

## COMMISSIONERS' SPECIAL MEETING, JULY 23, 2012

The Commissioners of the East Hartford Housing Authority held a special meeting on Monday, July 23, 2012 at the Authority's central office building located at 546 Burnside Avenue, East Hartford, Connecticut. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Robert N. Keating at 4:00 p.m.

1. **ROLL CALL:** Vice Chairman James Kate  
Commissioner Hazelann Cook  
Commissioner James Patterson, Jr.  
Commissioner Prescille Yamamoto  
Chairman Robert N. Keating

Also present were: Debra M. Bouchard, Executive Director and Brenda Pliszka, Executive Secretary/HR; Christine Paisley, Housing Programs Manager and Esther Clarke, Town Council Liaison.

2. Discussion and Possible Approval of the King Court Base Rents and Increase in Percentage of Income Used to Determine Rent

Ms. Bouchard explained to the Board that once a year the Housing Authority should be proposing a base rent increase for King Court and one has not been done since 2009 effective in 2010. She said this year the Housing Authority is requesting a base rent increase of \$25. A notice was sent out to the residents on June 8, 2012 making them aware the Housing Authority is planning to increase the base rent at \$25 per unit and a 31% of adjusted gross income versus the 30% that is currently being charged. A hearing was held at the Larson Center on July 9, 2012 for public comment from the residents. The Board received letters/petitions submitted by residents opposing the base rent increase as well as the minutes of what was discussed during that meeting.

Commissioner Patterson asked Ms. Bouchard to give the Board an overview of what was discussed. Ms. Bouchard reviewed with the Board the issues/concerns the residents had in regards to increasing the base rent and the percentage of the adjusted gross income. She stated that there were a few residents at the meeting along with a member from the Connecticut Housing Coalition to discuss the hardship that the increase would cause and it was stated that 25 families pay base rent. The Housing Authority is struggling to keep up the maintenance and the unit turnaround in order to keep the property in good shape. The Housing Authority did discuss with the residents if they are faced with a hardship paying the base rent then they could be moved to one of our low income properties. It was stated that King Court is a moderate rental property and the Housing Authority receives no subsidy and we rely on the rental income to keep the property running. The process of the base rent increase was discussed at length with the residents. CHFA wants the Housing Authority to do the base rent increase and to put it into our next proposed budget year for October 1, 2012. If the base rent increase is approved today, that will be forwarded to CHFA for approval.

There was a discussion of how many people reside at King Court and what the current rents are at that development. Ms. Bouchard explained that many people have aged in place and they are now living alone in a three bedroom apartment. Ms. Bouchard stated that the development is for families and not single elderly people and the Housing Authority can transition them into any of our other properties if

they are willing to go. Commissioner Yamamoto asked what was the response to the offer to transition to another development. Ms. Bouchard stated that no one wants to transfer.

Chairman Keating said that King Court is an 80 unit development with 30 vacant units. Ms. Bouchard said the \$25 increase will not do any capital improvements but will help us pay the additional cost of maintenance material, labor, background checks, etc.

Commissioner Patterson said his concern is if the Housing Authority is causing any hardship. Vice Chairman Kate asked if the tenants go to another development does their rent increase. Ms. Paisley said actually the people at base rent will have a substantial decrease in their portion of rent because they will be moving from a moderate family development to a development that does not have a base rent and only calculated at 30% of monthly adjusted. Ms. Bouchard said the developments do have a minimum rent of \$50.00. Ms. Paisley said that approximately 98% of the 25 residents paying base rent would actually get a decrease in their rent if they transferred. Vice Chairman Kate said then there should not be a hardship since the Housing Authority's job is to provide safe, sanitary housing for people. Chairman Keating said the Housing Authority needs to go after the people who are over housed. Commissioner Cook asked how many are actually over housed. Ms. Bouchard said there are nine individuals that are currently over housed. Vice Chairman Kate asked if we decide to move these people do we have a place for them to go. Ms. Paisley said not immediately but they would be transitioned into the right size apartment and we do have plenty of turnovers that these nine people could be moved by October/November if everything was to happen now.

There was a discussion if this decision made today could be reversed.

Chairman Keating asked if the units that people transfer out of can be rented. Ms. Bouchard said as long as the units are in decent shape. Chairman Keating believed the Housing Authority had trouble renting the units because the rents are so high. Ms. Paisley said the rent burden in East Hartford through our rent reasonableness study under Section 8 program is approximately \$1,000 plus utilities for a two-bedroom and \$1,100 - \$1,150 plus utilities for a three bedroom. She said at King Court you are talking about a maximum of \$750 and \$850 because that is what the contract rent is capped at right now. Commissioner Cook said that the maintenance department does yearly inspections. Ms. Bouchard said they do for general health and safety that you notice on the UPCS inspections.

Ms. Bouchard explained to the Board that this is a whole timing issue since we are still deciding what to do with King Court.

Chairman Keating asked how much did the rents go up in 2009. Ms. Bouchard said the rents went up \$100 because they were at \$280 and had to be brought up and in 2005 it was only brought up by \$20 from \$260. She stated with no subsidy that is why there are so many vacant units.

Commissioner Cook said these base rents are not outrageous and explained how she raised her base rents at her affordable housing program. She believes we need to bite the bullet and vote on the increase and inform the people that are over housed that they need to move since we have to follow our rules and regulations. There was a brief discussion of moving the over housed individuals.

Ms. Bouchard stated that the residents at the public hearing were informed that East Hartford Housing Authority partnered with Bridgeport Housing Authority and that a representative would be going out there to talk to the residents.

Commissioner Yamamoto said she believes that the Housing Authority has no other choice than to vote on the increase in order to be fiscally responsible and try to get the agency back together. Ms. Bouchard stated if we knew what the Housing Authority was going to do with King Court maybe the decision would not have to be made but at this time we don't have any definitive answers. Chairman Keating said the decision on the base rent increase needs to be made today. Ms. Bouchard said yes. Ms. Paisley reviewed the timeline with the Board. Ms. Bouchard said if the Board approves the base rent increase today it still needs to go to CHFA/DECD and if they approve it then it comes back to us. If we are going up on the rent, the Housing Authority needs to send the residents a 30 day notice and at that time if we decide not to increase the rent we could probably stop it at that point.

The motion was then made by Vice Chairman Kate to approve the King Court base rent by \$25 and increase in the percentage of income used to determine rent to 31%. Commissioner Yamamoto seconded the motion and it was carried by the unanimous vote of the Commissioners present.

Ms. Bouchard explained the different groups in which the residents of King Court are involved with to the Board.

Commissioner Patterson said at this time it is now in CHFA/DECD's court. Ms. Bouchard said that is correct and she has given the residents their addresses.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The motion was then made by Commissioner Yamamoto to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion and it was carried by the unanimous vote of the Commissioners present, and the meeting was then adjourned at 4:31 p.m.

I hereby certify that the above is a true and accurate record of the minutes of the special meeting held on July 23, 2012 by the Board of Commissioners of the East Hartford Housing Authority.

Respectfully submitted,

*Debra Bouchard*  
Debra M. Bouchard  
Secretary/Executive Director