

MINUTES OF HOUSING COMMISSION MEETING

DATE: 28 September 2010
TIME: 4:00 PM
PLACE: Housing and Community Development Department
350 West 6th Street, Suite 312, Dubuque, IA 52001

Vice Chairperson Schwendinger, following staff assurance of compliance with Iowa Open Meeting Law, called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm.

Commissioners Present: Lynn Sutton Jim Holz (via telephone)
 Judie Root Ricardo Woods
 Sister Dorothy Schwendinger, OSF

Commissioners Absent: William Helling David Kapler
 Lisa McAllister Dorothy Culbertson

Staff Present: David Harris Cpl. Mike Kane
 Janet Walker Jessica Kieffer

Public Present: Todd Schmidt, staff attorney at Iowa Legal Aid

Introduction: New Commissioner Ricardo Woods

New Commissioner Ricardo Woods was welcomed to the Housing Commission

Review and Certification of Minutes of 24 August 2010 Commission Meeting

Commissioner Root moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Sutton seconded. Commissioner Woods abstained. All others present in favor. Motion passed.

Correspondence/Public Input

Todd Schmidt, staff attorney at Iowa Legal Aid, questioned staff if there were plans to make the Section 8 Administrative Plan available on the City of Dubuque website. Janet explained that it is a staff goal to make the plan available within the next few months.

Old Business

Vacancies

David reminded the Commissioners that there is still one open seat on the Housing Commission as well as the open position on the Community Development Commission for a Housing Commission liaison. Commissioner Woods stated that he would like to be the liaison for the Community Development Commission.

City Manager response: Commission request on reducing number of housing vouchers

The Commissioners received a letter from the City Manager in response to their request not to further reduce the number of housing vouchers.

City Manager approval to issue new housing vouchers

The City Manager has given approval to issue new housing vouchers. Janet explained that staff has started the process. Janet also explained that the briefing process has been completely restructured.

New Business

HUD audit of HPRP homeless assistance program and Department response

David explained that HUD performed an audit of the HPRP homeless assistance program. One of their findings was that there was inadequate document keeping by Project Concern. Section 8 and CD staff have updated the policies and procedures and will be training Project Concern staff and monitoring the program. Commissioner Root motioned to approve the policy changes. Commissioner Holz seconded. All present in favor.

CIRCLES[®] program business plan/CIRCLES[®] Coach position

The Commissioners received a copy of the CIRCLES[®] business plan for their information. David explained that there is a 25 hour per week CIRCLES[®] coach position available. This position has been funded by Dubuque Works.

Resident Advisory Board

The Commissioners received a copy of the minutes from the 20 September 2010 Resident Advisory Board (RAB) meeting. Janet discussed that staff is trying to recruit more members, it can be a struggle to get participants to become involved. Todd Schmidt requested to be notified of the date of the next meeting.

Revisions of briefing process for new participants

Janet explained that the briefing process has been completely restructured. The Commissioners received a description of the new procedures which include performing the briefings in small groups of 3 to 5 applicants or for elderly or disabled, single briefings would be performed.

Cpl Mike Kane: Update on tracking arrests of program participants

Cpl Kane distributed a packet of information regarding arrests that he has been tracking on a weekly basis since last December. Commissioner Schwendinger questioned if Cpl Kane sees any trends in the tracking reports. Cpl Kane stated that the percentage of Section 8 participants arrested has been consistent, in the 5-6% range. He also stated that many of the charges are related to fines, alcohol use and driving while under suspension. David discussed that 3 out of the top 5 arrests are alcohol related; people are abusing a legal drug. David reminded everyone that a study has commissioned by the Council, to Northern Illinois University, which will provide more information on the relationships of crime, poverty and the Section 8 program. It will be completed in November.

Administrative Plan revisions:

1. Definition of disability

Janet explained that the revision of the definition adopts HUD's language. The previous definition of disability in the administrative plan may have been too restrictive. The new language allows for a person who may not be receiving SSI/SSD to still be eligible for disability preference points.

2. Ineligibility when receiving other City financial assistance

Janet explained that in order to prevent someone fraudulently trying to become eligible for Section 8 rental assistance preference points, staff is recommending that verifications such as a lease agreement and utility bill not be accepted as proof of residency if the funding for the rent or utilities is coming from any agency that has a subrecipient contract with the City of Dubuque.

3. Exception rents/payment standards

Staff is proposing that voucher payment standards are not to be changed until January of each year. The voucher payment standards are based on a percentage of the fair market rents. New fair market rents are published October 1st; however Housing Authorities generally do not receive them until December. Waiting to implement any voucher payment standard changes until January would remove the administrative burden of readjusting calculations made from October to December.

In addition, staff has received approval from HUD for exception rents which would allow an exception payment standard that is higher than the basic range for a designated part of the fair market rent area, in an effort to deconcentrate voucher participants from high poverty areas. HUD has approved exception rents in Census Tracts 8.01, 8.02, 12.01, 12.02 and 12.03. The voucher payment standards within the above census tracts will be set at the 110% of the 50th percentile published fair market rents. Staff is requesting approval of this change in the administrative policy.

4. Rent Reasonableness

Janet explained that this requested policy change would allow staff to use the average rent of comparable units when determining rent reasonableness.

Commissioner Root motioned to approve all policy changes. Commissioner Sutton seconded. All present in favor. Motion passed.

Information Sharing

Complaints Received

Commissioners received a summary of the complaints the Housing Department has received since the last meeting.

TH articles on CIRCLES[®] program

The Commissioners received articles that were printed in the Telegraph Herald regarding the CIRCLES[®] program.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 5:01pm.

Minutes taken by:



Jessica Kieffer
Recording Secretary

Respectfully submitted by:



David Harris
Department Director