




Office of the Executive Officer

INFORMATION CALENDAR

October 10, 2006

To: Honorable Chairperson and
Members of the Housing Authority

From:  Phil Kamlarz, Executive Officer

Submitted by: Stephen Barton, Housing Director, and Tia Ingram, BHA Manager

Subject: Status of Housing Authority Operations

INTRODUCTION

This monthly update to the Board is somewhat different in format from previous updates. Along with a summary of recent developments, I am attaching Acting BHA Manager Tia Ingram's initial report to me on the current state of the BHA and the changes she is making to improve operations. Along with the progress and changes Ms. Ingram reports, the major new development concerns the use of project-based Section 8 vouchers.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Troubled Status

As we reported last month, the BHA submitted its SEMAP report to HUD with a passing score. The BHA staff has not yet heard back as to when HUD will conduct its review and verification of the report. Under its rules, HUD should complete its review and provide a response by October 31, 2006.

Payment Standard

Once HUD has responded and the BHA can meet the requirement to have received bonus points for deconcentration in the SEMAP process, the BHA will immediately file a request to use its previous, higher payment standard based on rents at the median (50th percentile) rather than the current standard based on rents at the 40th percentile. If this request is not approved, the BHA will have to lower its monthly rent subsidy for a significant number of tenants beginning on March 1, 2006.

Governance Revisions

Staff continues to work on alternatives, with a particular focus on creation of a separate BHA Board that does not overlap with the City Council, and will bring proposals back to the Board at its November meeting for further policy direction. Ms. Ingram is also drafting an improvement plan for agency operations in which many of the issues reviewed in her attached report will be addressed.

Project-Based Section 8

In a new development, HUD informed staff in June 2006 that since allocations of Project-Based Section 8 assistance were made to projects that received City assistance prior to the BHA allocation, this created an “identity of interest” that requires HUD review and approval of all such allocations. City staff was unaware of the “identity of interest” rule at the time of the allocation process.

Staff provided HUD with the files related to the allocation of project-based Section 8 and in August, after completing its review, HUD disqualified allocations to three projects. Since then staff has engaged in discussions with HUD regarding their decision and those discussions have now been completed. HUD has revoked the allocation of forty-one Section 8 vouchers to Prince Hall Arms at 3132-38 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, a proposed new construction project with senior housing by the Prince Hall Masons, and the allocation of four Section 8 vouchers to 2500 Hillegass, a proposed rehabilitation project in a property already owned by Affordable Housing Associates. The 2500 Hillegass project is a small one, and is not time-sensitive. Staff will work with AHA to find other sources of funding. We will plan to bring a report on the status of the Masons project to the Housing Advisory Commission and the Council shortly. The loss of project-based Section 8 means that the Masons project has lost its major source of subsidy. At this point the only way to restore project-based voucher allocations to these projects would be for them to resubmit applications during a new allocation process.

HUD agreed to reconsider its decision regarding the allocation of twelve Section 8 vouchers to Allston House, 2121 Seventh Street, which is a project by AHA to acquire, preserve and rehabilitate an affordable housing project that had been moved to market rate rents by the current owner. HUD agreed to reconsider the Allston House project due to the exceptional circumstances of the project, which is a preservation project with all funding now in place. We expect to receive their final decision shortly. The project-based vouchers are essential if this project is to move forward.

HUD did not agree with the evaluation conducted by City staff and the Housing Advisory Commission in recommending these projects to the Board. Among the issues HUD raised is that the City relied on information available from previous interactions and previous allocation processes such as the Housing Trust Fund process, rather than ensuring that all necessary information was contained within the application to the BHA for project-based vouchers. In HUDs view this is both an illustration of the identity of interest problem and an improper procedure. City staff agreed with HUD that, had they known of the identity of interest issue at the time, they would have followed a different

procedure. Staff asked that HUD's evaluation focus on the substantive value of the projects and not simply on the process issues and HUD responded that in their view both areas were addressed in the review.

While City staff does not agree with HUD evaluation of the disqualified projects, under the program rules the decision is within HUDs discretion, and the City's previous method of handling the application and evaluation process was not carried out in a way that provided the separation of City and BHA allocation review that HUD considers necessary.

In addition to the disqualifications, HUD approved the project-based allocations to the other three projects that received allocations: University Avenue Senior Housing (1535 University Avenue), Ashby Lofts (1001 Ashby), Oxford Plaza Apartments (Oxford at Kittredge). HUD informed us that two of these projects, Ashby and Oxford, counted as "elevator high-rise" projects because they are five and six stories with an elevator and will serve families with children. We will need to submit an explanation to the San Francisco Regional Office as to why development at these heights is essential in certain areas of Berkeley. In addition, the Oxford project will require two waivers from HUD Washington allowing the project to combine project based Section 8 with funding from the Housing for People With AIDS (HOPWA) program and allowing use of project based Section 8 in a high poverty census tract. Up to now HUD has never denied a waiver for use of HOPWA funding, but the HUD staff warned us that HUD reserves the right to change its practice in granting waivers at any time. With regard to the downtown census tract, we have already done demographic analysis that shows that the apparent high poverty rate is the result of incomes found in the 18-24 student age group. We plan to submit the waiver requests shortly.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

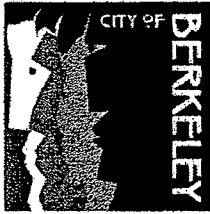
Unknown at this time.

CONTACT PERSON

Tia M. Ingram, Acting Housing Authority Manager, (510) 981-5471

Attachments:

1. 9/27/06 Initial Status Report from T. Ingram, Acting Housing Authority Manager




Housing Department
Berkeley Housing Authority

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 27, 2006

To: Phil Kamlarz, City Manager

From:  Ingram, Acting Housing Authority Manager

Subject: Initial Status Report of Housing Authority Operations

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum is prepared to advise you of important developments over the past few months, and those we expect during the next month. Most of the staff energy has been devoted to the Section 8 Program, thus the focus of this report. We acknowledge that there are significant issues relative to the Public Housing Program, and we would also like to acknowledge the tremendous management efforts and commitment of Affordable Housing Associates (AHA) relative to the Public Housing Program and the cooperation of the Public Housing residents. We are optimistic that we can soon redirect additional attention to the Public Housing Program and give AHA the assistance and direction they need for the program to be successful.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

A lot has been said about performance problems/issues and lack of customer service at the Berkeley Housing Authority (BHA). While the majority of the statements are factual, they are not the whole picture. Before delving into the litany of issues/challenges that are ahead for the BHA, I want to take a moment to highlight some of the BHA's accomplishments.

I. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The staff hasn't always done it right, but the staff has always worked hard. Now on my second tour at the helm of the BHA, I can say (and I believe other managers would attest) the staff is responsive to leadership. During my brief tenure I have introduced many new

Initial Status Report of BHA Operations

concepts, forms, procedures and policies. While so much change over a short period of time can be overwhelming, the staff is responding well, and it is beginning to show in our performance. What follows is a brief listing of a few of the Agency highlights:

1. The BHA has consistently operated at approximately 95% lease-up, serving the maximum number of clients without exceeding annual budget authority.
2. The BHA distributes approximately \$2 million in rental subsidies each month (combined for all Section 8 Programs). Owner rental subsidy payments are consistently mailed on the 1st of each month with a smaller check run mid-month to pick up any adjustments made after the first. These dollars have the potential of circulating in the community and contributing to the tax base for the City.
3. In spite of the negative opinions expressed towards BHA staff and numerous management changes over the past several years, the staff has remained committed to the Authority, and more importantly, to the families and individuals we serve. Human nature is such that it is mostly those with complaints who speak out about their experiences. However, there are literally hundreds of clients (tenants and landlords) who can attest to "beyond the call of duty" assistance they have received from staff. We have started telling the positive side of the story, and will continue to do so.
4. We have made interim changes to the front office to soften our image and make for a more pleasant experience for our customers. We reconfigured the desk of the receptionist so that he now faces the lobby and can readily see and greet visitors. For our youngest visitors we added a small play area (toys were donated by Yolanda Nasseripotowski, a BHA staff member). For our adult visitors we added live and artificial plants and magazines. These small changes are just the beginning of our efforts to make customer service a priority.
5. Previously closed to the public on Mondays, beginning October 1st, the office is open on Mondays from 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. We are remaining closed on Monday mornings so that all staff can participate in staff training and development. At the beginning of the year we will consider further expansion of our office hours (opening all day on Monday).
6. Previously each case worker was available to see clients at the counter one-hour each week. If you missed your worker, theoretically you had to wait until the following week (often times another worker would assist). Effective September 1, 2006, we expanded access to staff via the "worker of the day". A worker is available to assist clients daily from 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 2:30-4:30 p.m.

Initial Status Report of BHA Operations

7. We are responding to current inquiries and complaints in a manner of days! That said, there is a significant amount of both verbal and written inquiries. Given the volume it is not efficient to try to go back and address issues raised several months or even years ago. We are focusing our attention on current issues, and addressing stale issues as they arise. It is refreshing to now receive calls from owners and/or participants expressing thanks for our efforts on their behalf.
8. Staff now check voice mail at least twice each day (once in the morning and again in the afternoon) and respond to callers within 24 hours.
9. There are regular bi-weekly staff meetings, with formal agendas and a training component for staff performing case management/income verification function.
10. Staff has been advised of the importance of customer service. Facts about complaints are shared with staff and the appropriate supervisor via email; staff is directed to resolve the matter and provide the Manager a written response. A log is maintained documenting each complaint and resolution. As appropriate, training is provided on an individual basis or to all staff.

II. ADMINISTRATION

The BHA has a small staff of 13 full-time positions to serve some 2,000 clients. By way of comparison, the Alameda County Housing Authority has approximately 7,000 clients. As the Eligibility Manager (one of three divisions) I had a staff of 17 full-time positions performing the sole function of income determination. Many of the tools commonly found at other agencies are/were missing at the BHA.

1. Administrative (Admin) Plan. The Admin Plan is the policy document where discretionary policies for the agency are found. A well-written Admin Plan can make or break an agency. Our current Admin Plan is significantly deficient in a number of areas. Some policies are very liberal, while others are very restrictive and/or administratively burdensome. Our goals with the new Admin Plan are to produce a document that will insure we are compliant with HUD regulations; that provides the minimum level of subsidy needed for each family so that we can maximize the number of families we serve; and that is practical so that it can be followed by staff. We have obtained copies of the Admin Plans for the Alameda County Housing Authority and the Oakland Housing Authority (and have requested one from the Richmond Housing Authority) and are considering adopting similar policies to provide for continuity in the contiguous areas. Under normal circumstances we would be considering a revision to the Admin Plan. However, given our dissatisfaction with the current plan we will be replacing, not revising it. The Admin Plan will be shared with various community stakeholders (East Bay Community Law Center; Legal Aid of Alameda County and Housing Rights) for comment/input before the final document is presented for public hearing and formal adoption. Unable to await formal adoption of a new Admin Plan, we have moved

Initial Status Report of BHA Operations

forward administratively, via written directives to staff, with changes in the way we do business (some of the changes will be included in the revised Admin Plan):

- A. Allegation Meetings. Previously if a family was in violation of one or more program rules, we proposed termination and allowed the family to request an Informal Hearing. Now we require that staff conduct an "allegation meeting" where the facts of the issue(s) are brought out. If there is still a basis for termination, a formal notice of proposed termination is issued. Oft times staff learns of mitigating information and we avoid the formal termination process.
 - B. Reasonable Accommodation Process. All disabled participants in the program have a right to request a reasonable accommodation of BHA policies and practices to allow them to fully participate in the program. Heretofore, there was no formal, documented process for requesting, reviewing, approving or denying a request. We now provide (a) written notice with all of our recertification notices advising clients of their right to request an accommodation; (b) a form for requesting a specific accommodation; (c) a written decision is issued to the family, and if the decision is to deny the request, the family is given a right to appeal. A log is maintained of all requests and our decision.
 - C. Revision/Creation of Forms. Many of the forms in use at the BHA had not been reviewed or revised in years and many did not ask questions critical to correct determination of benefits. For example, our annual "application" did not ask for the client's address or inquire about qualification for any of the special disability provisions. Various iterations of forms are available in the office and are/were being used. As we review the various functions we are revising forms and placing them on the G-drive for staff use. Staff is instructed to discard the old forms and to create a road map for auditors responsible for reviewing the files.
 - D. Written Policies and Procedures. A lot of our complaints and performance problems arise from lack of formal policies and clear delineation of responsibilities. Some of the most alarming cases to date involved untimely processing of new contracts. In a few instances, owners reported a new contract, a tenant in place for months, but no rental subsidy payments for 6 or more months. We have instituted a policy where the process is tracked from the initial submittal of the contract request (Request for Tenancy Approval) all the way through entry in the computer and the first rental subsidy payment.
2. 3rd Party Verification. Obtaining documentation of income, assets and expenses is a major program requirement for every (re)certification performed. A lot of the sources that Public Housing Authorities (PHA) rely upon for income verification are facing staffing shortages, making it increasingly difficult for them to respond to PHA request for verifications. Many have gone exclusively or in part to electronic or Internet based systems, freeing up staff time. You may recall we certified to "0" points on the SEMAP

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indicator for “adjusted income”; this was in large part because we did not have proper documentation in the file, not because the calculation was incorrect.

- A. **CalWin.** A lot of our clients receive assistance from the County. The paper process for obtaining verification of the benefits was very time consuming, and often resulted in delayed or incorrect processing of our work. We recently signed an Agreement with Alameda County Social Services to allow us direct access (via the internet) to information about TANF (welfare), General Assistance and Food Stamps. We are scheduled to go live with the system on October 1st.
- B. **National Clearinghouse.** A significant number of our clients have adult children that are full time students. Many of the schools now refuse to respond to hard copy request for verifications. The other option was to require clients to obtain sealed, certified transcripts. We recently executed a contract with the Clearinghouse that allow for *Internet* verification of enrollment. The cost is minimal, and should not exceed \$25 per quarter.

These two tools will have an immediate and significant impact on our ability to quickly and efficiently complete our required tasks. Special thanks to the City Attorney’s Office and the Contract Compliance Officer for their assistance.

3. **HUD Systems.** Over the past several years HUD has pushed to do more and more electronically. Their most recent offering, “Enterprise Income Verification”, is a very useful tool for verifying Social Security Administration benefits and earned income (wages). All staff, except two, have appropriate access and are utilizing the system.

4. **Computer Software.** We converted to “Elite” in March 2006. This mid-year conversion has brought challenges. An efficient and effective computer system is critical to our operation and this is a much more capable system than the previous one. Currently, however, we are unable to use many of the new capabilities and are unable to produce basic management reports; unable to track/monitor staff productivity; have serious questions about the integrity of some data after conversion; data (screens) cannot be printed, and a host of other issues.

The original contract called for two on-site training sessions. Nevertheless, even our most computer savvy staff continues to struggle to make good use of the system. We are very fortunate to have excellent support (and empathy) from the IT Department as we try to understand and tweak the system so that we have reliable and meaningful data. With guidance and input from IT, we are arranging for an additional session of on-site training in hopes of better understanding the capabilities of the system, and getting modifications as necessary.

5. **Routine Functions.** The BHA is required to recertify each family at least annually. The recertification includes an inspection of the rental unit and a review of the family’s

Initial Status Report of BHA Operations

income, assets and expenses. The inspection function is being performed by Sterling, an independent contractor. The firm conducts approximately 15 inspections per day (this is up from approximately 10 inspection per day we were performing utilizing two staff persons). Inspections are currently being performed for contracts up for renewal in January. We are working with the IT department to use the "hand-held" devices so inspection results can be uploaded and inspection results generated; this will provide more complete inspection results in the computer system, and allow staff to report the results to HUD in a more timely manner.

The other half of the recertification is the review of family income. We are experiencing major problems getting reliable data from our computer system. We are working manually to try to determine our compliance rate and to correct data errors so reliable reports can be generated. We are currently utilizing a recertification by mail process. A large percentage of our clients are responding favorably. We are also attempting to provide reminder calls – where packets are not returned in a timely manner. We anticipate a significant increase in our production when the *Internet* verification systems noted above are operational. (We will provide reporting stats from the HUD system in our status report next month).

6. Financial Management. Funding for the current fiscal year (Section 8 and Public Housing) has been secured and all the required reports have been submitted to HUD. This frees the small finance staff to focus on creating the proper management tools and to begin addressing in earnest the significant management findings pending from prior year audits (many of which will be noted again this year). One major concern already under review/correction is the fact that the BHA financials are managed via Excel spreadsheets versus the computer software and/or the FUNDS system. Staff is actively working with the Finance Department to correct this situation.

HUD recently issued a notice about changes in the funding formula for the Public Housing Program. The change in formula will impact PHA differently. Based on our initial analysis we are one of the "gainer" authorities. We anticipate additional funding for the current fiscal year of approximately \$65,000. We will provide additional information after a firm commitment has been received.

7. Collaboration. I am pleased to report the first of on-going meetings with East Bay Community Law Center. The meeting is scheduled for October 3rd. Maintaining open dialogue with this community stakeholder is important to our ability to successfully manage our program. While we will not always agree on the outcome of an issue, we have the same objective – provisions of affordable housing to qualified families and individuals. I am looking forward to discussions about our Admin Plan changes, possible preference categories for our wait list, and other administrative policies and procedures.

Initial Status Report of BHA Operations

III. CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES

1. HUD Reporting. We met the first HUD imposed condition with our “standard” reporting under SEMAP for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2006. We are awaiting word from HUD as to when the “Confirmatory Review” will be conducted. A second consideration is to address the issue of governance; staff is continuing to explore various options. The third consideration is submittal of a plan for improvement of BHA functions. Much of the information in this report would be included in any such plan. We have inquired as to when they would like to receive the report; we await a response. In the meantime we continue our efforts to build a reliable infrastructure and to demonstrate sound performance on all the critical indicators.
2. Staffing Plan. Over the past five years the staff has been reduced from 19 to 13 due to reduced administration funding from HUD and ongoing increase in labor costs. In addition, some staff has been reclassified, and new classifications have been introduced. Management has not yet had an opportunity to carefully study all the functions and propose a reasonable staffing plan. We have initiated discussions with Human Resources Management, and some interim changes have been made. We anticipate entering discussions about the formal proposal in the next several weeks. To their credit, staff has accepted the various challenges and new assignments, and given it their best effort, without regard to classification.
3. Wait List. The combined Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Wait List includes some 4,700 applicants unranked (except for date and time of application) applicants. The list was last updated in 2001. We have drafted an update form that we will use to purge uninterested and/or unavailable clients and to update the status of the truly remaining applicants. We are in negotiations with DDM, a data management firm to handle the updates for us. This is the same firm utilized by Alameda County Housing Authority, the Oakland Housing Authority and the Richmond Housing Authority. We will rely heavily upon IT staff to insure that we receive information in the format required to update our system. Applicants are required to notify the BHA in writing of any change in address. They are advised that failure to do so may result in withdrawal of the application. Nevertheless, staff will update and Email notice to any applicant where the Postal Service advises a forwarding address. If no such info is available, the applicant will be withdrawn from the wait list and will have to reapply the next time applications are received. Our timeline for completion of this project is December 2006. In cases where a person renews contact with the BHA after being removed from the list, and their failure to provide updated contact information was connected with a disability, the BHA will consider reinstatement to the list as a reasonable accommodation on a case-by-case basis.
4. PIC Reporting. In June 2006 HUD issued notice granting all PHA an extension to September 30, 2006 to increase reporting to 95% to avoid financial sanctions. Staff had a concentrated effort to increase performance, including arranging for

Initial Status Report of BHA Operations

trained staff to assist on a part-time basis. However, deficiencies with our computer software made it impossible for us to identify the correct families for certification, and lack of the above referenced 3rd party systems slowed progress. There are provisions in the rule that allow for appeals under certain circumstances; we will study those criteria, and if applicable, appeal any sanctions.

5. **Payment Standards.** The BHA continues its appeal to HUD to restore the former payment standard, established at the 50th percentile. The BHA Payment Standards were adjusted downward effective March 1, 2006:

	0-Bdrm	1-Bdrm	2-Bdrm	3-Bdrm	4-Bdrm
Former	\$996	1,205	1,472	2,051	2,474
Current	\$952	1,150	1,362	1,847	2,287
Variance	(44)	(55)	(110)	(204)	(187)

The "current" payment standard applies to all new contracts entered on or after March 1, 2006 and affects people newly served by the program and people who move to a new unit. For existing tenancies the change applies on the second annual recertification on or after March 1, 2006.

For clients with an anniversary date January 1 – February 1 the lower payment standard will be applied upon their renewal in 2008.

For clients with an anniversary date March 1 – December 1 the lower payment standard will be applied upon their renewal in 2007.

Those clients most affected are:

A) Those living in a unit with more bedrooms than on the voucher. For example, a family with a one-bedroom voucher occupying a two-bedroom unit; or

B) Those residing in units where the contract rent are equal to or greater than the new payment standard. In this instance, the family would pay any amount of rent over the new payment standard and the family would pay any increase in contract rent granted to the owner. For example, look at the situation of a family with a one-bedroom voucher with a contract rent of \$1,205, current family rent portion is \$75. Once the new payment standard of \$1,150 goes into effect the family will be responsible for the \$55 difference in addition to the \$75, for a total payment of \$130. Similarly, if the rent was \$1,150 but the owner requests and is approved a \$50 rent increase based on current market rents for similar unit, assuming everything else remains the same, the family rent (based on income) would remain at \$75 and they would pay the additional \$50 for a total rent payment by the family of \$125. The family would have the option of paying the increased amount, or relocating to another unit with a lower contract rent. The owner, recognizing the financial impact on the family, might consider lowering

Initial Status Report of BHA Operations

the rent, requesting a smaller increase or delaying the increase, but that would be up to the owner.

6. Owner Consideration. A lot of the criticism shared about the BHAs performance have related to program participants. What hasn't been shared so publicly is the lack of timely response to our owners. Berkeley property owners are vital to the success of the program, and many of them have stayed with the program despite problems because they believe in the value of providing affordable rentals to low-income tenants and maintaining the diversity of the Berkeley community.
 - A. New Contracts. We have revised our process for responding to requests for new contracts. The inspection element has been contracted out, and we are inspecting units within five days of the request. The process continues with rent negotiation and contract preparation within five days. In most cases, we are now processing the first payment within two weeks of the start of the contract (the regulations allow 45 days).
 - B. Rent Reasonableness. In a City that is largely "Rent Controlled" or "assisted", getting "unassisted comparables" can be challenging. We continue to encourage owners to provide their own rent comps, which we will utilize. We are also drawing comps from "Craig's List" and "Metro Rent". We are scheduled to go live with Nan McKay's "Go Section8", a rent comp service.
 - C. Contract Rent Adjustments. There is evidence of owner requested contract rent adjustments going back several years, with no response from staff. It is not financially or administratively feasible to go back multiple years and make adjustments. Administratively we are attempting to address increases requested this fiscal year. Our news letter will advise owners and participants
7. Participant Files. Our current filing system is scattered about the office and is not very secure. We have researched a system that will meet our current needs, and in the event the office relocates (our lease expires next year) can be moved. The contract that we are considering includes the hardware and pre-labeled files. We also find ourselves in the situation where a lot of case files are misfiled. Staff spends countless hours searching for files to no avail. This slows completion of recertifications and results in clients having to reproduce documents (i.e. birth certificates, social security cards) that were provided many years ago. We cannot await the new system to correct this problem. We have a staff project where all staff will be responsible for a portion of the alphabet, and we are bringing on a temporary staff person to assist.

The final issue that we wish to share with you is our concern about our ability to meet the often conflicting demands of program compliance and the individualized needs of our severely disabled clients.

Initial Status Report of BHA Operations

Berkeley is rich in terms of services available to her citizens. However, there are some severely disabled individuals who do not avail themselves of the services they need in order to remain within the program. As providers of the desperately needed housing assistance we often find ourselves pleading with the client to comply with program requirements; appealing to the landlord of the assisted property to continue working with the client; and not being able to certify to HUD that we have performed the annual review of income and certified that the living unit is code compliant. Such cases can drag on for weeks, even months without resolution. The client and/or owner contact various representatives at the Housing Authority and through the chain to the City Manager and/or members of the City Council. Our goal is to identify the appropriate organization(s) to provide case management assistance to insure that these families receive the assistance they need to remain successful Section 8 Program participants. However creation of such an assistance program will require City funding.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Unknown at this time. As noted in the body of the report staff is researching possible contracts for services and/or acquisitions, and revisions in the staffing for the Agency. Once cost figures are available a detailed report will be submitted to the City Manager and/or Board for review.

Attachments:

1. August 16, 2006 letter from Singh Properties
2. August 22, 2006 Email "Caught in the Act"
3. Excerpt from September 25, 2006 letter from Roderick Watkins (pages 1 & 4)



Singh Properties

690 Rosal Way
San Rafael, CA 94903
Phone: (415) 827-0322

2006 AUG 18 PM 1:01
CITY OF BERKELEY
HOUSING AUTHORITY

August 16, 2006

Berkeley Housing
1901 Fairview Street
Berkeley, CA 94703

Deborah Ward:

Thank you very much for meeting with me regarding the two section 8 units at 1128 & 1130 Bancroft Way. As I stated yesterday I came into housing after the units failed and spoke to Phil at the front desk. I ask for an extension and also wrote a written request for the extension, which Phil stamped.

I also made numerous phone calls to housing regarding this matter and I had no response. I then made two phone calls to Wanda Drouillard and left messages both time on her voice mail. I had no response from her either time.

I made two phone calls to 510-981-5474, and still no response. I also called 510-981-5470 and was unable to speak to anyone after pressing several numbers as directed by your answering service yet another answering machine.

I then came into the office and requested in writing as directed by Phil for another re-inspection which Phil stamped again, and still no response. That same day I asked Phil who was in charge. He said that the person to speak with was Tia. I then asked for her phone number to make an appointment with Tia. I called to make the appointment and spoke with her assistant. She said that Deborah was in charge of the abatements so I called Deborah and left her a message to call me.

On a positive note Deborah called me back, we made an appointment to meet on 8/15/06 at 3:00 P.M. After our conversation she went with me to conduct the inspections.

I would like to thank Deborah for being so understanding and handling this matter so quickly, she is a professional person. She resolved all of my frustrations in less than an hour.

Thank you again

Malkiat Singh
Property Owner

Barnes, Tilda J.

From: Ingram, Tia
Sent: Tuesday, August 22, 2006 10:15 AM
To: All BHA
Cc: Barton, Stephen; Caronna, Lisa; 'andrew_Q._Nguyen@hud.gov'
Subject: Caught in the Act

I wanted to share with you a recent experience at the Authority.

Staff were working with a 70-year old single man. He had been assaulted several times and wanted to move. staff provided him with the required documents, which he failed to complete. We eventually figured it out --he couldn't read or write.

Staff gave him another set of documents and the unit listing. Unable to devote a lot of time to assist him, staff arranged for assistance via the local senior center. Staff there (Alana) assisted him with reviewing the available unit listing and the application for a new unit. He found a unit! But that is not the end of the story.

The client was back in the office for assistance. He had made several attempts to get his security deposit back from the landlord -- money he needed for the new unit. The landlord was unresponsive. Staff contacted CIL and ECHO for assistance.

ECHO came through and the client is now housed in a unit where he feels safe and secure!

We will refer him to legal aide for assistance in pursuing the security deposit for his original unit.

Kudos to you Tilda for a job well done!

Roderick Watkins

September 25, 2006

Tia Ingram
Berkeley Housing Authority

Dear Ms. Ingram:

Thank you for returning my telephone call and explaining my options with the Section 8 tenancies at my property. As you may recall, I own Berkeley. The property contains a total of fifteen units of which five are currently rented to Section 8 tenants. Four of the Section 8 tenants occupy two-bedroom units and one occupies a one-bedroom unit.

The current rent levels for the Section 8 occupied units are as follows:

Unit #	Tenant	Layout	Rent
1		2-Bedroom	\$1,308
3		2-Bedroom	\$1,099
4		1-Bedroom	\$1,100
5		2-Bedroom	\$1,258
14		2-Bedroom	\$1,205

We have requested rent increases over the past eighteen months for these units. You indicated that you had some evidence of this on file, although not all of the letters were apparently present. We acknowledge the benefits of the Section 8 program to the community, however, the existing rent levels are well below the going rate based on recent rentals in the building and the local market in general.

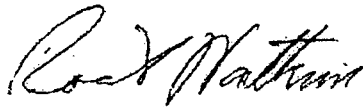
To illustrate my point, I am providing a summary of the most recent rentals in the building on the following page.

Tia Ingram
Berkeley Housing Authority
Page 4

I appreciate you taking the time to consider my case with respect to these units. While I endorse and support the Section 8 program, I still feel that these rent adjustments are both appropriate and necessary to provide a fair return on the property.

Please call me with your questions, opinions, conclusions, etc. so that we may discuss these matters prior to contacting the tenants.

Sincerely,



Roderick Watkins
(925) 930-2847

Property Manager:
Cedar Properties
c/o Jonathan Weldon
(510)834-0782

55 Santa Clara Avenue, #170
Oakland, CA 94610