nothing actually voted on at this point. The frontrunner is “Affordable Housing of Ridgefield “RHA” Inc” Jason said – incorporated can get non-profit status, more so than LLC.

Tenant Commissioner: Ms. Macpherson discussed some meetings she recently had in an effort to help located vendors to “find curb appeal” at Prospect Ridge. She was advised of how the procedures work with going through the Management Office to ensure continuity and focus. She also suggested that the Garden Club might offer “affordable” support since they have exposure to a Master Gardener. Her future plans include individual meetings with each of the residents at our locations.

Old Business

Ballard Green - the Ballard Green Walkway project aims to address the deteriorating conditions of the existing walkways, with a primary focus on eliminating trip and fall hazards to enhance safety for our residents. The scope of work includes the removal and replacement of damaged asphalt areas, along with the installation of process stone for grading and addressing structural cracks to prevent further deterioration.

After a thorough evaluation of the bids received, we have received two competitive proposals:

1. MJM Paving: \$39,000.00

2. Cummings Construction Services LLC: \$70,235.00

Based on the information gathered during the bid process, including references and past project

experience, it is our professional recommendation to proceed with MJM Paving for the Ballard Green

Walkway project. MJM Paving has demonstrated their suitability for this project through their competitive

pricing, extensive experience, and track record of completing similar projects for other municipalities in Connecticut.

By selecting MJM Paving, we believe we can achieve the project's objectives efficiently and effectively while ensuring the highest standards of quality and safety.

Therefore, we respectfully request approval from the board to move forward with the project using MJM Paving LLC as the selected contractor.

After some questions concerning scope of work and future plans, Board unanimously approved MJM.

Emergency Plan. ED Wade Rockwood, Commissioner Hebert, and-Resident Service Manager, Monica

Stromwall have a meeting scheduled for March 7th to perform a final review of the emergency plan.

Cameras. Last week, service technicians from Open Systems began the installation of the camera

system at the Congregate location at 51 Prospect Ridge.

Capital Needs Assessment Last week, Mr. Rockwood had the opportunity to meet with CHFA representative

to discuss the State Sponsored Housing Improvement Program funds, which are designed to support

capital improvements at housing developments like ours. During the meeting, we explored the possibility

of securing funding for our Congregate development. We had a productive discussion covering both critical

and non-critical needs of the Congregate development. I shared a copy of the Capital Needs Assessment

to provide CHFA with a comprehensive understanding of our requirements. The CHFA representatives

expressed interest in our development and indicated that they would review our eligibility for funding

based on the information provided. They have committed to getting back to me with further details on

whether we qualify for any funding assistance. I will keep you updated on any developments regarding our

application for State Sponsored Housing Improvement Program funds. A number of items were discussed by Mr. Liscio

regarding issues needing attention at Prospect Ridge including generator roof and damage to building by birds,

water drainage, structural issues, redoing units at both locations for make more appealing, etc.

Facebook Page Update in process and should be available on line quite soon. Ms. Stromwall requested a backup and

Ms. Macpherson volunteered to take on that role. Ms. Stromwall also suggested an individual very active in affordable

housing committees for an additional "non-resident" assist and was granted permission to ask that individual.

Washers and Dryers at Ballard Green as of February 20th, the invoice for the washer and dryers totaling

\$21,420.59 was approved and emailed to accounts payable for processing on February 16th. Once CSC

receives the check, they will proceed to order the laundry machines. Please note that it may take 60 to 90

days for the machines to be received after the order is placed. Put thru on CapX and take off next agenda.

Commercial Refrigerator at 51 Prospect Ridge As of the latest update, there was an issue with the commercial refrigerator that was ordered. Unfortunately, the unit would not fit through the doorway, and the old unit is also too large to fit as well. However, the good news is that we were able to refuse delivery of the refrigerator and received a full refund. Moving forward, it will be necessary to re-order a refrigerator of a different size that can fit through the doorway. Additionally, property management will need to speak with a contractor about removing the old refrigerator to make room for the new one.

Mr. Liscio requested that “Web Presence” be eliminated from “Other” on Agenda. Also remove 27 Wetlands which can be-added if necessary.

Public Session

Krisann Benson – Thanks for recent snow storm removal- all facilities working so well.

Nancy Higgins – Thank you for all you do – witness how all involved interact – wish whole world would use example.

Barbara Beaulieu – Thank you for all the positive attitudes. “Ridgefield Affordable Housing” already being used. Mr. Liscio

Pointed out it’s for a different entity-Phone service was \$300/mo. now is \$900/mo. Mr. Liscio agreed that he saw this also and questioned it and stated that line item that is now being booked under that heading.

Ballard Green Entrance – can we do another way. Ms. Hebert added that they are looking into ways to add walkway and enhance entrance. How about MJM cost overruns – Management will keep an eye on this thru contract agreement.

Izette Brendza – Didn’t respond when called upon.

Mr. Liscio then asked for a vote to adjourn meeting at 8:49PM

RHA Minutes Respectfully submitted by Patricia Harney, Recording Secretary.

Next Meeting March 6, 2024 at 8AM

Minutes available in Hardcopy at REM Office, Gilbert Street, or outside REM Office at Prospect Ridge, or with this link on Town Site.

<https://www.ridgefieldct.org/housing-authority>

Audio Visual Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/IEVla1KHrmgyMy109T53A2bzdZmpmksouluzjAe3ildpz8xlUFi5Oi0Tilp2XU8r.RPlvRxZCsl4E91Kn>

