



**Minutes of the Special Meeting
of the Board of Commissioners of the
Housing Authority of the City of Everett**

July 20, 2015

Meeting Called to Order

The Special meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Everett was called to order by Chair Michele Rastovich at 12:30 p.m. on Monday, July 20, 2015 at the Authority's main office, 3107 Colby Avenue, Everett, Washington.

Commissioners Present at Roll Call:

Chair Michele Rastovich
Commissioner Maddy Metzger-Utt
Commissioner John Mierke
Commissioner George Perez, Jr.

Commissioners Absent:

Commissioner Todd Taylor
Commissioner Lyle Ryan

Also in attendance were:

Staff:

Ashley Lommers-Johnson, Executive Director
Wendy Westby, Director of Housing Choice Voucher Program
Chris Neblett, Hearing Officer/Admin Coordinator

Other:

Lorna Corrigan, Attorney

Items for Individual Consideration

Resolution No. 1392 Revising Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan to Amend Specified Discretionary Applications, Waiting List, and Tenant Selection Policies

By way of introduction, Executive Director Ashley Lommers-Johnson said the waiting lists for the tenant based voucher program and three RAD PBV properties – Grandview, Bakerview, and Pineview – would be open between Tuesday, July 21st and Friday, July 31st. In order to be placed on a waiting list, applicants would be required to complete a pre-application form via an Internet website called Housing Café. He said that HCV Program Director Wendy Westby had been working with Yardi, the agency's housing program software provider, to implement this system. He also noted that Everett Housing Authority was the first agency in the nation to use the Housing Café applications portal. This use of an Internet-based applications system, as well as the need to process applicants quickly, required changes to certain provisions within the HCV Administrative Plan.

Using the laptop and projector, HCV program director Westby provided the Board with a visual demonstration of the process an applicant would need to follow in order to submit a pre-application via Housing Café. This included six different language options. A personal email address would be required to set up an account, submit a pre-application, and receive subsequent notifications regarding eligibility. Ms. Westby pointed out that the system would not process incomplete pre-applications, so staff would not have to review these individually and follow up with an applicant when one was not complete, as was the case with paper applications. Executive Director Lommers-Johnson advised the Board that notice of the waiting list openings and application process, including the necessity of a personal email account, went out to over 300 agencies and organizations that serve low-income persons. He said staff and computers would be available at the Housing Authority office during regular business hours to assist anyone who needed help and/or a way to access the Housing Café website; however, given the prevalence of smartphones and other Internet capable devices among the general population, he did not anticipate large numbers of people or lines.

Executive Director Lommers-Johnson said three policy changes related to applications, waiting list management, and tenant selection would facilitate the agency's goal of 100% voucher utilization as it related to the opening of the HCV tenant-based waiting list. The first proposed change allowed for applicants to be placed on the waiting list in date and time order as their pre-applications were received, rather than delaying until the end of the pre-application period to assign positions on the waiting list by lottery. Mr. Lommers-Johnson said this would allow new applicants to be called in to complete a full application and have their eligibility for a voucher determined as soon as the end of the first week of the waiting list opening. The second proposed change allowed for use of a two step rather than a one step applications process when the estimated time between initial application and eligibility selection was less than 60 days. Although the goal was to get individuals on the waiting list and selected for an eligibility review as

soon as possible, Housing Café's full applications portal would not be operational for another month or more. This made it necessary to have a two-step applications process, involving the use of paper applications for the eligibility determination step. The third proposed change allowed for the agency to notify an applicant by email that he or she was on the waiting list.

Following their presentation, Executive Director Lommers-Johnson and HCV Program Director Westby fielded questions from the commissioners. Most of these questions were related to concerns that someone without an email address might not be able to apply, or that individuals might not apply if they were unable to access the Housing Café portal, or experienced problems completing a pre-application on that site. Mr. Lommers-Johnson assured the Board that the agency had taken a number of steps to help, including hiring seven temporary employees to help with the process, either in person at the Housing Authority office, or by telephone via a dedicated line.

Commissioner Metzger-Utt moved that the resolution be adopted. Commissioner Mierke seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Rastovich called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Metzger-Utt motioned to adjourn, Commissioner Perez seconded, and the meeting ended at 12:59 p.m.



Chair, Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:



Secretary