



Housing/Community Development/Social Services Committee - Board of Representatives

Gloria DePina, Chair

Lila Wallace, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Monday, August 17, 2020
Time: 6:30 p.m.
Place: This meeting was held remotely

The Housing/Community Development/Social Services Committee met at the above time and place. In attendance were Chair DePina, Vice Chair Wallace and Committee Member Reps. Moore, Palomba and Roqueta. Excused were Reps. Michelson and Pratt. Also present were President Quinones; Ralph Blessing, David Woods and Emily Gordon, Land Use Bureau; and Ellen Bromley, Director of Social Services.

Chair DePina called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
1. HCD30.032	APPROVAL; of an Agreement with HR&A Advisors Inc. for an Affordable Housing Study. 04/01/20 – Submitted by Mayor Martin 04/07/20 – Held by Board of Finance 04/20/20 – Held By Committee 09/10/20 – To be Considered by Board of Finance	HELD
Item 1 was held without objection, since it had not been taken up by the Board of Finance.		
2. HCD30.016	ORDINANCE <u>for final adoption</u> ; Providing for the Creation of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund in the City of Stamford. 01/05/19 – Submitted by Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief 01/30/19 –Held in Committee 8-0-0 02/11/19 – Moved to Pending 09/16/19 – Approved by Committee 5-0-0 10/21/19 – Public Hearing Held and Approved by Committee, as amended 3-0-1 11/06/19 – Held by Full Board 31-0-0 11/18/19 – Held by Committee, as amended, 4-2-0 12/09/19 – Held at Steering	APPROVED, AS AMENDED, 5-0-0

Mr. Blessing discussed the proposed ordinance:

- The proposed amendments to the ordinance are meant to address the increased risk of evictions and foreclosures due to the pandemic. Evictions and

foreclosures are currently stayed by executive orders, but this stay is ending and increased evictions and foreclosures will become a problem. The Affordable Housing Trust Fund can be a key tool for helping during the crisis.

- The City of Stamford generates funds through below market housing fee-in-lieu payments and commercial linkage fees. The account currently has approximately \$1 million.
- The goal of the ordinance is to create a body that can distribute the funds quickly and with flexibility. The funds would be transferred in upon approval by the Board of Representatives, the Board of Finance and the Planning Board. The funds would be distributed by the Board of the Trust.
- One proposed change is to permit use of the funds for foreclosure and eviction prevention programs.
- The Board of the Trust would establish its priorities based upon the Affordable Housing Study; but the amendments permit disbursement during a state of emergency

Committee members discussed the proposed ordinance with the invited guests. Items discussed included the following:

- The individuals to fill the 2 undesignated positions should not come from organizations which might receive funds from the Trust Fund
- Rental assistance would be based on earning less than 80% of AMI, not living in below market housing
- It is important to get this ordinance passed and get the process going
- The Board of the Trust Fund would identify an entity with experience in eviction/foreclosure assistance to act as a liaison between individuals and attorneys
- There would be no tax money used for the task force funds
- Currently the Housing Development Fund and Urban League provide eviction/foreclosure assistance in Stamford
- Ex officio members are appointed based upon their offices, and are able to vote and participate fully
- The ordinance could designate the Mayor or the President of the Board to appoint the additional members of the Board of the Trust Fund; either a resident of affordable housing or a person with significant affordable housing experience
- In the interest of moving forward, the Committee could amend the ordinance to reduce the number of members of the Board back to 5 members and then amend the ordinance at a later date to increase the number of members

A motion to amend §146-70 of the ordinance to reduce the number of members of the Board of the Trust from 7 to 5 was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 3-2-0 (Reps. DePina, Wallace and Palomba in favor; Reps. Moore and Roqueta opposed).

A motion to amend the ordinance to approve the [changes recommended by Mr. Blessing in §146-75.C](#), as follows, was made and seconded.

Sec. 146-75. Expenditures from Trust.

C. Expenditures shall be made from the Trust only in accordance with the following procedures and requirements:

1. All expenditures listed below shall be based on and prioritized by the Stamford Affordable Housing Plan. Funds from the Trust shall only be used for the following authorized purposes:

* * *

f. *Foreclosure and Eviction Prevention and Protection Programs.* Programs that provide support, including but not limited legal services, financial counseling, or financial assistance, to Stamford residents threatened by foreclosure, eviction or other events that may lead to homelessness.

g. *Rental and Landlord Assistance Programs.* Programs that provide financial or other support to renters or landlords focused on low income households and landlords or organizations providing affordable housing for low income households.

2. *Two years after the creation of the Housing Trust Fund, No funds shall be disbursed in absence of an approved Stamford Affordable Housing Plan and all expenditures must demonstrate how they meet the goals and priorities established by the SAHP. This rule may be suspended during a State of Emergency to allow for the disbursement of funds to alleviate emergency related impacts on housing.*

The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0-0 (Reps. DePina, Wallace and Moore, Palomba and Roqueta in favor).

A motion to approve the ordinance, as amended, was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 5-0-0 (Reps. DePina, Wallace and Moore, Palomba and Roqueta in favor).

Chair DePina adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Gloria DePina, Chair

This meeting is on [video](#).