TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

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TOWN COUNCIL PUBIC HEARING

JANUARY 10, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE CHAMBERS

Re: Resolution Authorizing execution of lease with WHFH Development Corporation

DEBRA A. CHASSE, CSR #00055

APPEARANCES:

Town Council Members Present:

SHARI CANTOR, MAYOR

LIAM SWEENEY, DEPUTY MAYOR

CAROL BLANKS

ALBERTO CORTES

LEON DAVIDOFF

DEBRA POLUN

BEN WENOGRAD

MARK ZYDANOWICZ

ALSO PRESENT:

RICK LEDWITH, TOWN MANAGER

ESSIE LABROT, TOWN CLERK/COUNCIL CLERK

DALLAS DODGE, CORPORATION COUNSEL

MAYOR CANTOR: We are calling the 7 p.m. public hearing to order. This is a resolution authorizing the execution of a lease with West Hartford Fellowship Housing Development Corp for property located at 10 to 50 Starkel Road. We will start with a role call, Miss Labrot.

MS. LABROT: Miss Blanks.

MS. BLANKS: Here.

MS. LABROT: Miss Cantor.

MS. CANTOR: Here.

MS. LABROT: Mr. Cortes:

MR. CORTES: Here.

MS. LABROT: Mr. Davidoff:

MR. DAVIDOFF: Here.

MS. LABROT: Miss Fay is absent. Miss Polun.

MS. POLUN: Here.

MS. LABROT: Mr. Sweeney.

MR. SWEENEY: Here.

MS. LABROT: Mr. Wenograd.

MR. WENOGRAD: Here.

MS. LABROT: Mr. Zydanowicz.

MR. ZYDANOWICZ: Here.

MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Miss Lebrot.

We will begin with a presentation on Mr. Garilli. Mark Garilli, please come forward.

I should have did that at the vote. We have -- again, we've had three members of the council that have been part of the Fellowship Board. One actually resigned and we have two now, so we will have recusals from Mr. Cortes and Mr. Davidoff, and I want to thank them for their service on this Board. I appreciate it very much. Thank you. And Mr. Wenograd did resign from the Board for the purpose of serving on the Council. Thank you for your service on everything.

MR. GARILLI: We'll start without and go through on paper. Everyone, I think, has the presentation in front of them.

So Mayor Cantor, Council members, members of the public, good evening. My name is Mark Garilli and I am pleased to be here tonight as the executive director of West Hartford Fellowship Housing in partnership with the Town of West Hartford. West Hartford Fellowship Housing has developed three times in the past 50 years and our Board of Directors has since established a master plan to redevelop our aging campus.

As part of that strategy, the Board created a new nonprofit development corporation to spearhead redevelopment efforts and secure funding. Tonight, we are here to present on our plans for the redevelopment at 10 through 50 Starkel Road and excludes our adjacent property at 60 Starkel, which is a 3-story building that houses 44 units of Section 8 subsidized housing for elderly and disabled.

Fellowship Housing, as a whole, provides affordable studio and one bedroom apartments designated for seniors and disabled individuals. We offer a range of services, such as life and health care referrals, that enable our residents to remain independent for as long as possible. Our team is continually growing our services to provide a higher level of care, support, and connection to the community.

Our next slide that says "project overview" is a map of our campus. And just to give you a quick brief, that campus includes 24 building. The top set of buildings here, these buildings right here, all these are the developments that we're talking about today. This bottom building down here, this is 60 Starkel. That's that 3-story you just heard me talk about. Two separate leases; on SDD, one special development district, number 87. So, again, we're just here to talk about the 23 smaller buildings that are up here. Fellowship has developed once in 1970, that's these buildings here, and again in '75, which we call Fellowship 2. That's these buildings here. These buildings make up 169 units.

The next page you have is our resident demographics, just to tell you a little bit about the folks that we serve. We do have a diverse demographic. 94 percent of our residents are age 50 or older. We do have a larger population of females than males, 62 to 38 percent. About 85 percent of our residents live alone, and about 15 percent live with a spouse or others. We have -- we're very racially diverse with Hispanic, American Indian, Asian black, African-American, native Hawaiian, white, and other multi race.

When we look at our income demographics, the average resident, 60 percent of our residents are at or below $1,300 a month for their income. Another 20 percent are at or below 800 a month. Most rely on Social Security, some are on retirement, very few on veteran's benefits. Most of our folks, well, not most, but about 36 to 40 percent are currently participate in the SNAP or food stamp program.

Next slide would be our current

development at 10 through 50 Starkel Road is affordable housing for elderly. We do have some units that we have converted over the years for mobility impaired. We have an 8-acre campus, 23 buildings, 169 apartments. The average studio is 350 square feet, an average rent of 580 a month. An average one bedroom is 450 square feet with an average rent of 650 a month.

Currently, we have 20 project-based vouchers. Those are HUD subsidies that help provide subsidized rent for 20 individuals that live in our community.

The next screen is a location map. If you look at this location map, you could see that we are on Starkel Road. This here is the Big Y Plaza where you've got the Senior Center, the Public Library, and the Post Office. You can see those rooftops that I showed you in the campus plan, as well. Those are the two property locations right there adjacent to the -- just behind 60 Starkel, which is behind the firehouse on Route 44.

So why redevelop. We look at ADA compliance and accessibility. Currently, for our senior population, the majority of our buildings are 2-story walkups, no elevators. Folks who are there with us for a long time, age in place, can't stay there

once they've got any challenges with stairs or mobility issues.

Energy efficiency, building envelopes no longer meet the building standards of today. Our campus layout is very sprawling, it's long distances to community spaces, so if a residence wants to make it from the backside of the property to our laundry or our community multipurpose base, it's a long walk, whether it's in the heat or the cold in the winter or in the rain, so that campus layout isn't very conducive to our current population. Lack of amenities and technology, think about the time through Covid. We've got limited resources for connectivity. How we connected with our residents but, more importantly, how residents connected with family and how they connected with healthcare providers through that time.

Lastly, quality of life for our residents, very small apartments, they lack any provider or program space and really there's a huge need for more affordable housing. We have a very long wait list.

So tonight we're looking at the organizational and real estate requirements for a redevelopment project, and what those are as -- we formed WHFH Development Corp as a nonprofit development

arm of Fellowship Housing, we established the mission of the organization, which is the exact mission of Fellowship Housing. We established it as a 501(c)(3). Our funding -- we established our funding requirements through the Connecticut Housing & Finance Authority, through the Department of Housing, and through Federal Housing Urban Development.

We've met our land use approvals. If you recall back in 2019, some of you heard our presentation to get us through that special development district land use approvals, and, lastly, we're here to talk about our ground lease with the Town of West Hartford for a term not to exceed 99 years for the property located at 10 through 50 Starkel Road. That's really our last step as we talk to our funders and secure our private investors.

Our current structure, 10 through 50 Starkel is West Hartford Fellowship Housing at the top, and we've got West Hartford Fellowship Housing, Inc. and West Hartford Fellowship Housing 2. Those two entities are under the Board of Directors for West Hartford Fellowship Housing and have been since we developed back in the early '70s.

What we envision for our future structure, 10 through 50 Starkel is, again, West

Hartford Fellowship Housing, the Development Corp, which is the development arm we talked about, and each time that we go out for tax credit awards that we apply for funding, they require that we establish a separate organization in order to satisfy the funding. So we talked about four phases of construction in our redevelopment. Each phase would require us to establish a new LLC or new corporation to house the funding.

You can see that this project overview, again, is one slide that gives you what our current property looks like today. These three buildings down here would be scheduled to be demolished in order to make way for the development of phase 1, which would incorporate two buildings, so these two you can see the red, it takes the place of those three buildings; 22 units in the existing buildings, 65 units scheduled to come back.

If we were to look at the summary page, again, 22 units to be demolished, 65 units to be built back in the same location. We'd be expanding our common area space and program space. The two buildings with one connector between the two of them. That main connector is about 1,000 square feet. Between the two buildings and the connector, we've got just close to

72,000 square feet of new construction.

So you heard me talk about those three buildings that would need to be relocated or demolished to make way for new construction. That would require that we relocate the 22 residents that are in those units. We worked very hard to make sure that we do everything we can to relocate those individuals on campus. We've tried to identify any vacancies that come available and utilize those vacancies to relocate individuals to those spaces until the time that the new construction is built, in which case those individuals will then move into the new construction.

Under the Uniform Relocation Act, we are required to relocate those household into the new construction at their existing rents of 580 and 650. We have hired dedicated staff to managing the relocation process. We expect that 14 of those 22 residents will have been relocated to units on campuses by early spring, so within the next few months. Currently, we have relocated 9 residents, to date, on campus.

We are looking to locate appropriate housing for the potential remaining residents should construction come before we're able to move everybody into any potential vacancies, and only in phase 1 will residents need to be relocated off campus during construction. So after we're done with phase 1, we'll need to move some residents, who live in the current units that will need to be demolished for phase 2. Those folks will move into the new building that was just built, and then those units get demolished, we build the next phase and then the next phase of buildings that are scheduled to be demolished, those folks will move into phase 2 and so on. Once we get to phase 3, we'll have a surplus of units over the amount of actual residents that we have on campus. Our goal is to expand our campus by another 95 units of affordable housing.

So with our anticipated rent projections for the first year of operations, we would add anywhere between 100 and $200 for utility allowances based on the unit sizes. We have three categories of units that fall into different average median income rates. So we have 13 units that fall within a 30 percent average median income, so residents who fall within that will experience net rents at or below current rents for studios and small one bedroom units. Folks who fall into the 50 percent of AMI, there's 26 units that are set aside for -- 50 percent of AMI will experience net rates that are equivalent to current rates for one bedroom units today. And then 60 percent of AMI, there's 26 units that are set aside at that -- at 60 percent, and residents who fall within that percentage, those net rates will be at or above current rents for large one bedroom and two bedroom units.

Residents will be responsible to pay for their own utilities. Again, you heard me mention the utility allowances based on the unit sizes. Currently, projected monthly rents are approximately $30 under the low income housing tax credit rent maximum. So the tax credit -- the low income housing tax credit sets a maximum allowable rent for all of those units. Currently, the program that we have put together is approximately about $30 under the maximum rents for each one of those units.

We anticipate a 2 to 3 percent increase per year based on extended projections and regulatory limits, keeping in mind that we are restricted by that cap. These projections are based on current income limits, market conditions, and final specified utility equipment, so the utility equipment is the energy, the things that take up energy, and what kind of -- how much energy they would be using. We fully expect these buildings to be extremely efficient and considerably more efficient than the current buildings we have in place. The rents and projected expenses will be subject to final approval with our lenders and our investment partners.

The next slide identifies our funding sources, so we have a slide for our project funding and it identifies where all the different funding sources come into play to make up the dollars that we need to not only build the building, but to remain and capture those affordable rents.

So the first line is syndicated equity. We've got about $1.8 million in low incoming housing tax credits. That's what we were awarded form Connecticut Housing Finance Authority. That 1.8 million in tax credits translates to about 16 and a half million dollars in private investments. So private investors purchased those tax credits at about 90 to 92 cents on the dollar.

The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority is providing a soft mortgage for us of about $1.8 million, and the Department of Housing has established a $4 million state bond, which we have been awarded. There will be about $2.3 million in federal home funds, and there will be about a million dollars of an affiliate loan. There's some deferred developer fees and the energy incentive rebates that I spoke about earlier for a total permanent cost of about 26 and a half million dollars.

The new affordable housing that will be provided to the Town of West Hartford or in the Town of West Hartford in phase 1, we have 65 units of new construction minus the 22 units, which will add 43 units of new affordable housing in West Hartford. When we go to phase 2, we'll have new units of 16. When we go to phase 3, we'll have an additional 27 new units and, lastly, in phase 4 we'll add another 9 units. So that's the 95 units -- anticipated 95 units that we've been speaking about.

If you were to look at the additional slides for phasing, this is what phase 2 would look like. We talked about phase 1, and these two buildings at the bottom of the page, these next two buildings would be added at top, and that would be the next phase, so that would be phase 1 and phase 2. Again, for -- this is all fellowship 2 back here. Right? So as we go to phase 3, we would then add a 4-story building here in this corner of the property and take up more of the additional housing and, lastly, final phase would complete the overall campus, there would be no more existing buildings with the exception of 60 Starkel. These would be all of the buildings within the four phases of construction that we've planned for our master plan.

As far as our project timeline is concerned, we have it in three buckets; town approvals, secure partners, and then construction. So we're here now, January 2023, for a public hearing and a resolution of the lease assignment and extension. We expect to secure our partners. This past November we identified our general contractor in, this past December, and currently, into this month, we are securing our private investor, who is purchasing the tax credits. We expect to close sometime in April of 2023 with CHFA and COH. So that would put us into construction some 30 days after closing, so the spring of 2023 into the fall of 2024, where we would be completing phase 1 construction.

I've got down here, as well, the resident relocation process, which you heard me talk about already.

Then the remainder of these slides are really renderings of what we expect Fellowship Housing to look like. This would be the view from Starkel Road, or from the library looking across the street at Starkel Road. The building on this side of the drawing in phase 1, this other half would be part of phase 2. This is just the same image of the buildings, only from the courtyard side, so the backside of the buildings. This next rendering is the multipurpose community space that we anticipate having about double the size of the current space we have today. And the rest are just some elevations, architectural elevations, that identify the different elevations of the building.

And that concludes my presentation. I do have members of the Board of Directors here with me today should there be any questions that we might be -- might be more appropriately answered by the Board of Directors; however, we're here and available. I apologize for the technology.

MAYOR CANTOR: That's all right. We've had a lot of weird things happening tonight. That's okay. Thank you, Mr. Garilli. And we will open it up to questions, but I want to make sure we get to public comment. So if you have any questions, just maybe briefly we can save that? Okay. Can we look at the signup sheet. I know people have been waiting a little too long.

While we're doing that, Madam Clerk,

have you received any written comments? No, she has none. Thank you very much.

So the sign-up sheet, the first person I have is Jessica Chatfield, and please state your name and address for the record, and then the next person, just so you know, is Claire Kindall.

MS. CHATFIELD: My name is Jessica Chatfield. I live at 10 Starkel Road, Apartment C. Thank you. I feel very brave being here.

MAYOR CANTOR: You are brave, but don't be afraid. We want to hear from you.

MS. CHATFIELD: Thank you. So I have lived at West Hartford Fellowship Housing for the last 12 and a half years. I have been blessed to receive Social Security disability after I could no longer continue my nursing, RN career years back. My building is in phase 2 of the new construction. I was initially granted a lease there with a HUD subsidy, and I was not mobility impaired. While I no longer receive a HUD subsidy, I have been grateful to have a safe, affordable, steady place to left at West Hartford Fellowship Housing. The developing project is a welcome come up-levelling in the quality of life for all residents there.

I have come tonight to address my

interest in section 3 of the proposal provision of rental housing and related facilities, services for the elderly and mobility impaired during the term of the lease. I notice the clear wording elderly and mobility impaired in this new proposal, and I have been curious. Okay, concerned.

I have shared my angst with our property manager, assistant property manager and Mark, the executive director of Development Corporation. I have experienced them as kind, supportive, and they have told me that I will continue to have a place there in the new apartments to come. I will be grandfathered in.

When I requested that they might put this in writing, they each shared that they were not able to do that. Each have been affirming of the intention of the Board governing West Hartford Fellowship Housing for all current disabled residents under the age of 65 to continue to live affordably there now and after the new building is completed.

In September of 2019, I spoke here at the town hall meeting when the proposal for the construction at West Hartford Fellowship Housing was present. My primary concern was the wording of the proposal that said elderly housing development and did

not include disabled. I walked up to the podium without an assistive device and with a steady gait. Upon sharing my concerns with the council at the meeting, their responses from those presenting were assurance that the disabled residents were indeed included.

Perhaps it was a matter of semantics. It has recently come to my awareness that it is not and has never been the Board's intention to have non-mobility impaired disabled individuals under 65 years of age living there. The Board's mission, since inception, is clearly focused on our elderly population. As someone whose profession was primarily centered on providing skilled nursing care for the elderly population, I cannot argue the significance of this intention.

With the current lack of truly affordable housing options available here in West Hartford and in Connecticut, I am curious about where one might live with a disability. I am invited to trust the process of life and I am holding faith that only the highest and best outcomes will unfold for all involved. Thank you.

MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Miss Chatfield. Thank you very much. The next speaker is

Miss Kindall, Clare Kindall, and then after that Mary and, I'm sorry, I think it's Donegan. Thank you.

MS. KINDALL: I thought I would speak last, actually, to see if I could respond to some of the resident' concerns. Clare Kindall, president of West Hartford Fellowship Housing Development Corp. So if I may speak at the end, I can perhaps address some of those concerns because we're aware of them and are happy to address them.

MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Miss Kindall. Mary Donegan and then Gary Smith. So this is for this public hearing. If you'd like, I can cross you off that and you can sign up on the general. Maybe, Mr. Dodge, you can help. Thank you. We will call -- if you missed signup, we will call for you anyway. And Gary Smith, I don't know if that's the same thing, as well. So that's all I had signed up. Is there anybody here that would like to speak to this public hearing? I don't see anybody, so Miss Kindall, you are back up.

MS. KINDALL: Clare Kindall, president of West Hartford Fellowship Housing Development, Corp, and I'm here to thank the council and for all of their support. We're at the end of a very long road. Our current lease with the town is, I think, more than 25 years left. But we need a 99-year lease in order to do affordable housing development under the low income housing tax credit. Through this counsel's support, we were able to get the state to give us low income housing tax credits, which is a remarkable accomplishment, and we couldn't be more thrilled.

So we're here to say there's some structural changes that need to be made in the lease in order to qualify for the financing, and we need a longer term, so we really greatly appreciate this Council's consideration of modifying the lease so that we can do that.

I wanted to address Miss Chatfield, who I thought gave beautiful comments. The structure of the phases, for the four phases, is that all current residents for phase 2 will go into the extra housing that's being built in phase 1, and all of those current residents actually have a guarantee. It's a federal statute, so they're automatically in. So if you're a current resident, you already have a spot, and then for phase 2, people from phase 3 will move in, and by phase 3, people from phase 4 will move in, but have extra spots and then phase 4 will have extra spots.

Our organization for the past over

50 years had been primarily elderly; however, when we built fellowship 3, which is not part of tonight, it's at 60 Starkel, we expanded it to the language of the times, which was mobility impaired. We interpret that now as disabled. And, obviously, we could fill our entire complex with only disabled, but we wanted to make a mix. We're not doing any sort of promises of mixes until we have open spaces, because right now our priority is for our current residents.

That said, it has also been the intention of the Board and commitment of the Board to include disabled residents under the age of 62 in the development. So this is not something we're saying if you're under 62, you can't live there if you're disabled. It's always been our case and it's been our policy. It's what we've done. So it's affirmative for Fellowship 3, but we plan to do that, as well, for the new phases of phases 1, 23, 3, and 4. We are not setting any quotas or percentages for that at this time, because we're basically throwing all new residents -- all current residents into the new buildings, so that the only people who have to be relocated off-campus is phase 1 to the extent that we don't find room on the campus.

I don't know if that made it clear.

I hope so. So, I guess, the bottom line is everybody in phase 2 will receive a letter guaranteeing them an apartment, when phase 2 comes, so Miss Chatfield will have her piece of paper. Everybody in phase 1 has already gotten a piece of paper, and she will have a piece of paper. So, you know, we wouldn't get rid of her. We wanted to, and we don't want to is, I guess, the bottom line. We want to keep our disabled residents, we want to keep all of our residents.

MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Miss Kindall. So the signup sheet, is there anybody else, again, one more time, that would like to speak to this public hearing? Okay. Any questions from Town Council? Miss Blanks.

MS. BLANKS: Thank you, Madam Mayor. I guess the question is probably addressed to Miss Kindall since she spoke on behalf of the Board. For the disabled residents that are under age 62, would you just elaborate for me, how far down does that go?

MS. KINDALL: What do you mean by how far down? If they're 18 and disabled, they can live there.

MS. BLANKS: Thank you for that clarification. And then for, I believe the resident that came up looking for the piece of paper, this is probably just a general note. If she doesn't get that piece of paper, what would you advise her to do or what would be the period of time that she should expect that documentation to come through?

MS. KINDALL: When we get approved for phase 2 and get the funding -- we're only on phase 1. She's not impacted at all right now. So when we have phase 2, then every resident who would be affected will be -- will get that piece of paper. Right now she's in her apartment, there's no change for her. There's nothing that happens to her. When we do the new phase, we're not on phase 2 right now, we're just on phase 1 but if, for some reason, we didn't give her that piece of paper, she could go to HUD, she can go to CHFA, she can call you. I mean, it's a legal require. She gets a piece of paper when the time comes to relocate her.

MS. BLANKS: Thank you for that clarification. And then for the residents who are going to be relocated -- what was my question. I had a question. Hold on, give me a minute, Clare.

For those are that going to be relocated, what kind of assistance will they receive in their relocation?

MS. KINDALL: Tons. We pay for

everything. We pay to move them. They keep the same rent level, we find them the place, we make sure -- I mean, they are held -- this is, you know, we would do it anyway. Even if we didn't, it's legally required. They receive full unconditional support in the relocation, both off-campus or into their new place, and then back when the new construction is done.

MS. BLANKS: Thank you for that clarification.

MS. KINDALL: You're welcome.

MS. BLANKS: I'm all set.

MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Miss Blanks. Are there other questions? Miss Polun.

MS. POLUN: Thank you, Madam Mayor. Just a quick question regarding Section 3. It currently says, "The corporate purpose of the WHFH Development Corporation must be the provision of rental housing and related facilities and services for the elderly and mobility impaired. I'm wondering do we mean you have to be both or do we mean and/or?

MS. KINDALL: And/or.

MS. POLUN: Is that implied through that language?

MS. KINDALL: That's how we've interpreted it through our 50 years, since we've done phase 3. It has been either/or, it's not required to be both.

MS. POLUN: Thank you.

MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Miss Polun. Any other comments or questions? All right.

MS. KINDALL: Thank you for your time.

MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you very much. If there are no more questions, one more look around, we will close the public hearing without objection. I move that we adjourn. Is there any objection? Seeing none, we are adjourned and we will begin the Town Council meeting.

We won't be voting on Fellowship tonight. This has to be referred to our Town Planning & Zoning Commission to complete it's required review, so this will be voted on January 24th and you can watch it televised. I just want to make sure that you understand that if you want to leave, if you're waiting for this vote, I don't want you to be tied to wait. So just to let you know. But if you want to stay, you are more than welcome, and thank you very much for coming out.

(Whereupon, the hearing was adjourned.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, DEBRA A. CHASSE, Court Reporter and Notary Public within and for the State of Connecticut, duly commissioned and qualified, do hereby certify that the foregoing 27 pages are a complete and accurate computer-aided transcription of my original verbatim notes taken of the Public Hearing held before the West Hartford Town Council.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my notarial seal this 20th day of January, 2023.

Debra A. Chasse, CSR
Notary Public
State of Connecticut

My Commission Expires:
June 30, 2026
CSR No. 00055