



Cornerstone of the Community

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY 2022

Board of Commissioners



Sheila Church, Chair

Director of Patient and Community Services at ChesPenn Health Services



Tonya D. Warren

Retired, Office Administrator for Chester Eastside Ministries, Inc.



Catherine A. Feminella

Associate Dean of Students at Widener University



Roderick T. Powell

Retired, Instructor at the Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired



Susie Kirkland

Retired, Chester Office Director for Congressman Robert Brady

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Message From The Mayor



Writing this as 2022 draws to a close, I express my deep gratitude for the transformative work of the Chester Housing Authority (CHA) and the dedicated men and women serving some 7,000 residents since the onset of a global pandemic.

Since the imposition of the first measures to limit the spread of Covid, the importance of the work of CHA has been magnified. Confronted by circumstances previously unimaginable, CHA rose to the challenge, exemplifying the can-do spirit of our city. It turned its Ruth Bennett Farm into a fresh food distribution site, brought testing and vaccine clinics to its properties, and even contributed \$10,000 to city sponsored efforts for the same.

CHA has also helped with the city's tax base through homeownership development. A no-interest loan from the authority pushed four new units on Arbor Lane over the finish line.

Like the rest of our nation, Chester began to emerge from the pandemic this year. Considering the challenges of the last several years, it is important CHA and our city acknowledge the resilience of Chester and the renewed commitment to serve as expressed in our work throughout the pandemic. Our achievements and successes are many and should be sources of great hope and optimism for the future.

Thaddeus Kirkland

Message From The Board Chair



The past few years have reminded Chester that our entire community cannot thrive unless we work together and prioritize a communal focus on supporting one another.

During my time as board chair, I have been consistently impressed that the team has always valued this necessary collaboration and care in both theory and practice. The CHA team has remained committed to supporting residents through the process of becoming an independent housing authority, the complex challenges of the pandemic, the expansion of the Ruth Bennett Community Farm, the development of new units and rehabilitation of existing ones and many other unique circumstances during my time as board chair.

In 2022, CHA continued its reputation for excellence and care with major milestones including the 10 and 15-year anniversaries of the ANUME Fitness movement and the Ruth Bennett Community Farm. I and my fellow Housing Commissioners sought excellence ourselves by attending a national oversight conference. Board education is done regularly as we are determined to be up-to-date and progressive.

I also congratulate CHA on its perfect audit for 2022, proving once again that the organization is fiscally sound and responsible. I am grateful that CHA is always a trusted partner to the City of Chester and that its work is often at the center of our community's shared successes.

Congratulations to Steve, the executive team, and the entire CHA family on another successful and fiscally sound year.

Sheila Church

Message From Our Executive Director

In our most recent reports we addressed uncertainty, unprecedented times, a global health crisis and life's only constant – change. The last three years have seen our world turned upside down. The pandemic forced us to re-evaluate our priorities and practices. Like other organizations, the Chester Housing Authority (CHA) found new and innovative ways to meet the needs of our residents and the City of Chester.

As we settled in to our new normal in 2022, we found ourselves driven by the very reason we exist – community. Beneath our logo is the tagline *Building Community*. That is at the heart of everything we do. The work of every CHA employee, from the executive staff, to accounting, program managers, maintenance staff, human resources and the police is focused on that goal.

Our ongoing non-housing endeavors, ANUME Fitness and the Ruth L. Bennett Community Farm, celebrated their 10th and 15th years respectively. Our Building Community video series is in its third year, having produced over 30 segments.

On the housing side – yes, that's what we mainly do – our Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Programs are pillars of the community serving approximately 2,500 families. Unfortunately, there are years' long waiting lists for each program, speaking not only to their desirability but also to the acute shortage of affordable housing. New additions to our housing stock this year involved the 44 senior units in Yeadon at Makemie Court and four first-time homeownership opportunities at Arbor Estates in Chester. As co-developer of housing at the former Sacred Heart Hospital, we hope our team will garner state support in the coming year.

We are grateful for the steadfast dedication and work of our Board of Commissioners. Their commitment to our mission never wavers amidst challenges and triumphs. We are also thankful for the support and commitment of our city, county, state and federal elected officials.

CHA has made remarkable strides since its re-establishment as a public authority in 2014. We embrace our role as a key operator in the lives of our residents, their neighborhoods and the City of Chester. We believe we are a **Cornerstone of the Community**.



Steven A. Fischer



Public Housing

Properties owned and managed by the Chester Housing Authority dealt most intensively with the effects of Covid. In the early days of the pandemic, movement in and out of units was curtailed by a “stay at home” mandate. Federal and state eviction moratoriums were also imposed. Recognizing that these circumstances would be temporary, CHA developed an eviction prevention program to address the prospect of a large-scale crisis when things returned to normal.

These efforts included onboarding Marrea Walker-Smith to work collaboratively with the management team of Norman Wise to engage delinquent residents. At the same time, CHA established a strong working relationship with the federally funded Emergency Rental Assistance Program administered by Delaware County (DELCO ERA). CHA provided DELCO ERA with an on-site workspace and maximized its accessibility and benefit to residents. CHA received \$513,449 on behalf of 185 residents. CHA’s work helped to improve its rent collection rates throughout the pandemic.

Pandemic or not, housing management does not come to a halt because of extenuating circumstances. The authority housed 39 new families, nine of them seniors, and filled 1,419 work orders, all while understaffed due to Covid-related issues.

After a slowdown related to the pandemic, the pace of capital improvements picked up with a focus on the Bennett Homes, CHA’s largest and oldest property. By the end of 2022, contracts had been signed for a significant number of unit renovations and the installation of surveillance cameras throughout the development.

Public Safety

CHA operates its own safety force, the Chester Housing Police Department (CHPD). While a smaller force than in earlier years, CHPD is staffed by dedicated community-oriented officers.

Residents have a direct, 24/7 line to the CHPD. Calls for service have diminished in recent years, in part due to the addition of surveillance equipment at our largest properties. In 2017, the Williams Penn Homes were the first to be equipped with cameras and other technologies, immediately realizing a drastic reduction in crime. Security cameras were also installed this past year at Wellington Ridge.



Additionally, a grant received this year will enable us to install cameras at the Bennett Homes, which CHA already started at the end of 2022.

CHA’s officers respond to many senior residents’ calls for assistance and often assist the Chester City Police Department when necessary.

Residents and staff are fully aware that the CHPD, its technology and positive attitude provide for a safer environment in which to live and work. CHA is grateful to Chief Rodney O’Neill, Officers William Cooper, Wesley Seitz (pictured at left) and Bryan Reeser and a stellar team of round-the-clock dispatchers headed by Labarbra Bronson.

Housing Choice Voucher Program

CHA's Voucher Program Continues to Grow

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) continued to grow in 2022 with the receipt of 15 Foster Youth to Independence vouchers (FYI). FYI is a federal initiative to help prevent homelessness for young adults who will be aging out of the foster care system.

By the end of 2022, the Chester Housing Authority's annual contributions contract for the HCVP stood at 1,622 households. An additional eight special purpose vouchers were received from HUD in August to increase CHA's efforts to assist the homeless or those at risk of becoming homeless.

Maintaining High Utilization

Despite an extremely limited and competitive rental market and other challenges, the CHA maintained a 95% utilization rate throughout the fiscal year. To respond to the dramatic increases in rents and utilities, CHA requested a waiver from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to adopt payment standards at 120% of the small area fair market value. CHA noted the increase in tenant rent burden due to rising rents and utilities. Based on CHA's 2022 utility study, there was a 25% overall increase in utilities for a three-bedroom rowhome or townhouse. The anticipated cost of oil-heated units rose 52%.

The waiver provides additional subsidies to meet the demand for higher rents and reduces the rent burden for the assisted households. In addition to the waiver, CHA added staff and designated a leasing coordinator to focus specifically on the new voucher holders to maximize lease-up.



New Affordable Housing Opportunities

CHA is in the process of building 12 new ADA-accessible units at Makemie Court in Yeadon. The units will receive housing assistance under a 20-year contract in the Housing Choice Project-based voucher program. Tenants will pay 30% of their monthly adjusted income for rent and utilities. The need for affordable, accessible housing is demonstrated by the more than 300 applicants for the 44 available units at Makemie Court.

Expanding Supportive Services

Throughout the most challenging period of the pandemic and continuing into 2022, the HCVP continued to coordinate the delivery and setup of furniture and household items for the Mainstreaming Persons with Disabilities Program, the veterans at Buchman Meadows, Foster Youth, Nurse Family Partnership, and Homeless Set Aside Initiative. The HCVP has also filled furniture requests from public housing residents as needed. Riddle Village Retirement Community, Holly House Condominiums and local realtors have been tremendous resources for residents who would otherwise struggle in meeting their household needs.

CHA's efforts have brought stability to many program participants who were establishing a household of their own.

Ruth Bennett Community Farm

The Ruth L. Bennett Community Farm thrived in 2022. The farm continued to distribute free fresh produce boxes in partnership with Philly Foodworks. The boxes contained an average of eight types of produce and other nutrient-dense products grown at the farm. More than 1,600 boxes, totaling approximately 40,000 pounds of produce, were distributed to residents.

Thanks to another grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the second segment of CHA's deer fence was installed Spring 2022. The farm also planted an orchard with 40 fruit trees and fruiting shrubs. Beehives were also installed with the help of a mentor from the Philadelphia Beekeepers Guild.

Flowers sales continued to flourish over last year. Farm manager Natania Shaumburg and youth coordinator Isabella Korfmann hosted a webinar on cut flower production for other growers interested in incorporating that into their growing spaces.



The farm also hosted various workshops thanks to funding it received through a federal Socially Disadvantaged Veterans Farmers and Ranchers grant on topics including:

- tools and small engines.
- beekeeping.
- environmental justice.

The farm's volunteer program continued to connect Chester residents with meaningful agricultural experiences, including:

- nine young people who participated in CHA's 8-week Youth Crew program.
- community volunteers from Crozer Health, the Swarthmore and Chester Rotary Clubs, students from Widener University, and the CHA students who participated in the Chester Community Fellows program at Swarthmore College and completed a 10-week internship.
- high school volunteers to CHA's site weekly for eight weeks via Youthworks.



Celebrating 10 Years of ANUME



In 2022, CHA celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the ANUME (a-NU-me) program, which helps residents participate in activities to be physically active, reduce blood pressure, and lower cardiovascular risk through food shopping and cooking education, diet, group exercise, gardening and group support.

ANUME started as a two-year pilot program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Since its inception, ANUME has become a positive and encouraging activity for CHA residents and the community.

The program has maintained the five key components outlined in the WEHL (Wellness Equity for a Healthy Life) program: group fitness sessions, independent fitness activities, nutrition and wellness workshops, hands-on education activities and access to healthy food.

“ANUME has inspired better health, community engagement and joy since its inception,” said Deborah Montgomery, CHA Resident and Community Health Worker. “The regular participation we’ve seen from residents has shown ANUME is an important way to support our CHA community.”

Making a Difference Scholarship

Founded in 2019, the scholarship fund was established with a personal donation of \$1,000 from Norman Wise (pictured on the far right), CHA’s director of housing operations. MAD assists college-enrolled residents who show strong academic success and involvement in extracurricular activities.

CHA awarded \$1,000 scholarships this year to:

- Mohamed Awad, a 14-year old high school graduate from Pennsylvania Cyber Charter.
- Rachelle Bobo, a STEM Academy at Showalter graduate.
- Isaiah Freeman, a STEM Academy at Showalter graduate.
- Genessa Green, a STEM Academy at Showalter graduate.

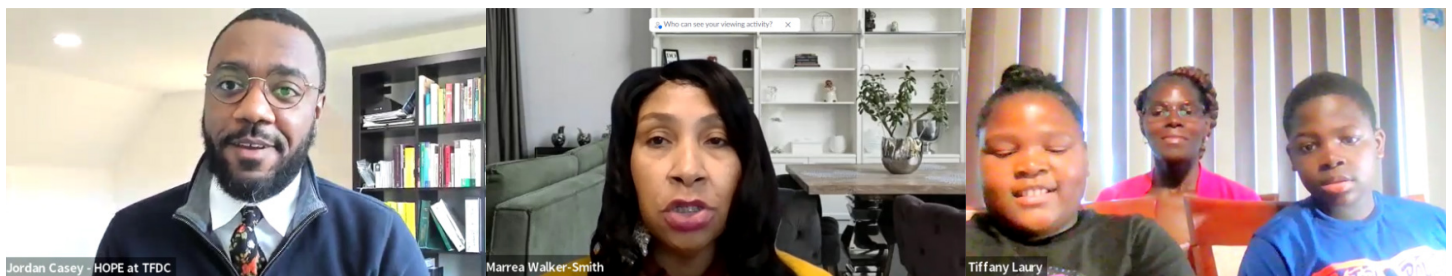
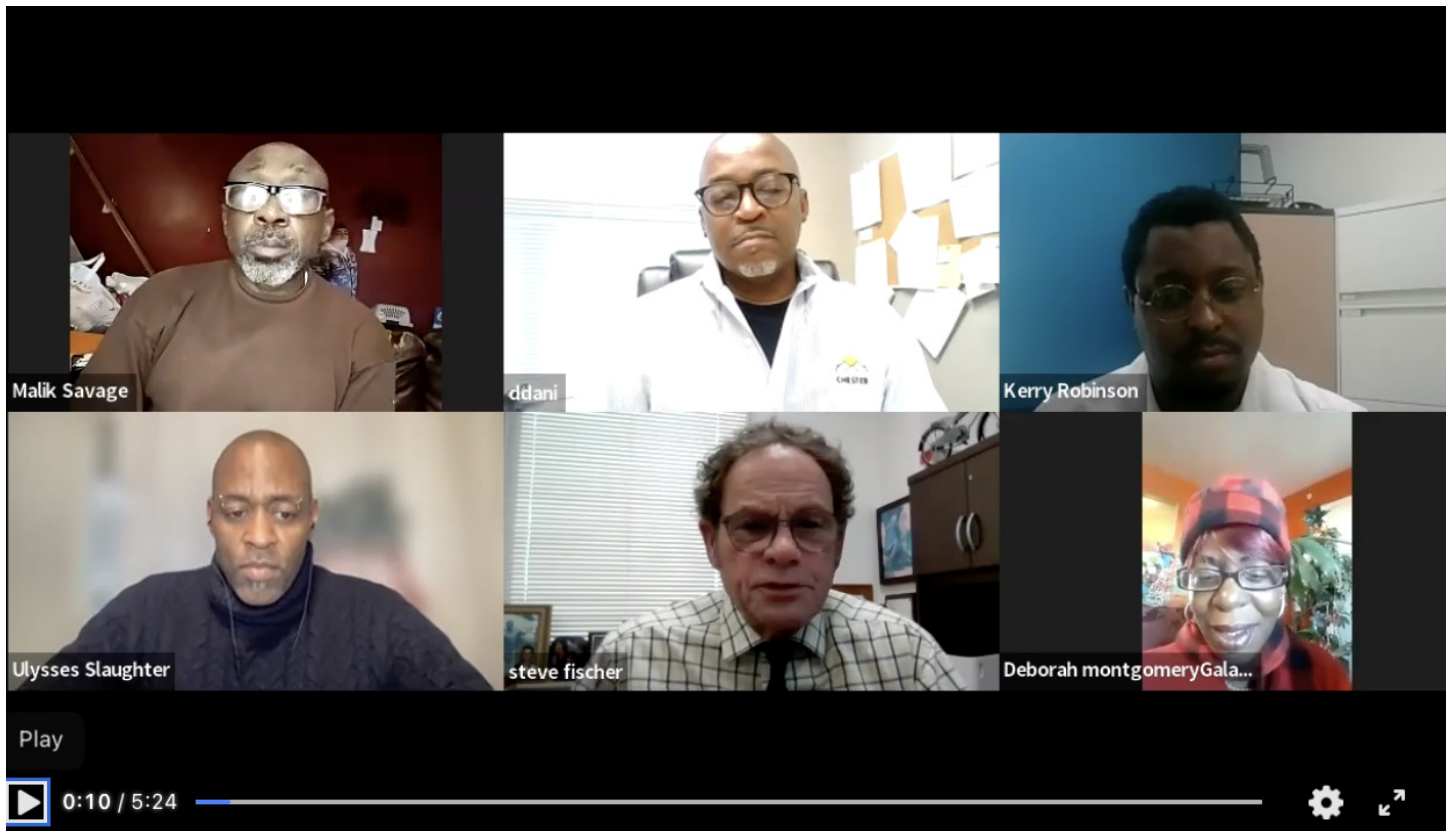
The scholarship fund also received donations from various CHA vendors including AGD Manna Cleaning Services, Kubas Keller Associates and Remington & Vernick Engineers. For the second year in a row, CHA employees participated in a Biggest Losers weight loss challenge to raise money for the scholarship fund. The team lost a combined 48.4 pounds, raising a total of \$650. Winner: Shanelle Johnson (pictured in front).



Building Community

Started in April 2020 to keep in communication with residents and the community at large during the pandemic, the Building Community video series co-hosted by special projects coordinator Ulysses "Butch" Slaughter and executive director Steve Fischer is in its third year.

The series has expanded to cover many topics of importance in Chester. Many excellent guests discussed subjects as varied as business building, Black history, fatherhood, grief, voting, and healthcare access and equity. Where possible, young people from recent college graduates down to pre-teen campers were engaged. Game show episodes were also included to bring levity to the series.



Human Resources

	Full time	Part Time	Seasonal	Total
2018	35	19	5	59
2019	36	15	3	54
2020	34	15	1	50
2021	36	15	1	52
2022	36	11	0	47

Teamsters Local 312 represents CHA administrative staff. SEIU Local 32BJ Mid-Atlantic Region represents the authority’s maintenance employees. CHA management staff and police officers are subject to the rules and regulations of the Pennsylvania Civil Service Commission.

Legal

CHA continues to use an arbitration system with a special master and appeals judge to oversee its eviction cases. In addition to the eviction moratorium, courts were closed for much of 2020. A counselor was hired to reach out to delinquent tenants in November 2021. The counselor entered into repayment agreements with tenants who were delinquent and assisted them in other matters such as negotiating disputes and assisting with obtaining access to pandemic-related programs and services. Public housing staff continues to work with delinquent tenants to apply for DELCO ERA funds to pay arrears.

Planning and Development

CHA filed its latest annual agency plan in April 2022. The plan describes the mission of the authority and its long-range goals and objectives for achieving its mission over a five-year period as well as its approach to managing programs and providing services for the upcoming year. The CHA Annual Plan also serves as the annual application for grants to support improvements to public housing buildings. CHA’s five-year plan and annual report can be accessed at chesterha.org.

1. CHA is in discussions with various developers to develop a recently purchased parcel on West 3rd Street adjacent to the William Penn Homes. This development would be done without the use of federal funds. A request for proposals was issued with no response.
2. There are ongoing discussions to rent or sell a West 7th Street property. An environmental review was completed in August 2020 to support this potential transaction.
3. In 2022, CHA entered into a co-development agreement with Everest PACE Center, Inc. The plan is to develop and for CHA to manage, 106 units of senior housing in the former Sacred Heart Hospital on West 9th Street.
4. At the former CHA Headquarters site on West 6th Street, a design has been developed for a future office/residential complex.
5. CHA provided a bridge loan of \$156,000 for new first-time homeownership development in the City of Chester, to be called Arbor Estates. This development was spearheaded by the Riverfront Alliance of Delaware County.



In The News



CHA Celebrates 10 Years of Helping Residents Lose Weight, Lower Blood Pressure and Reduce Cardiovascular Risk



Chester Housing Authority Celebrates 2022 "Making a Difference" Scholarship Award Recipients

DAILY TIMES



Devon Prep tech students build new computer for ten-year-old Chester student

The SPIRIT



Historic grant for CHA farm in Chester



New affordable senior housing community opens in Yeadon with smart home capabilities



Chester Charter Scholars Academy Students Perform at the Wellington Ridge Senior Apartments

CHA By the Numbers

ASSETS	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$2,201,710
Cash, restricted	\$2,640,267
Accounts Receivable, net	\$313,758
Prepaid expenses	\$22,698
Assets held for sale	\$7,962
Capital Assets, net	\$24,678,627
Notes Receivable	\$26,209,067
Other Non Current Assets	\$16,066
TOTAL ASSETS	\$56,090,155

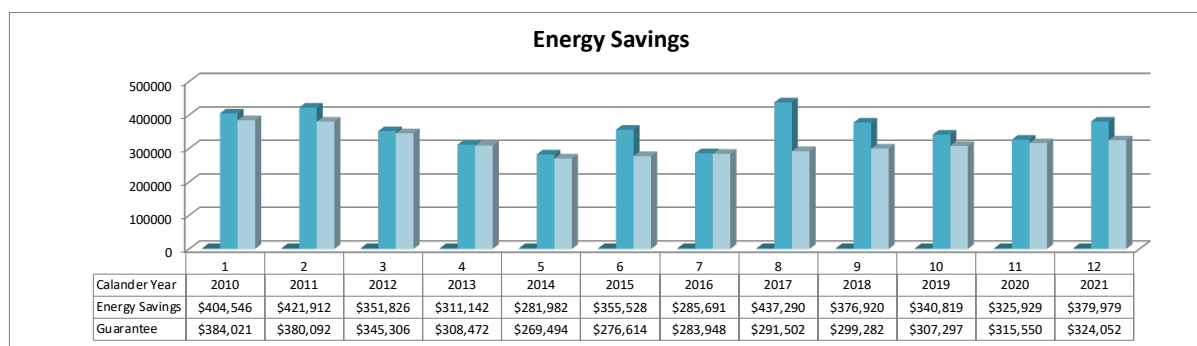
EXPENSES	
Administrative Costs	\$2,599,096
Resident Services	\$305,105
Utilities	\$1,464,543
Maintenance	\$2,410,873
Protective Services	\$947,859
Insurance Premiums	\$511,133
General Costs	\$1,581,411
Housing Assistance Payments	\$16,032,819
Depreciation and Amortization	\$2,544,770
Interest Expense	\$9,343
Bad Debts on Notes Receivable	\$894,553
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$29,301,505
NET INCOME (LOSS)	(\$1,161,270)

LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable	\$369,845
Accrued Compensated Absences	\$643,229
Other Liabilities and Accruals	\$11,941,634
Notes Payable, capital projects	\$869,354
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$13,824,062

NET ASSETS	
Invested in Capital Assets	\$23,809,273
Restricted Net Assets	\$28,661,142
Unrestricted Net Assets	(\$10,204,322)
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$42,266,093
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$56,090,155

REVENUE	
Federal Assistance (table below)	\$24,539,082
Rental Income	\$2,574,756
Interest Revenue	\$4,220
Other Revenue	\$1,022,177
TOTAL REVENUE	\$28,140,235

SCHEDULE OF FED. FUNDING	
HUD Public Housing Operating Subsidy	\$4,473,332
HUD Public Housing CARES Act	\$628,934
HUD Housing Choice Voucher Program	\$16,703,086
HUD Housing Choice Voucher Program CARES Act	\$1,082,732
HUD Mainstream Vouchers	\$201,142
HUD Mainstream Vouchers CARES Act	\$659
HUD Capital Fund Program	\$1,449,197
GRAND TOTAL	\$24,539,082



CHA is pleased to report a cumulative total savings of \$4,273,564 accomplished through an energy performance contract (EPC). Additionally, there was a cumulative excess savings of \$487,933 over the Guarantee. Energy performance contracting is an innovative approach to finance costly but sorely-needed modernization. HUD agreed to underwrite the construction work which the housing authority repays with the resulting energy cost savings. CHA's energy performance contract included major infrastructure upgrades to plumbing and heating systems resulting in significant utility savings.

Around the CHA Community



**Friday Night
Kids Club**



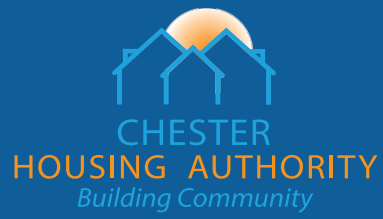
**Chester Trades
Education Program**



**ANUME Annual
visit to Longwood Gardens**



**Annual
Thanksgiving Luncheon**



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