



COMMONWEALTH TERRACE

COOPERATIVE STUDENT HOUSING

Commonwealth Terrace Cooperative

Board Meeting Zoom Meeting – July 27, 2023

Meeting was called to order at 6:34 PM – In-person with virtual attendance option.

Directors Present:

Yorkinoy Shermatova (Chair)
Munkh-Erdene (Muugii) Bayarsaikhan (Vice Chair)
Adepeju Adesina (Board Member)
Javier Ruiz (Board Member)
Manlin Cui (Board Member) – *Virtual Attendance*
Mwaso Mnensa (Treasurer) – *Virtual Attendance*
Jovin Lasway (Board Member) – *Virtual Attendance*
Muyideen Yusuf (Board Member)
Taiwo Aremu (Secretary)

Directors Absent:

Also Present:

Shanea Amundson (Executive Director)
Lindy Wirth (Communication & Community Outreach Manager)
Austin Holik (Co-op Liaison, UMN Housing and Residential Life)
Daniel Elliot (UMN Housing and Residential Life)
Liz Loeb (Consultant for organizational development, facilitation and training, leadership)
Matt Bombyk (Finance Committee Member)

Timekeeper: Lindy

Process Assistant: Yorkinoy

1. **Welcome**, Timekeeper (minute taker) and Process Assistant (Chair)
 - Introduction of everyone present was conducted.
2. **Approve: Packet / Agenda / Consent Agenda**

Muugii makes the motion to approve the packet, agenda, and consent agenda. Adepeju seconds the motion. Seven (7) votes in favor. Zero (0) opposed. Packet, agenda, and consent agenda is approved.



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3. Daniel Elliot and Austin Holik / UMN Housing and Residential Life (HRL) -- University Project Updates & HRL (Discussion/Review)

- Austin is new to the position, now serving as CTC's co-op university liaison. Austin more recently worked at Como Student Community Cooperative.
- Austin will report projects to board members at monthly meetings that impact CTC. This is also an opportunity to ask questions.
- Daniel Elliot is Austin's supervisor at Housing and Residential Life.

4. Daniel Elliot and Austin Holik / UMN Housing and Residential Life (HRL) -- Historical Reference for New Board Members (Discussion)

- Started in 1940s, temporary housing "Quonset huts." Property was then transferred from the US government to the University.
- 1950-1960s: Buildings were built in phases (four) and the demand increased in the 1960s, as well as the interest in "self-governed" housing. In May 1969 a group of residents protested the University of Minnesota management, in order to become a cooperative and self-governed.
- 1970s-1980s: University agreed to a five-year management cooperative on an experimental basis, creating CTC. Construction began on CSCC, and CTC managed CSCC until 1975. Thatcher Hall previously sat on Commonwealth Ave on CTC grounds, before being demolished.
- 1990s-2000s: Rent credit system implemented for work performed on CSCC and University grounds. Increase in required maintenance.
- 2005-2006: Wilder foundation manages CTC.
- 2008: stockholders voted to remain a cooperative.
- 2010s-Today: Buildings are approaching end of function life. Many proposals on future use of the site. Still a commitment for affordable, well-maintained housing for university students and their families. Your impact on the board can impact future generations and cohorts.

Taiwo enters the meeting.

- Roles of the University and University Liaison:
 - Management Agreement: University owns the buildings. A portion of the rent pays the co-op's operational costs, then the other portion is forwarded to the University per the management agreement.
 - As a co-op, the board has a lot of control of the operations and activities.
 - The University Liaison provides technical assistance and get a better idea of what's going on at the University. They also collect feedback from residents on projects.



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- Daniel works on a lot of capital projects at the University. There are a lot of people, and thus opinions are involved. There is a project manager that collects input, who then communicates to the contractor. That is how we view CTC's Executive Director's role; it helps simplify and streamline information and communication, as they collect input from both entities. Daniel and Austin are still available, yet it can be productive to use the established communication methods to enhance knowledge and understanding.
- Playgrounds Project Update: Waiting on materials, should be implemented this fall 2023 (September). Delivered likely in the next couple weeks.
- How would residents communicate options on capital projects to UMN HRL/Co-op Liaison?
 - It is more effective to come to the board or the involved committee, allowing more input and feedback, then also involving CTC's Management for additional insight. This allows feedback and recommendations by the board. The board should have the opportunity to hear these ideas and decide how to move forward with the University or handle within the organization. It can become confusing when numerous people are involved, all communicating in their own ways, versus communicating through a hub or representative, so to speak.
- Idea to use Parking Lots to Fundraise during MN State Fair:
 - The idea was brought up due to the existing financial deficit. These funds could also help with providing events for the community to have fun.
 - Internal fundraising efforts are allowed if it is not affiliated with the University at all (not visual or on property), since it is not on behalf UMN.
 - No official approval is needed.
 - All funds raised would not go toward capital projects, rather for the operational budget.
 - Advice from UMN representatives that it is wise to think long term about the budget and set the co-op up for success at the start, rather than focusing on specific actions that generate revenue.
 - However, the fundraising parking lot idea violates the management agreement, since it is on university property. The parking lot is owned by the University, in which you would be fundraising using a university resource.
 - The parking lot is a service the UMN serves to the co-op. Versus, a bake sale or carnival on site, to generate donations for events.
 - Cannot use University property for direct revenue generation that does not benefit the CTC residents directly.

Community Voices (2 minutes each)

- Received one form in July 2023, and two forms in June 2023.
- In-person attendee/s (1):



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- Finance Committee Member, Matt, wishes to bring to the board's attention that this year, CTC has gone noticeably over budget on UMN Landcare expenses, spending over \$170,000. With a deficit already budgeted, it should be important to look at what is going on here for potential cost savings.
 - Part of that expense amount was due to an error: the UMN had an error in the amount that was being charged, and when CTC asked for clarification/distinction on the billing, UMN realized they had been erroneously charging CTC a lesser amount, proceeding to begin billing the co-op the full amount. In which case, CTC was undercharged on the last fiscal year, and this is now a residue effect of finding the error and now being accurately charged.
 - CTC benefited for a couple years from being undercharged, but now CTC couldn't budget correctly, taking invoices of expenses to forecast the budget, not realizing those invoices were incorrect.
 - How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?
 - CTC management is working for greater clarification and cost distinction on different tasks. Now we are at a place to have a better understanding.
 - The amount looks expensive; explore other options for Landcare (lawn, snow, tree trimming) to see if cost savings is possible.
 - Mentioned in the Co-op Liaison's History of CTC presentation, there were rent credits or residents for completing landcare services throughout the grounds in the 1990s. This was in the 2000s for specific reasons unknown, yet a major part was due to insurance and liabilities.
 - Explore alternative turf options that requires less water/maintenance than the current grass. We should consider these other options, which also help protect the environment.
 - The Operations Committee is currently working on this.
 - Operations Manager and Manlin can give a presentation in August with a report.
- Submitted forms: One regarding unsupervised children was discussed in last June meeting.
 - The issue involves sport balls accidentally hitting the buildings near the soccer field and volleyball field.
 - Status: correspondence occurring between CTC Facilities Manager and reporting resident.
 - Some board members report speaking with individuals involved playing basketball, who say it happened infrequently.
 - Proposed Action: Schedule a meeting to discuss, help reduce the tension?
 - Conciliation committee for purposes like this is reinstating next month (August).
 - Waiting until then, however, the situation could escalate. Yorkinoy and Adepeju volunteer to speak directly with the reporting resident to increase understanding and help reduce the tension.
- For meeting format, the Co-op Liaison, Austin, will exit the meeting after the UMN HRL report and Community Voices. However, the Board/Management can request him to stay longer, if preferred.

Management & Financial Report (Discussion/Action)



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- Overbudget by \$218,740 for June.
- Summary page:
 - Admin and Maintenance Salaries: Underbudgeted by \$50k
 - Notable expenses include Landcare, Co-op Expenses, and Utilities:
 - Utilities: Gas alone went up by 26%. Utilities 3-6% is standard for forecasting.
 - Co-op expenses: not having the university's insurance invoices at the time of writing the budget, in which it was underbudgeted (and now over).
- Other Notable Expenses:
 - Maintenance \$63k over
 - Street Repairs: Adding speed bumps, not all roads were fixed.
 - Speed bumps from Operational budget (not Capital)
 - The University/Capital will only do a replacement, not repair.
 - Will not do North/South Lots since they are planning a redevelopment, yet it is at the end of its life, and it needs significant repairs that the co-op/operations budget cannot afford.
 - Lawn: This includes fixing the volleyball court, as well as UMN Landcare's services.
 - Snow Removal: April, May, June – billed out from the winter months, which is part of what is difficult with UMN Landcare's billing.
- Can we add clarification to the report to clarify what is going to the University, as well as what is capital spending and what is operations spending?
 - Everything in the report is operations expenses. We do not have an itemized report for capital spending.
 - We are not required to contract UMN Landcare, could we have more choice for what is provided.
- Vacancy Loss: We are at 100% occupancy. 2% vacancy is required per the management agreement. 5-15% is industry standard. For month: 2.36%.
 - Average is 5 days for maintenance turns. Maintenance walk-through inspections help estimate the number of days needed to clean, repair the unit, in order to minimize the time and fill the unit as soon as possible.
 - We budget 2% vacancy. When it's under 2%, the co-op saves money.
- There is hesitation to motion or move forward amongst the board members. Some members report that the packet and information provided was overwhelming. Summaries would be helpful.
 - The Executive Director asks if everyone has read the provided management report and if there are any questions. No direct replies.
 - Advice from Liz Loeb: It is a lot of work to serve on the board, and it's for the good of your community. This is millions of dollars that affect thousands of people. When the board continually asks the management to do the work for them, then the management cannot do other crucial things to the organization. It is time



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taken away from the co-op. As a board, these are the hard decisions you make. This includes deciding how does the board allocate the time and resources of the staff, as well as how does the board allocate time for certain topics (such as asking for more time to further explain the management report).

- Request for management to provide key takeaways from the management report:
 - Maintenance and Facilities: Served 203 work orders last month, only 3 technicians.
 - Operations Report: Updates for Animal and Additional Appliance policies and processes. Outlines projects that must be put on hold. Events on property, including required events or for fun.
 - Summary page of financials, vacancy, maintenance. Where it gets long, is the projects and events that are completed, in-progress, or on hold.

Mwaso leaves the meeting.

Muugii motions to approve management and financial report. Taiwo seconds the motion. Seven (7) votes in favor. Zero (0) opposed. The management and financial report is approved.

Co-op Board Leadership and Legality Onboarding -- Facilitated by Liz Loeb & Shanea Amundson

- Liz works with numerous boards throughout the Twin Cities, equity, governance, and non-profit boards.
- How we handle conflict reflects our values. Identities are what we carry into our meetings and interactions with others, and often how we are seen by others as well. The goal is for everyone to be able to be their full selves and open up to differences to celebrate and work cooperatively, as well as build community and build connection.
- It is difficult training/onboarding as a new board member. This is common and to be expected, as you've never worked together, and there are many types of learning that needs to happen.
- Executive Director aspires to organize a training retreat. Until then, however, board members should take the opportunity to schedule meetings with ED or come early to meetings, or email or call. Ask questions during meetings and outside of meetings. Come to the Executive Committee meetings – it is more casual and where a lot of great discussions happen.
- Shanea, CTC's Executive Director, has worked at CTC work 15 years, starting as an intern while attending the University of Minnesota. The board voted Shanea into the Executive Director role in 2021, after serving as the Operations Manager for numerous years.
- How do we have CTC maintain and strive for another 50 years? How can you as a board ensure that happens?



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- Especially with the redevelopment plans – CTC Management is planning to the best of our abilities, yet units are starting to go offline and income are going to reduce, and buildings are going to start failing.
 - Slated to remove 21 bedrooms, yet CTC management has kept them online by maintaining them without the University’s help.
 - We’re here all for the same thing: a safe, affordable, quality place for UMN students and their families that celebrates diversity and collaboration.
- Not every board motion will be voted upon unanimously. There may be disagreements. However, we must go back to our co-op board’s values and obligations, continuously working together to serving our community with respect to the process and other board members and facilitators.
- In the manual, the governing documents are linked. If you want printed, request from the Executive Director. Table of contents is also linkable.
 - Page 26: As a board, you are running this business. You hire the Executive Director, who then hires a team and handles the day-to-day operations.
 - How do we gain back the cooperative mentality in the community and increase participation and involvement?
 - Communication protocol: it is important to stay up to date and informed, please read and respond to emails, as well as RSVP for meetings.
 - Please attend meetings in person, with the virtual option only available for when you are traveling.
 - Always stop to think: what is my intention, does this serve CTC’s mission and community?
 - Board meetings follow Robert’s Rules.
 - The manual explains the responsibilities of management and the responsibilities as a board. Ultimately, we are working together.
- The Board’s executive meeting is on the second Thursday of each month. This is an opportunity for greater discussions, as well as to add discussion topics to the agenda for the upcoming board meeting.
- Shanea serves as Executive Director for CTC. CTC contracts out a professional accountant company, The Accountant House, to fulfill CTC’s accounting department.
 - As a small company/staff, CTC uses consultants.
- An audit is required annually. CTC pays to have an audit conducted, as required by the University’s management agreement. Once complete, the auditors present their findings to the board.
- The auditor must be someone qualified to perform the audit and also fall within the means of the approved budget.
- Advice from Liz: It would be unwieldy for the board to make that decision to interview, and schedule auditors. This is time consuming, and with a competent Executive Director,



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it should be a task elected to the management. There is not much difference between auditors – the intention is to be objective and ensure the numbers add up as claimed.

- Secretary asks if it appropriate for the person who manages the finances to hire an auditor for an account.
 - Liz confirms yes, it is appropriate.
- Liz points out that as a board, you decide how we use our time, such as how deep to go on topics or in answering one question – as time is valuable and can go quickly during meetings.
 - We should have trust in each other.
 - Ask questions for clear understanding for your own understanding, which can also help others' understanding.
- Notion that the Board manual should be a separate training, as we are short on time.
 - The board is a legal entity with legal obligations.
 - The board runs CTC as its own entity. Ultimately, anyone can manage this property, but it is a co-op managed by CTC within the current management agreement.
- Training: Does training require to be during the board meetings? Or could it take place, such as one hour before the meeting?
 - Agreement that the trainings is a lot during the meetings, and it would be better to take place at a different time. Currently, this is how it has been historically done, but there is the idea to make it a fun Saturday and interact with other boards and previous CTC board members.
 - The board can request to add time. This is a board decision to spend that time. A board member could motion this, and then the Executive Director would decide how to staff that time.

Adepeju motions to schedule a training meeting prior (and/or external) to the August Board meeting, with specifics decided at a later time. Javier seconds. Six (6) votes in favor. One (1) opposed. The motion to schedule a training is approved.

- Requests for training:
 - Legal training
 - Can we do a four-hour training so we can move on to other discussions/topics?
 - Whatever we do not get to this meeting, we will discuss another time. Working out logistics for another meeting is additional work.
 - It could be an optional meeting, or a meeting for new members?
 - Is it feasible for ED to prepare a training for before the next meeting?
 - Training will still be ongoing.
 - 5-5:30 for legal training before the next meeting.
- Executive Director will send an email with confirmation, proposing additional training.



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- Liz – to really train a new board can take 4-6 hours. 90 minutes for legal training. Are these agendas really realistic for the conversations that you'd like to have? Do we want to rearrange or restructure? Why weren't we able to get to the training tonight? Agreements for types of discussions. These are your choices, not a right or wrong way, just how you want to work together.
 - It is not anyone's fault. It is difficult to have a transient board, holding the knowledge.
- For questions or training now, the process now is to come in advance or schedule meetings with ED. One hour prior to every board meeting – currently it is more casual for discussion.

House Keeping

Confirm Monthly Board Meeting Schedule + Format (Discussion/Action)

1. Assign Terrace Times (Oct., Jan., April., July)

Taiwo exits the meeting.

- a. October: Yorkinoy and Adepeju
 - b. January: Manlin
 - c. April: TBD
 - d. July: TBD
2. Assign Social Hour with the board (Sept-Oct)
Welcome the community to have a casual discussion prior to the monthly board meeting, one hour prior to the meeting.
 - a. September: Yorkinoy and Manlin (all are welcome!)
 3. Committee Liaison Update (Discussion)
Not necessary but to allow insight/feedback on current committee findings.
 - a. Operations/Manlin: The committee did not meet in July. Staff is there to support meetings. Patrick is unable to attend, due to covering the Housing Coordinator position intermittently, in addition to Operations Committee.
 - b. Programs/Yorkinoy: Lots of ideas yet need volunteers and commitment.
 4. State Fair
 - a. Parking Lot idea was vetoed due to previous discussion regarding management agreement.

Muggii motions to adjourn the meeting. Muyideen seconds. No objections. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.