

Ridgefield Housing Authority
Ridgefield, CT 06877

RHA Unapproved Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 20, 2023
Meeting on Line - 18057065480

Commissioners Present: Vincent Liscio, Paul Janerico, Jan Hebert, John Burke, Ed Baird

REM Staff: Wade Rockwood, Monica Stromwall

RHA Resident: Nancy Higgins, Krisann Benson, Isette Brendza, Georgette Colletto, Barbara Beaulieu

A motion to approve RHA Meeting Minutes from September 6, with no changes, was made by Mr. Janerico and seconded by Mr. Baird, Mr. Burke opposed, Ms Hebert abstained, remaining Board approved.

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

A motion to approve the Financial Report was made by Mr. Burke and seconded by Ms. Hebert, all present approved.

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

A motion to add FOIA Request with Cost to Agenda was made by Mr. Janerico and seconded by Mr. Liscio, all present approved.

A motion to move into Executive Session was made by Mr. Janerico and seconded by Ms. Hebert- all present approved.

The Board moved out of Executive Session and returned to Public Session

A Motion To approve the Chair, Vincent Liscio, authority to execute a settlement agreement of \$47,500.00 with Ferrandino along with other terms as advised by counsel and acceptable to RHA. That Motion was voted on via a roll call and it went as follows: Mr. Janerico yea; Ms. Hebert, yea; Mr. Burke, abstain; Mr. Baird, nay; Mr. Liscio, yay. Therefore, the Yay's have it with a vote of 3-1-1

The Board then voted unanimously to return to Executive Session.

The Board moved back into Public Session

A Motion was made "To approve the request of Mr. Grimley of Victoria Gate for an easement as proposed in the drawing attached as presented for Mr. Grimley only, and that Mr. Grimley will be responsible for any and all expenses going forward from now and into the future". The vote was via roll call and went as follows: Mr. Janerico, Abstain; Mr. Burke, Aye; Mr. Baird, Aye; Ms. Hebert, Aye; Mr. Liscio, Aye. Therefore, the Motion passes 4-0-1

A motion was made to adjourn the RHA meeting by Mr. Burke and seconded by Mr. Janerico-all present approved.

Mr. Liscio began the meeting at 7:00PM by reading the Misson Statement. He then asked for approval of meeting minutes from September 6, 2023. Ms. Hebert stated that she did not receive minutes and Ms. Harney forwarded her a copy immediately.

Management Report

Maintained overall occupancy rate of 98% and are currently 100% at Ballard Green and Congregate. There are no upcoming vacancies for Ballard Green, but there are two upcoming vacancies for Congregate. There are two vacancies in General Apartments and one vacancy that opened up in Meadows.

Continued focus on delinquencies. A slight increase in the overall aging for Ballard Green by 15.7%. To address this increase, a payment plan will be enforced for the outstanding amount. General Apartments increased by 220.8%, and to address this, the resident has been placed on a 6-month payment plan to pay off balance. There has been 45.2% improvement in Congregate outstanding balance. To address the >90 day balance, the resident has been put on a 3-month plan to pay off the balance owed. Statements of account for those residents with debit balances were mailed on September 18, 2023. Those residents with outstanding balances received collection letters requesting that payment be submitted. 90% of the >90-day balance for Meadows totaling \$9,898 is in legal with the remaining balance of \$1,204 expected to be paid off in 4 months.

Property management has been working with Security Solutions to resolve an alert with the smoke alarm in a vacant unit. They are waiting on a part for the device. As soon as the part is installed, we will have the complete fire alarm system re-tested to ensure it is working properly.

Property management has been working with the fire protection company to close out the permit for the work that was completed replacing the 4-side wall mounted sprinkler heads that were located in buildings A-wing, and Buildings 1 to 5.

Waiting on Johnson Controls to obtain the permit so we can begin the process to replace CO2 devices at the developments at prospect ridge. Residents will be receiving information via notices once the proper permits have been received, coordinated with the fire marshal, and scheduled with the fire alarm company. Project to start in October.

At the end of the month, Property management had to secure the services of outside vendors to handle hot water issues that occurred in Ballard Green and Meadows.

Property Management secured the services of Integrity Cleaning for the housekeeping and custodial services to ensure that our residents at prospect ridge congregate receive the housekeeping services, and that all community areas in all developments receive custodial support. Residents should start to see an improvement in housekeeping and custodial care in their developments.

Work continues with our legal team to address situations of non-payment. Currently have several residents on payment plans, and recently resecured a unit through eviction.

Ms. Hebert questioned whether the Fire Marshall was coming to inspect. Yes, but not until fire alarm safety items have been installed and tested.

Mr. Rockwood asked if he should show prior month on 90 days but Mr. Janerico stated they will discuss in more depth off-line.

How is new cleaning service? Involved in a learning curve from employer/employee perspective. Only here a very short time and addressing questions as they arise.

Resident Services Manager

In September, we started with our signature Ridge & Green programming, which includes various activities to encourage our residents to maintain ways to stay physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy. The month has 37 programs for the residents of Prospect Ridge and 34 programs for Ballard Green residents scheduled.

Ballard Green and Prospect Ridge residents are enjoying new programming this month with the introduction of a series of TED Talks, water coloring painting, and crafting with press flowers.

As always, I am always looking for ways to engage and improve the quality of life of our community members.

This month programming for Prospect Ridge and Ballard Green residents began with our partnership with RVNA Health and our Know Your Numbers Clinic; Tiffany Carlson, the Ridgefield Recycling Coordinator, gave a workshop to Ballard Green residents on composting and the possibilities available to the residents. Prospect Ridge residents took part in a farm tour at Henny Penny Farm, where they learned about regenerative farming practices, met the animals, and learned how farmer Whitney makes fiber products. We are so thankful for the opportunity.

All residents over 60 were invited to The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum Senior Tour today and saw the museum and new exhibits.

All residents look forward to the rescheduled Knights of Columbus BBQ luncheon this Saturday, September 23, from noon to 1:30 at Ballard Green and a special treat from Real Estate Masters from Bridge Street Premium Ice Cream Company. Lastly, the residents of Prospect Ridge will enjoy a visit from Woodcock Nature Center at the end of the month and learn about the animals and mission of the nature center from Jennifer Bradshaw. Woodcock Nature Center visited Ballard Green at the beginning of summer, and it was a fantastic event for the residents.

Upcoming fall events include visits with our community partners from Exceptional Sidekick Therapy Animals, Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra, special programming with RVNA Music Therapy, and Brain Health with Sherrye Platt, MA, MT-BC, The Ridgefield Women's Club Fall Harvest Social at Ballard Green, and National Charity Leagues Halloween Costume Party at Prospect Ridge.

As we look forward to these events, we thank all for your continued support.

Election season is coming, and part of my job is to ensure that residents have information and resources available. Both local parties will be visiting with their candidates to provide information to residents. Real

Estate Masters and Ridgefield Housing Authority does not endorse any candidate or political party. If any resident has questions about voting, please see the Registrar of Voters at Town Hall.

Concerning elections, Real Estate Masters will manage the upcoming tenant commissioner election as an unbiased party. All residents of Ridgefield Housing Authority will receive the Notice of Tenant Commissioner Opening and Advice, the Summary of Tenant Commissioner Responsibilities, and the Details of Election the week of October 2nd in the US Mail.

I have some sad news from Prospect Ridge with the passing of 3 long-term residents that impacted many of the residents there, including mine, Grace Peterson, Willard Carter, and Florence Colletto. Please keep their families and friends in your thoughts.

Thank you again to all our community partners and volunteers. I want to highlight a volunteer who has impacted all residents by assisting with food resources—Lisa Flanagan, who travels from Weston every Monday and Friday and works with Food Rescue Fairfield County. Lisa picks up from our local Starbucks and delivers breakfast sandwiches, lunch sandwiches, desserts, and other goodies to both locations when enough donations exist.

Ms. Hebert asked about the food pantry – Already been stocked and depleted. Will continue with this going forward.

Financial Report

Mr. Janerico read the August Statement on 9/15, received on time. Was able to get through Meadows and General – Congregate and Ballard Green require more time. Budgets in PHA Web – Meadows OK (minor changes given to Robert Weiss of REM); Reserves under-funded by month (given to RW) Payroll, salaries look good. Mortgage interest appears to be higher than expected; cash on hand – 292K, should be 304K. Overall, under budget by about 10%. Income perfect. Insurance below budget. Contract questions forwarded to RW. General – budgets overall changes made; reserves under funded by 3K, automated payroll and salaries on target. Interest expense on target; overall budget dragging due to overall vacancies. Snow removal and trash over on our budget.

Ballard Green and Congregate – needs time to do them.

Mr. Burke questioned whether check registers can be made available to Board. Ms. Hebert would also like this. Mr. Janerico stated that he will not look at registers in detail.

Mr. Burke questioned how the budget was broken down; define reserve accounts, what about 5 mortgages.

Mr. Janerico gave an overview of the above questions. Ms. Hebert asked if meeting with Jason had been scheduled. . . Paul hadn't done that as yet but will notify Board as soon as it's on calendar.

Tenant Commissioner Report

Thanks much to grants, donations and income, the RHA has plenty of money available for Capital Needs. As residents of Ballard Green are asking, the sidewalk has been an issue for years, so when it is going to be done? *(Being addressed presently – per Mr. Rockwood)*

☑ Winter is coming, and I hope a tree inspection has been done around the properties. We do not need another incident as last year when a tree fell on Ballard Green C building. The south parking lot needs a hedge/tree trimming (north side of lot). Have brought this you to the Property Manager, so I hope it will be done soon. Also, the pathway between CVS and RHA, someone is going to get strangled soon if the hedges are not trimmed there. *(Will advise landscapers to focus specifically on the areas noted RW)*

The south parking lot is running out of spaces, so parking for visitors, caregivers and the high school will have to change. We have several handicap persons in C, D, and E buildings, so I want an additional 4 spaces closest to the building(s) to be reserved for persons with handicaps. (Handicap parking spaces) *(RW – Not sure who controls Handicapped parking spaces – will check and advise)*

If you are a tenant that does not use their car at least once a week, then I propose a rule that you park your car in an area of RHA that is not so crowded as the south lot. *(Only residents should park in designated spaces – aids must find parking farther away)*

☑ Dogs, we have a problem at Ballard Green. Dogs are to be seen not heard. The lease of RHA states: (General Restrictions) 14(d) Have pets or animals of any kind in the unit without the prior written permission of the Landlord, but the landlord will allow the tenant to keep an animal needed as a reasonable accommodation to the tenant's disability, and will allow animals to accompany visitors with disabilities who need such animals as an accommodation to their disabilities; or (e) make or permit noises or acts that will disturb the rights or comfort of neighbors. Each person with a dog / animal at the RHA must have a letter of disability on file which provides proof of their disability, IE comfort dogs. No letter no dog is the policy of the RHA and this policy needs to be enforced. If the tenant does have such a letter but cannot

keep control of its animals' disturbance to other tenants, then no animal/dog is allowed. *(Yes, letter noting disability must be on file to have a dog)*

☑ **Smoking.** No smoking in or near units, NONE. At Ballard Green we have smoking areas designated. If in smoking area please respect which way the wind is blowing. Nearby units, especially C, D, E, may have windows open and does not appreciate the smell or the smoke. *(Lease violation – letters sent)* Ridgefield Police Dept, no we do not need here for smoking, dogs, and minor disputes. I think REM, Wade and Wesley, should be the final judge instead of the Police. If you want an appeal, come to and be involved in the RHA board meetings, 3rd Wednesday of every month. Think GOLDEN RULE *(If there is a disturbance that can't be fixed between residents, the police should be called.)* *(Monica will prepare and send a letter to residents documenting the procedures for disputes and violations of lease.)* Questions on the latest financial reports, I uploaded my enquirers to the RHA Dropbox, so Paul at your leisure. *(Mr. Janerico will address.)*

Old Business

Ballard Walkways – new scope of work identified – bids should be available by next mid-month meeting.

Emergency Plan – No new update at this time.

Ballard Green Cameras – Meeting with contractors now; have 2 new quotes, should have solution to discuss at next mid-month meeting.

CNA – Work orders prepared; fire extinguishers Ballard Green Community Building are done. BBQ behind Building H being addressed; Doors inside Community Room have new handles; hot water heater in Community Room replaced; damaged gutter on building A repaired; all gutters will be cleaned in early October.

Congregate Underground Fuel Tank – Surprise inspection by DEEP concerning the 4,000-gallon oil tank at Prospect Ridge that supports generator. It is functioning properly (we believe), but its life has expired in 2021 and it must be removed. This must be completed by 12/20/23. Much information exchanged concerning all the components of accomplishing this was discussed in detail. Ms. Hebert concerned that Mr. Rockwood may have more on his plate than reasonable. He thinks he's OK, but will keep Board informed.

Hybrid Meetings and Equipment -Projector has been purchased so it can now be tested. Look at replacing current meeting facilitator with Zoom. Mr. Rockwood to investigate.

Contract Leases and Insurance – Ms. Hebert to supply Mr. Rockwood with each property and particulars for each.

27 Abbott Avenue – Letter from RHA Board expressing concerns about project going forward. Property is a rental and who's going to maintain special system regarding flooding issues – should be addressed first.

Alternative High School – They are looking at possibility to move construction to right side. Ms. Hebert mentioned Emergency Exit on driveway but Mr. Liscio stated that had already been addressed.

Other -Becomes part of CNA.

New Business

FOIA Request and cost: to accept reading with vote *(all Board Members approved)*

FOIA Request – redact all tenants names from financials – cost projected for 50 files 50/60 pages each; would take 1 to 2 full days between \$280 to \$560 to have done. Mr. Burke volunteered to handle.

Public Session

Krisann Benson – No comment at this time.

Nancy Higgins – Good meeting, thanks for all the hard work. Areas of highest concern is conservation commission and wetlands behind Ballard Green – thank you Jan.

Isette Brendza – Kudos; 911 alarm in building C – red light on top of building not lighting up and needs to be fixed. Lounsbury and Ballard Green Pizza Luncheon is being held on Monday which is a high Jewish holy day. The oil tank being removed should be taken off the property for disposal. Red car is still in parking lot for over a year, and new tenant in C building had a 12:30AM crisis causing concern.

Georgette Colletto – N/A

Barbara Beaulieu -Retention Pond – owner is responsible. RHA intervener – closed to public as of last meeting.

8:57pm the Board voted to go in to Executive session

9:25pm the Board came out of Executive Session and in to Public Session.

There was then a Motion "To approve the Chair, Vincent Liscio, authority to execute a settlement agreement of \$47,500.00 with Ferrandino along with other terms as advised by counsel and acceptable to RHA". That Motion was voted on via a roll call and it went as follows: Mr. Janerico yea; Ms. Hebert, yea; Mr. Burke, abstain; Mr. Baird, nay; Mr. Liscio, yay. Therefore, the Yay's have it with a vote of 3-1-1.

The Board then voted unanimously to go back in to Executive Session again at 9:27pm.

The Board moved back in to Public Session at 9:43pm.

A Motion was made "To approve the request of Mr. Grimley of Victoria Gate for an easement as proposed in the drawing attached as presented for Mr. Grimley only, and that Mr. Grimley will be responsible for any and all expenses going forward from now and into the future". The vote was via roll call and went as follows: Mr. Janerico, Abstain; Mr. Burke, Aye; Mr. Baird, Aye; Ms. Hebert, Aye; Mr. Liscio, Aye. Therefore, the Motion passes 4-0-1

Then there was a Motion to Adjourn by Mr. Burke; Second by Mr. Janerico, All were in Favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:46pm

RHA Minutes Respectfully submitted by Patricia Harney, Recording Secretary.

Next Meeting October 4, 2023 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/video link : <https://fccdl.in/8Z6o2cECDJ>