

HOUSING AUTHORITY EXAMINING BUDGET

Scotfield Manor funding under review

By Elizabeth Kim
Staff Writer

STAMFORD — Citing rising maintenance costs, the city's housing authority, Charter Oak Communities, said it is reviewing the operation and funding streams of a state-funded nursing home in North Stamford.

Scotfield Manor, officially known as a residential care home, is located on 11 acres on Scotfieldtown Road. It is home to 50 residents, most of whom are physically disabled and in need of daily assistance.

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Vin Tufo, Charter Oak executive director

"It's operating, but marginally," said Vin Tufo, Charter Oak's executive director, adding that costs have been increasing 5 percent on average each year. The cost of staff medical benefits alone is expected to jump 15 percent this year, he said.

Armed with an annual budget of \$2

million, the facility receives approximately \$117 per day per resident from the state, Tufo said. The rate is 88 percent higher than other residential care homes in Connecticut, according to the state Department of Social Services, but Tufo argued operating costs in lower Fairfield County could be higher.

Tufo did not seek to raise any alarms, instead describing the internal assessment of Scotfield Manor as part of a broader initiative by the agency to re-examine all of its assets in light of cutbacks in federal spending.

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"We are looking at ways to improve the operation, making it more responsive to residents needs," he said. "It's about making sure that it stays as healthy as possible."

He stressed that there were no plans to close the facility, saying, "We're going to try to do everything we can to see that the facility stays in operation in some form."

But the financial vulnerability of Scotfield Manor underscores the increasing difficulty in the area to maintain services for the elderly and disabled. At least two other nursing and assisted living facilities in Stamford have struggled to stay afloat.

Kindred Healthcare, owner of Courtland Gardens Healthcare Center, a skilled nursing facility, said it suffered annual losses of nearly \$4 million in 2008 and 2009. In 2010 the

company asked permission from the state to close the home but was denied. This past January another health-care firm stepped in to buy Courtland Gardens after being allowed by the state to reduce the number of required beds.

Meanwhile, Smith House, a city-owned nursing home, has finished in the red nearly every year over the past decade, prompting periodic fears of a shutdown.

Scotfield Manor has been run by the housing authority since 1989. Prior to that, it was operated by city, which still owns the property.

Following the study, recommendations are expected to be delivered to Charter Oak's board of directors by the end of the year.

Staff Writer Elizabeth Kim can be reached at elizabeth.kim@sni.com or 203-964-2265.