



SECHA Board of Directors Meeting
March 11, 2022
8:30 AM

Conducted by Zoom Conference

Draft Minutes

Attendees: Norton Wheeler, Mark Oefinger, Susy Hurlbert, Fred Allyn III, Deborah Monahan, David Stanland, Les King, Jim Butler, Amanda Kennedy, Christie Stewart.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Wheeler called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

2. Introductions

Mr. Butler introduced Christie Stewart. SECHA members introduced themselves.

3. Approve January 14, 2022 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: To approve the January 11, 2022 Meeting Minutes (Oefinger, Monahan). So voted unanimously.

4. Financial Report

Ms. Kennedy presented the financial report. Since SECHA's last meeting, we have received a check from Liberty Bank Foundation for \$5,000. While staff are spending more time on DOH-funded affordable housing plans, expenditures have been low, but SECHA has raised \$11,500 of the targeted \$14,000 budget and will pursue additional grant opportunities coming soon.

MOTION: To approve the financial report (Wheeler, Allyn).

5. Updates:

a. Center for Housing Opportunity update – Christie Stewart

Mr. Butler introduced the Center for Housing Opportunity discussions. Mr. Butler reminded SECHA of the current amount of money in the bank. While local banks and foundations have been generous, we raise limited funds and leverage RSG

funds for the affordable housing work that staff work on. SECHA also can be limited by the relationship with the COG, which needs to be respectful of the 22 municipalities it serves. The CHO model may have greater freedom to do work in the region.

Christie Stewart began her presentation, “CHO Initiative Overview & Strategy”. The Housing Collective is a regional organization that is working to end homelessness and address affordable housing needs. Described short- and long-term goals, including providing data and research and technical assistance. Outlined the initiatives and partnerships in Fairfield and Litchfield Counties. In the Fairfield County CHO, key partners are Regional Plan Association (RPA), the Fairfield County Community Foundation, The Housing Collective, and Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC). Both data collection and public will-building are important to move the housing conversation forward.

Mr. Butler said that they have been meeting with the Community Foundation about funding and inviting funding partners to the table. Ms. Kennedy said that SECHA has not decided how SECHA would fit into this larger regional opportunity. Ms. Hurlbert volunteered that ECAR has recently purchased a building and would be happy to have a CHO staff person as a tenant. Mr. Allyn asked about community partners – Ms. Stewart said that they started by bringing 35 decision makers together and that it took at least 12 months of meeting once a month to come up with a shared agenda on moving forward. Having a dedicated staff person was critical, and \$150,000 a year would cover staff and communication efforts. Mr. King said that he is happy to support however he can. Mr. Butler said that they are hoping to have a convening for funders in April-May, with the possibility of opening an office by the end of the year. Mr. Wheeler says that he’s excited for the opportunity for SECHA to step up our game. Ms. Monahan asked the role of Desegregate, and Ms. Stewart said that RPA is now the backbone organization of Desegregate and they work closely together but are different organizations. Mr. Stanland asked about the likelihood of getting necessary funding, and Mr. Butler said that Maryam Elahi of the Community Foundation is a big advocate in pulling the funders together. Mr. Oefinger said he

was supportive of a more impactful effort from a bigger organization, voiced support for pushing harder with Desegregate. Ms. Stewart said that the most helpful role for SECHA right now is to use board members' networks to bring groups together. SECHA could also become a steering committee for CHO. In terms of goals and impacts, Ms. Stewart said what they are working toward is to change the ecosystem to make production and preservation of units easier by changing public will.

b. Local Affordable Housing Plans

Ms. Kennedy presented an update. Salem, Sprague, and North Stonington have completed plans. We have just started Preston and Montville, expect to begin Griswold next year, and have not heard from two towns in the region. Next step is to start going to towns that have completed plans to work on implementation steps. Mr. Butler thanked staff for their work. Ms. Hurlbert asked which towns are unknown – Ms. Kennedy said that we do not know where the Town of Windham (no official staff planner) or the City of New London (staff planner recently left) are in the planning process. Mr. Butler will reach out to the Mayor of New London.

6. New Business

Ms. Kennedy added that SECHA will hold a session for a Desegregate CT briefing next Thursday, March 17th with Desegregate.

The Nominating Committee needs to meet before next meeting to nominate board members and officers.

7. The next regular meeting will be held May 13, at 8:30 AM.

8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 AM.