

The ADVOCATE

Lawmakers want more funds for housing

Vidal Court work gets \$5M in bonds

By Brian Lockhart
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HARTFORD — Organizations in Stamford and Norwalk were the beneficiaries of state aid released yesterday by the bond commission at its regular monthly meeting.

The biggest recipient was the Stamford Housing Authority, although there was a dispute over

how much aid it was promised.

The bond commission, led in the absence of Gov. M. Jodi Rell by Stamford resident Lt. Gov. Michael Fedele, unanimously authorized \$5 million for the Vidal Court revitalization.

The multiphase project upgrades the Vidal Court housing development, replacing it with new on-site buildings and aug-

menting those with new off-site properties.

The project creates a total of 216 affordable housing units and 134 market-rate family rentals.

"We're very pleased the governor, bond commission and our state delegation have worked so well together to deliver this," Housing Authority Executive Director Richard Fox said.

But the Rell administration appeared yesterday to be backing away from what Stamford's

delegation said had been former Gov. John Rowland's commitment to give \$20 million to Vidal Court.

In January, the mainly Democratic local delegation, which also includes Greenwich Republicans Sen. William Nickerson and Rep. Livvy Floren, referred to the deal in a letter to Rell.

The group wrote that Rowland's budget director, Marc Ryan, pledged in writing in Please see **BONDS**, Page A4

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2004 the state would give the Stamford Housing Authority four installments of \$5 million for Vidal Court.

The bond commission released the first \$5 million in 2004.

"The Stamford Housing Authority has been relying on our administration's critical funding commitment and we would appreciate the timely release of funds so they can proceed with their project," Stamford lawmakers wrote.

But yesterday, state budget chief Robert Genuario of Norwalk said \$10 million — the \$5 million released in 2004 and the \$5 million released yesterday — is all the housing authority can expect for now.

"There's no commitment, one way or the other, on future funding," Genuario said. "They're going to have to make their case these additional funds are appropriate."

He said the housing authority might have to apply

for other state aid rather than bonds and compete with other affordable housing complexes.

"You'd think they would honor" Ryan's letter, state Rep. Carlo Leone, D-Stamford, said yesterday, noting that Rell was Rowland's lieutenant governor.

A copy of Ryan's letter was not available.

Leone said the delegation was prepared to battle for the additional \$10 million.

But Fox was unwilling to criticize Rell or Genuario, noting he understands the state has a deficit and officials were being cautious.

"We're very happy about the \$5 million today," he said. "I've received strong commitments from the administration. It's a very positive day, and everything's going forward."

The bond commission yesterday also released \$1.5 million to help pay for expansion of the Child Guidance Center of Southern Connecticut at Greyrock Place in Stamford.

Rell visited the city earlier this month to announce she

had placed the money on the bond agenda.

The outpatient mental health center provides counseling for children and adolescents from Stamford, Darien, New Canaan and Greenwich.

The bond commission yesterday also authorized giving \$107,500 to Side by Side Charter School in Norwalk.

In its 11th year, the school serves 235 children from Fairfield County, from 3-year-olds to eighth-graders.

Matthew Nittoly, the school's director, said the money would be used for some "pretty significant" upgrades to the roof, siding, windows and interior of Side by Side's annex.

"We have two different buildings," he said. "One was formerly St. Joseph Church Catholic School, that we've rented for the past 11 years. That's our main building. In 1998, we put up a portable annex for grades 5 through 8. The life expectancy is probably nearing its end if improvements weren't made."