

August – October 2008
Hawai'i Public Housing Authority (HPHA)
Resident Community Meeting
October 7, 2008 – 6:00-7:30pm
Kapa`a Resource Center

Minutes

Present: Chad Taniguchi, Stephanie Fo, Clarissa Hosino, Mattie Yoshioka, Officer Stanley Wakumoto, Council Chair Jay Furfaro, Maile Cummings, Carolyn Kuehe, Muelyn Ka`ahanui, Debra Kamuelo, Doreen _____, Sandra Kouchi, Laurie Ho (Facilitator), Susan Tai

Absent: None

Purpose of meeting:

- Develop stronger lines of communication and to build trust and stronger relationship between management, staff and residents
- Address any and all questions and concerns

Meeting Agenda:

See HPHA Resident Community Meeting Agenda handout that was provided to all attendees (Appendix A)

Agenda Topic #1: New HUD requirement for Asset Management (project based management)

Presented by: Stephanie Fo

- Previously, HPHA would receive all housing funding and distributed out various amounts to various housing sites on an as-needed basis.
- Now, each site will receive its own amount. But, depending on what the federal government determines is needed by each site, that site would only receive 89% of the designated amount. The site would then have only that amount and the residents' rent payments as their budget for any repairs or other necessary expenses.
- Therefore, every resident must do their part to help their housing site save money: e.g., paying rent on time and in full, conserve water use, etc.

Agenda Topic #2: Community, police, neighborhood board (this applies more to O`ahu), nonprofit and elected official issues/concerns.

Presented by: Chad Taniguchi

- Ideally, staff, management and residents get together often to discuss any security issues. Sandi indicated that she coordinate a meeting at least once a month. Everyone in the housing community is invited to a general meeting every other month. Their board meetings are once a month.
- Chad praised this group for being diligent in this area and for encouraging everyone to do their part. He explained that last November, Maui County Council passed a resolution to investigate the living conditions within the public housing units because of crime and safety issues. HPHA brought in the local police department and non-profit organizations to help address problems and develop solutions. The staff and management really stepped up to the plate and successfully worked with the residents who also got actively involved and personally invested in maintaining their housing units and grounds (e.g., mowing lawns, conserving water usage, etc.). Also, with more rent received on time and in full, there was more budget to help address these issues. There was still crime and drug issues to be addressed, which is beyond the scope of staff and management, so the local police was brought in to address those problems.

- Officer Wakumoto was asked what types of crimes he has seen in the area. In his 7½ years covering the Hanalei district (out of his 10 year career on the police force), there have been mainly domestic issues and not many burglaries, thefts and other crimes out there. There's also drug related crimes in that district, but the vice part of KPD deals with that, so he doesn't have specific stats to provide.
- Sandi added that KPD has come out to the housing complex to provide training on neighborhood watch, etc. Otherwise, they are there to investigate a call. Drugs happen everywhere on Kaua`i, but the residents will not stand for that in their housing community and, thus, that crime needs to move elsewhere. They have community policing in their community and the parents there are not the kind who are unaware or inactive in their kids' lives. They tend to hold their kids accountable.
- The resident from the Hanama`ulu housing community (Jenny Clement?) has only been living there since June, so she didn't feel she could contribute much historical info on the activity there. Sandi mentioned that Hanama`ulu is organized, also, but not as organized as the resident community in Kapa`a.
- Regarding elected official concerns, Council Chair Jay Furfaro spoke on the public input he has received regarding public housing. Jay has extensive experience with affordable housing (e.g., via his term with Habitat for Humanity and other programs). He has heard requests for better landscaping to provide a unique sense of place within the communities, especially for children (e.g., community gardening). Sandi indicated that they are waiting for a response from DLNR regarding land by the fence behind the resource center to be deeded over to them, which they'd like to use for community gardening. Jay also said that he has heard requests for more mature trees probably for better shading.

Agenda Topic #3: Long-term public housing repair and maintenance needs.

Agenda Topic #4: Possible solutions such (a) resident and volunteer involvement, (b) mixed income/mixed finance development (successfully done in places such as San Francisco and Seattle), and (c) other solutions Presented by Chad Taniguchi

(1) Refer to the blue handout entitled "HPHA FY 2009 Budget and Turnaround Plan."

In the last 3 years, HPHA's expenses exceeded its income by \$21 million over the last three years. It used to have \$25 million in reserves and now only has \$4 million in reserves. Therefore, there is an estimated \$4.2 million deficit as on 07/01/08. If they can fix the units faster, have 95% residency for all the projects, collect at least 90-95% rent, they will at least break even by the end of the fiscal year. Taxpayers will not pay more money to support this.

(2) Refer to the PowerPoint presentation slide handout entitled "The Future of Public Housing in Hawai'i."

It is projected that the 6200 statewide public housing units will require \$900 million in maintenance and repairs between 2003-2033. That means HPHA needs \$30 million per year. Currently, it only gets about \$18 million from state and federal funding – i.e., \$12 million short of what's needed. In 30 years, then, HPHA will be \$360 million short. Insufficient funding means some of the maintenance and repairs will not be done and units will fall into disrepair, become vacant and/or be destroyed.

Residents and community can work together to save public housing by helping make repairs, conserving water and other utilities, and by considering *Mixed Income Redevelopment*, which has worked very well on the mainland. It brings in other people who can pay higher rents and help increase rent payment success rate, neighborhood safety and community outreach programs. This is a 1-for-1 replacement of public housing units, but more units would be added to get more higher-income people to come in and pay more. Public housing residents would continue paying public housing rates, while affordable housing residents would pay higher rents. If some units need repair, some of the public housing resident will be moved around. If the units get demolished, public housing residents would receive a voucher and still pay only 30% of their income toward rent. After construction is done, those residents would have the first right-to-return.

Mixed Financing Redevelopment also brings private and public financing and tax credits, and also diversifies the building use to include retail and other purposes. The goal is more economic development in addition to the housing. Residents may be relocated during renovation which, again, may include access to Section 8 vouchers. There may also be mixed use at the public housing sites, such as retail and other businesses/office space, to help generate more funds.

Q: Would this be calculated at a flat rate or 30% of the income?

A: It would be 30% at first. But when it reaches a certain rate, the resident would just pay a flat rate. Figuring the flat rate is based on fair market rates established by HUD, and that depends on the number of bedrooms and other specifications. If the area's market rate goes up, the amount would increase accordingly.

Q: Is this community planning what you're planning to do?

A: It's still in the ideas stage right now. For example, there are 36 units here. In the Mixed Financing Redevelopment scenario, if the number of people on Kaua`i increased, and the need for public housing increased, the HPHA board may say that the Kapa`a public housing is getting too old and therefore they should think about getting a private non-profit organization involved to get them to put their money into the project for tax credits. This would result in either adding new units to meet increasing needs and repairing existing units, or tearing everything down and building all new units. In these situations, 36 units would still be for public housing, and another 44 units would be added for people who can pay the higher rent. This is more likely for the older projects on O`ahu, but may apply to the neighbor islands, as well. Residents are asked to look at the info in the packet handed out at this meeting and to Google the HPHA website for more details or for other board packets and minutes from the monthly meetings.

- There's a sewer lift station on the property. Occasionally, the system gets clogged, typically in the rainy season or due to a power outage/surge that trips the alarm. The alarm is pretty loud and, because there's no standby staff to respond and turn it off, it sometimes takes 3-4 hours to disable it. There's a phone number to call but that connects to Honolulu. There is a list of Kaua`i people, who are on-call but not on standby (i.e., they are not in a paid position that must respond in a timely manner to emergency calls). This list is purely voluntary and someone has to go contact each person on the list until someone will respond.

There was standby pay previously, but that was discontinued about 6 months ago. This is a statewide problem: standby pay was about 25% of the typical base pay – i.e., if it's \$50K/yr, standby pay would be \$12,500/yr. If standby pay was made hourly (e.g., \$100/hr), it would still be more economical if a staff member would respond to the occasional call and be compensated for about 3 hours of overtime. Sandi mentioned that they got rid of the landline, so if anyone who provides a personal cell phone will essentially be on standby to respond. In addition to the annoying and continuously blaring alarm, this is a public health concern because as one unit gets clogged, the overflow continues down the street from one house to the next. Sandi reiterated that they do not have a maintenance foreman like some other housing complexes and that they are not trying to ask for more in general, but asking for an emergency call response system and for the residents' concerns to be addressed. The area is also locked, so the responder would need to access their key as well. Chad and Stephanie will work with Sandi and the other Asset Management Projects statewide to address this and try to get a local solution, as well.

Solving this is a risk management issue. Because this is on state land, if a spill occurred and was pointed out to the county, the fine is more than \$100K, especially if the spill goes outside of the fenced area. So, it's even more cost effective to pay people a premium because the fine is considerably higher.

Agenda Topic #5: Resident Association and resident issues/concerns.

Agenda Topic #6: Staff and Management issues/concerns.

Presented by Chad Taniguchi and Clarissa Hosino

- Earlier in the meeting, when Jenny from the Hanama`ulu community answered a few questions, it segwayed into Clarissa asking Sandi if she thinks they give the Hanama`ulu community as much support as they do in Kapa`a. Sandi indicated that the group will still hold meetings if the Kapa`a staff isn't able to help them. Clarissa asked if they could be stronger if they had more staff/resources involved, and Sandi indicated that they could, but their board is not strong. Kapa`a understands that they need more people involved so that things don't fall apart if any one member moves away. In Hanama`ulu, the board or association is not strong and momentum is broken and/or projects fall apart when an active member moves away. Boards and associations need to get to a point where it can maximize efficiency and effectiveness with minimal effort. Sandi has reached out to the Hanama`ulu group to work with them, but often she gets no response. On a positive note, though, they currently have a full board because they had elections very recently.

Key is stronger relationship between staff and management with the community. Otherwise, there's fighting. Sandi said it's time-consuming and it's not easy staff wise; but because it's important, she devotes the time to keep pursuing it. Chad suggested having this meeting in Hanama`ulu next time. Clarissa suggested having an umbrella association in which the strongest association oversees all the associations until the weaker ones are more developed, stable, and independent. Laurie Ho, the meeting facilitator, asked if there was a neighborhood board on Kaua`i. There is one starting, but it's not operating yet.

- Clarissa referred residents to the handout entitled "A Message from Resident Representative CLARISSA HOSINO." Clarissa works with the Resident Advisory Board to establish equal understanding between residents, staff and management so everyone's voices and concerns are heard and addressed. An association of committed residents can represent all the residents in an organized fashion, especially when approaching management with concerns. A strong association creates a strong foundation. It can get funding to run the association and may even have an umbrella structure in which the most well-coordinated and, under Asset Management Projects, well-organized association on the island leads the other local associations to share their best practices and learn from one another. Clarissa told residents that they, as a community, can make great change and they can't expect management to care as much as their association can.

Having a Resident Advisory Board (RAB) will also provide other benefits. It will address policies of HPHA to see what everyone agrees on or not and what issues to prioritize. If residents have any concerns or issues, they can submit that and the RAB goes over 18 components (i.e., evaluation criteria), send recommendations and findings to the Executive Director will then send his findings back to the RAB until the issues is resolved. This is usually an 18 month process. There is a resident representative for Kaua`i who can bring the Public Housing Authority's plan and address the associations and residents, explaining any changes made to get the residents' and association members' input. This is especially important in terms of asset management issues.

Audits will be done on all associations before they receive their funds to ensure each association is using their funds appropriately.

Allen (last name?) and Clarissa with resident services will try to come out on site to help create stronger foundations to make everyone happy. They want residents to help be the eyes and ears for each neighborhood, which is particularly important at the housing complexes at which there is not management staff on property 24 hours around the clock.

Sandi indicated that when the RAB comes with their comments at their next meeting, the residents can go over each change so everyone knows what's going on and Sandi can forward their concerns back to the RAB. A RAB member must attend each meeting. This is an annual requirement per the resident plan. Bylaws, however, need to be corrected to reflect HPHA in certain sections in which other agencies are noted.

- Another question came up on whether the eviction process and the board are working now, which Sandi indicated that it is.
- Chad reported that a new law will take effect on January 1, 2009 that makes it illegal to drink any alcoholic beverages in the commons areas. Commons areas include anything property outside of a housing unit, including walkways extending from the unit and the yard(s) around the unit. Basically, a resident can drink inside the unit, but not anywhere on the property outside of a unit. This law was requested by people living in public housing, particularly at the Mayor Wright Housing site in Honolulu where police responded to numerous calls – including public drinking in residents' yards – and officers were unable to do anything about it. When fighting and other inappropriate activity happens due to drinking, unless it's in the commons areas, police and other law enforcement cannot take any action. Now, in commons areas, they can make arrests and/or remove perpetrators, if needed. HPHA is currently meeting with prosecutors and police to discuss law enforcement issues as they pertain to the housing bylaws.
- Representative Rhodes plans to introduce a bill to stop smoking in public housing (i.e., outside of commons areas). Clarissa is writing a letter to Rep Rhodes that this is extreme and unfair and suggested designated areas for smoking, and she'd like to garner as many residents' signatures as possible. She'll circulate that around when it's completed.
- Sandi reported that the residents are very active in their volunteerism, working on a lot of projects that impact the community outside of their public housing, including the Coconut Festival during the weekend of October 11th.
- Sandi reported that the elderly gardening project is also on its way.
- There are storage units (utility closets) on property, so there's no need to store gasoline inside any of the units. There's room for the water heater and storage.
- If there is a resident association at the housing complex, HPHA encourages residents to paint the exterior of buildings. HPHA will provide the painting materials if the residents can do the actual painting. The residents at the Kapa`a site were enthusiastic about it and would like follow up. One of the residents pointed out that the Kaua`i Police Department has helped them in the past with similar maintenance activities, so there's no lack of interest there. Residents considered it part of their community resident volunteer activity.
- Chad praised the Kapa`a public housing (its residents, board members and staff) for all its good work and its valuable feedback at this meeting, and he mentioned that they find that Kaua`i is where things seem these positive things happen and things get done.

Chad concluded the meeting at 7:15pm.