

HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD  
MINUTES  
CITY OF MESA  
MESA HOUSING SERVICES  
415 N PASADENA STREET  
November 18, 2004  
-MINUTES-

MEMBERS

Ms. Mary Bolig  
Mr. Jon Burroughs (Unexcused)  
Mr. Robert Hisserich  
Mr. LaShawn Jenkins  
Mr. Raymond Jones  
Ms. Judy Kent  
Mr. Ken Salas (Excused)

Ms. Linda Starr (Excused)

STAFF

Ms. Nichole Ayoola  
Ms. Kathleen Kelly  
Ms. Ruth Anne Norris  
Ms. Lisa Wilson

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Raymond Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was held at Mesa Housing Services. Dr. Ed Valenzuela was introduced to the Board.

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

There were no citizen's comments.

OCTOBER 28, 2004 MEETING MINUTES

The minutes will be approved at the January 27, 2004 meeting.

PRINCIPALS OF FAIR HOUSING

Dr. Ed Valenzuela of the Arizona Fair Housing Center gave a presentation to Board members regarding Fair Housing.

Fair Housing is the right for individuals to obtain the housing of their choice, free from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin. The Federal Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968 and amended in 1990 to make it unlawful to discriminate in the sale, rental, financing, and insuring of housing. The Housing for older persons Act of 1995 provides for senior communities intended and operated for occupancy by persons 55 years of age or older.

Since 1991 The Fair Housing Center, Department of Justice and The Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) have recovered approximately \$190 million dollars against violators.

“Testers” are used to validate certain complaints for the Attorney General’s Office and the City of Phoenix. The testers are trained and must follow a script during visits in the field. The conversations are recorded. Once the complaint is verified the violation is

reported and the law enforced. The case is reported to the Attorney General's Office, HUD or directly to the Justice Department.

As landlord/tenant conflicts are considered civil issues, there is not an agency that enforces the Landlord Tenant Act or Mobile Home Act. Individuals must contact a private attorney, community legal services, or represent themselves in court.

The Fair Housing Center receives numerous calls from tenants who feel they have been victimized. Rising awareness brings out many complaints. Discrimination is there and the Fair Housing Center's job is to disseminate information and make sure people know where to seek assistance.

The Arizona Fair Housing Center provides educational outreach to the public in both English and Spanish. The information is also given to consumers, housing providers, leasing agents and managers. The law also covers any real estate activity with brokers.

HUD requires the City of Mesa to conduct an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice to plan and take appropriate actions to overcome the impediments (barriers to fair housing opportunity). This can become part of City policy. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) can provide funding to correct any problems from these findings. Further studies can also be made to investigate the number of individuals that are homeless due to unlawful discrimination.

More resources are needed to address the issue of domestic violence cases because women are more likely to be victimized twice; by enduring the violence itself and by being evicted because of the domestic violence. DV falls under enforcement through the Crime Free Housing Program. This program requires tenants of participating multi-housing complexes to sign an agreement stating that they will not commit any criminal offense. Criminals are not a protected class therefore violation could result in eviction.

Judy Kent asked if many of the cases were due to absentee landlords such as large group corporations or by single-family owners. Dr. Valenzuela stated that they must involve four units or homes to fall under requirements of the Fair Housing law. The only time a private homeowner can become subject to the law is if they are discriminating within their advertisement. Advertising is very explicit. Pictures must include all races, certain words must be avoided and the location of the advertisement must not exclude certain types of people.

LaShawn Jenkins asked about how they distribute the Fair housing questionnaires. Dr. Valenzuela stated that they are distributed to individuals, at conferences and community meetings. Ms. Kelly also added that the questionnaires are posted on the Community Revitalization website in English and Spanish. Lisa Wilson asked where a Spanish translation of the Fair Housing Act could be found. An option is to look at the South East Valley Board of Realtors website or contact the Arizona Fair Housing Center for more literature in Spanish.

### MESA 2025 UPDATE

Ms. Ayoola gave an update on Neighborhood Services Department's presentation to the Finance Committee. Mesa 2025 Financing the Future presentation that will be completed by December 1, 2004. Lisha A. García, Neighborhood Services Department Manager will present the final version of the presentation at a public meeting on Wednesday, December 8, 2004 at 5:30 p.m. in the Lower Level Council Chambers. Board members are encouraged to attend. The committee is made up of a group of Mesa citizens that make recommendations on how the City departments should be funded through build out. The presentation will give an overview of each of the divisions within Neighborhood Services. It will include comparisons of operations and funding between six national cities and six local cities in order to find out the future challenges.

Ms. Ayoola sent a memo by email to all Board members regarding the joint allocation process with Mesa United Way and about Mesa 2025. A press release was put out about the joint allocation process. A large number of people attended the joint allocation meeting. The application packets will be available in early January.

### MONTHLY HOUSING DIRECTORS/MANAGEMENT REPORT

Mesa Housing Services Director Ruth Anne Norris gave an overview of the monthly housing report. Housing Services received 569 new requests for housing assistance. No new Section 8 families were leased this month, two new families with portable vouchers were absorbed into Mesa's program, and 23 families were terminated. The Section 8 lease-up rate decreased slightly from 93% to 90%, and the Affordable Housing lease-up rate increased from 80% to 92%. Monthly housing assistance payments were made in the amount of \$897 twelve to 623 private sector landlords in Mesa.

Ms. Norris included a new report on families that were terminated from the Section 8 program in October. They will have 23 vouchers available for people on the waiting list. The process is time consuming because the applicant's paperwork is verified in detail. As of July 2003 all new admissions require a criminal background check, which is completed by the Mesa Police Department and the Department of Public Safety. Violent crimes are not accepted unless the crime was committed 15 years ago. The background checks are done when a person is called in for an interview from the waiting list.

Mr. Hisserich asked if a Section 8 applicant who may qualify to buy a home with federal assistance is given that information. Ms. Norris stated that a Homeownership Coordinator sends out letters regarding the homeownership program and there is also a homeowner's club where they can get credit counseling. In most of the cases it takes about two years to move low-income individuals to homeownership. The key issues are credit problems and customers being in debt. Housing for Mesa provides counseling for those wanting to buy a home. Clients can also receive down payment assistance. The staff has been working extremely hard on the waiting list for Escobedo. Out of 101 units 93 were leased at the end of October. A report stated that there would be two vacant units by the end of the month.

## HOUSING REHABILITATION PRESENTATION

Due to the absence of Chris DeCaluwe Housing Services Rehab Supervisor Ms. Norris provided the Board with information about the Housing Rehabilitation Program. Ms. Norris explained the process of qualifying for the program. In emergency cases a Housing Services Specialist is sent out right away. The program has limited funding and there is a cap of \$35,000 on major repairs.

The Housing Services Specialist does a walk-through to determine an estimated amount of charges. A list of contractors is maintained and homeowners are required to select four contractors from the list. The contractors that are selected are invited to attend a walk through. The contractors submit bids but are not made aware of the estimated charges from Mesa Housing Services. The bids must be within 15% of the office estimate. Once the contract has been reviewed and approved by the Housing Director the project can be started. There are five components to the program:

- Deferred Payment Loan (DPL), which is a forgivable, non-interest bearing loan secured by a 7-10 year lien.
- Revolving Loans are designed to spread funding over a large number of participants by requiring the homeowner to pay for a portion of the rehabilitation costs.
- Permanent Lien Loans are non-interest bearing loans and become due and payable when the homeowner sells the home or it otherwise changes homeownership to someone other than the qualifying member of the family.
- Emergency Grants are granted to eliminate threats to life, safety or health. The maximum allowed under the emergency grant is \$7500 per dwelling. A lien will not be placed on the property. If the amount of repairs exceeds the maximum amount of the grant, the owner has the option of paying the overage to prevent a lien being placed on the property.

Permanent liens will be paid off when a home is sold and the funds will be returned to the Community Develop Block Grant (CDBG) fund.

Ms. Norris states that the homeowner makes payments depending on their qualifications. If they are below 80% of median income there are no costs but if they are above 80% median income level, they must participate directly with a loan program and make interest free payments.

Ms. Norris added that the homeowners attend a maintenance class and are given a handbook developed by staff with excellent tips. Also, contractors must be licensed, meet federal standards and provide a drug-free work place to be considered for any project.

Ms. Kent asked if Mesa CDBG funds are used to replace mobile homes. Ms. Norris stated that she would give that information to the Board at the next meeting.

## STAFF REPORTS

Ms. Wilson gave a brief report about the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) kick off event. Volunteers and their families were treated to a BBQ dinner and prizes. Sue

Long of the Mesa family YMCA and a member of the Mesa EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit) Collaboration assisted with the planning of the event.

Ms. Ayoola briefed the Board on the Arizona Community Action Association meeting held in Globe. The discussion focused on the new funding formula for the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG). The formula determines how the funds are distributed throughout areas in Arizona. The funds are used to provide services to low-income individuals and families in the areas of employment, housing, food, nutrition, education and emergency assistance. This year our funds will be slightly lower due to the new formula.

Ms. Norris spoke about the new housing board that is being created. An ordinance is being created to establish the new board. Details have not been made as to how this would affect the H&HSAB.

Ms. Ayoola stated that there is enough work for two boards but the issues are interrelated which would require dialogue between them.

Ms. Kelly added that Mayor Hawker has expressed concerns and advocates more housing available for people of higher income levels. By having a different housing board they can cover a larger spectrum. The housing board is currently in the planning stages and there is interest about working with mobile homes.

Ms. Norris spoke about a new component to the administration plan called “project based” to the Section 8 voucher. The current administration plan was started by the former housing director and is not compliant with HUD regulations therefore, it must be corrected. The administration plan must have a project-based component. Also, two Escobedo units have been converted for office use and the rehab office has been modernized.

Ms. Ayoola spoke with Brian Trethaway about the ABC: A Better Community program October report. He stated the funds were adjusted for the last two months. The adjustment was based on the finance system integrating with the new computer system.

#### ADJOURN

Since there were no further items to discuss Raymond Jones made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Jenkins seconded his motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm. And the group toured the Mesa Housing Services facility.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Nichole V. Ayoola, Human Services Coordinator