

bha update

August 2009

Board of Commissioners

Kathleen Vila - *Chairperson*
Reverend Sulton Stack, Jr. - *Commissioner*
Daniel Ford - *Commissioner*
Shanté Hanks - *Commissioner*
Dulce Nieves - *Commissioner*

Bridgeport Housing Authority Chairperson, Kathleen Vila, Executive Director, Nicholas A. Calace

Message from the Executive Director Nicholas A. Calace



Our progress at BHA has been substantial, especially in light of the current economic conditions. In this UPDATE we're pleased to report about funds found through energy efficiencies, new construction, and successful union negotiations, all significant advances in this environment.

As is the case with other agencies and private businesses Housing Authorities are struggling to continue operations with less. In fact only 85% of the Bridgeport Housing Authority's budget (not including Section 8) has been funded by the federal government the last couple of years. For our 17 million dollar annual operating budget that is big number to make up. We're proud that in these austere times we've been able to continue serving our residents. Certainly some fringe services have been curtailed but our basic service is done with an eye toward respectful customer oriented resident services.

Through hard work and determination our occupancy rate has improved to 97%. Our goal, of course is 100%. Just 18 months ago we had 200 vacancies now we're down to 40 vacancies. We've actually moved from crisis intervention to quality of life issues and much of the credit for that goes to our residents as well as our staff.

Yes, there is some stimulus money in the pipeline but that's strictly for capital expenses. We're expecting to use six-million dollars for various shovel-ready capital projects that have been in our strategic plans. The money has been used to bring our vacancy rate down even further.

In spite of our good work, the poor economy means our waiting lists are still long, nearly 3,000 between both Public Housing and Section 8 units which we also administer. So the need still exists but we're doing a great job at turning over apartments for new folks as soon as they become available.

As you'll read in the following articles we're also involved in other monumental endeavors that will continue to shape our agency in a way that'll allow us to continue to provide resident services while expanding our vision.

Nicholas A. Calace

Union agreements and more coming

The BHA recognizes the value of its employees in the completion of its mission to provide housing and services for its residents. So, in order to secure the Authority-employee relationship it has begun negotiations with union membership on contracts. We understand that negotiations are difficult for all parties. Union leadership and BHA management have toiled for five years to hammer out acceptable contracts. After much work the BHA has tentative agreement with two unions and is working on two others at the time of this publication. We're happy to say it has been done without any employee layoffs as has been the case unfortunately with neighboring authorities.

\$33 million Redevelopment Project unveiled



The ELEANOR THE FRANKLIN

In about one year construction will be completed on one of Bridgeport's biggest current development projects. The Bridgeport Housing Authority (BHA) and the Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development took the wraps off their 33-million dollar redevelopment project at the former Park City Hospital site recently. The partnership will produce 110 affordable housing units at the newly named development, to be known as "The Franklin" and "The Eleanor".

Park City Hospital will be renovated into two different and completely separate facilities in the single building; an apartment complex for low income and disabled households known as "The Franklin" and a second complex the tower known as "The Eleanor" for senior citizens. Both complexes will provide on-site supportive services designed to meet the needs of the residents. The \$33 million project uses nine different funding sources and satisfies three priorities: housing for the elderly and disabled; helping to prevent homelessness; and providing social, health, job-training, educational and other support services designed to keep people successfully housed.

The Project's completion helps satisfy BHA's obligation to replace some of the housing from the former Father Panik Village. All 110 units in the new facility count as replacement housing units bringing the number of required units down to 140 from the original 1,063.

Energy Performance Contract

Four years ago when BHA's new Executive Director Nicholas Calace first arrived in Bridgeport it was immediately evident that BHA was going to have to tighten its belt because of funding shortfalls. The Authority had to have a plan of attack to creatively find efficiencies. One of the first things BHA did was to successfully transfer out of cash transactions to check transactions with residents through our lock box system.

The Authority then utilized a plan approved by Congress and administered by HUD that would allow the agency to tap funds made available through energy efficiencies paid for by capital improvements. A loan for the capital improvements would pay for the work as well as unearth added monies through utility savings.

The energy conservation measure is over \$18M, which will be financed through a twenty year municipal lease agreement and guaranteed by Siemens Building Technologies that the energy savings generated by the measures will be sufficient to pay for the energy conservation measures.

Siemens will install new energy efficient boilers, domestic hot water and an internet based energy management system at P. T. Barnum Apartments, Charles F. Greene Homes, Harborview Towers, and Fireside Apartments. Common area lighting will be upgraded to the latest energy efficient fluorescent lights with motion sensors. New refrigerators will be installed in over 2,400 units. And new cooling systems will be installed in the community rooms at Harborview Towers and Marina Village.

United Illuminating will conduct weatherization improvements (window caulking, door seals and insulation where needed) in all of our properties; install new water saving devices (showerheads, faucet aerators, low flow toilets); and provide compact fluorescent bulbs for residents. UI is implementing this \$1.5 million dollar portion of the project at no cost to the BHA through the UI Helps Program."

Best of all we're improving our residents' quality of life while running an efficient and responsible housing authority.

BHA Scholarship recipients are:

Thao Dam **Warren Harding High School**

She is number four in her graduating class. She and her family immigrated from Vietnam under very extreme circumstances.

Genesis Polanco **Bassick High School**

She is number six in her graduating class. She will be attending the University of Connecticut

LaShaya Marrow

Received the Gear-UP scholarship. She will be attending Southern Connecticut State University.

New Commissioners

We're happy to say that we have filled all the vacancies on the BHA Commission. That was a priority for the Authority. A full commission allows us to work uninterrupted and gives us the value of their combined experiences. We thank Mayor Bill Finch for these accomplished new commissioners. Joining our resident representative who also is the Chair, Kathleen Vila, and our Commissioners Rev. Sultan Stack Jr. and Daniel Ford are Shanté Hanks and Dulce Nieves.



Shanté Hanks, who was born in Bridgeport, is the Recovery Director and Director of Constituent Services for Connecticut Congressman Jim Himes.

Ms. Hanks, who once lived in Beardsley Terrace, worked at Southern Connecticut State University. Most recently Hanks worked at Housatonic

Community College as the Director of Student Activities and Special Projects.

Beyond her Masters Degree she also has a Six-Year Degree in Educational Foundations and Urban Studies. The former Section 8 landlord and public housing resident says she is uniquely qualified to help the Authority and its residents.

Hanks is also involved with The Witness Project which brings attention to the issues of breast cancer in women of color. The member of Mount Aery Baptist Church says she has fond memories of living in public housing and hopes to create new ones as a contributing Commissioner.



Dulce Nieves has lived in Bridgeport since she was 5 years old. Her first Bridgeport home was in P. T. Barnum Apartments and some of her formative years were spent living in Marina Village.

Nieves is a retired State of Connecticut Corrections officer, who currently works as the Fairfield County Coordinator for

Children in Placement. In that capacity she advocates for abused and neglected children, the majority of whom are foster children through DCF.

Nieves has been an active volunteer over the last four decades. Her contributions have included; Parent President of the Park City Prep Parent Association, a 30-year school Volunteer, and a graduate of the Parent Leadership Parent Institute.

Dulce Nieves has received The Constance Smith Family Life Award and a Certificate of Excellence in Leadership Award as a Parent Leader. Among her certifications are Adoption Groom Specialist and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting.