



MESA HOUSING SERVICES GOVERNING BOARD

April 7, 2005

The Mesa Housing Services Governing Board of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on April 7, 2005 at 7:30 a.m.

BOARDMEMBERS PRESENT	BOARDMEMBERS ABSENT	STAFF PRESENT
Keno Hawker, Chairman Rex Griswold Kyle Jones Tom Rawles Janie Thom Claudia Walters Mike Whalen William H. Egan, Sr.	None	Mike Hutchinson Debbie Spinner Barbara Jones

1. Conduct a public hearing to discuss the Mesa Housing Services' Streamlined Five-Year Plan.

Mayor Hawker welcomed Mr. Egan as the newest member of the Board.

Housing Services Director Ruth Anne Norris and Senior Housing Specialist Debbie Cooke addressed the Boardmembers relative to this agenda item.

Ms. Norris reported that as a result of changes in the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations several years ago, the City Council established the Mesa Housing Services Governing Board. She explained that the Board consists of the Mayor, the Councilmembers and one member of the community who is participating in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Ms. Norris stated that as part of the Mesa Housing Services Division's (MHSD) requirements for continued funding for its Section 8 Program, staff is required to provide HUD with an Annual Plan and Five-Year Plan. She added that the plans must be reviewed and approved by the Governing Board prior to their submission to HUD on April 17, 2005.

Ms. Norris said that it was brought to her attention this morning that while she provided the Boardmembers with the resolutions and a memo outlining the two plans, she inadvertently failed to include the Five-Year Plan and Annual Plan. She suggested, at the Board's discretion, that it might be appropriate to postpone the meeting until such time as the Board has the opportunity to review the plans.

Chairman Hawker stated that he would be agreeable to a delay, but proposed that the Board conduct the public hearing in the event there are citizens present in the audience who wish to address the Board at this time.

Chairman Hawker announced that this is the time and place for a public hearing regarding the Mesa Housing Services' Streamlined Five-Year Plan and Streamlined Annual Plan.

There being no citizens present wishing to speak on this issue, the Chairman declared the public hearing closed.

2. Conduct a public hearing to discuss the Mesa Housing Services' Streamlined Annual Plan.

(Public hearing was conducted under agenda item 1.)

3. Consider a resolution authorizing approval and submission of the Streamlined Five-Year Plan.

Chairman Hawker referred to Page 3 of the Mesa Housing Services Governing Board Report and commented that relative to MHSD's suggested goals for the next five-year period, he would like to include the following goal: "To move existing recipients and children away from the HUD-assisted program." He stated the opinion that such a goal would encourage self-reliance and would also apply to the Voucher Homeownership Program, which provides for qualified individuals/families to purchase a home and use their voucher for a period of 15 years to assist with the mortgage payment. He stated that although the program "makes some sense" for the handicapped and elderly, it is his goal that the participants in the program do not become so dependent on such assistance that they never take the necessary steps to become self-reliant.

Chairman Hawker also expressed concerns regarding the fact that participants in the Section 8 Program whose incomes exceed 30% of the median income criteria are penalized and may be encouraged to quit their jobs in order to remain qualified for housing assistance. He requested input from staff regarding whether it would be appropriate to address such issues as part of MHSD's suggested goals for the next five-year period.

In response to Chairman Hawker's comments, Ms. Norris clarified that while she shares his concerns, it is important to note that the Section 8 Program is one of HUD's most regulated programs. She stated, as an example, that while the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program provides recipients with greater flexibility regarding the manner in which they use their funds and designs programs to fit the needs of the community, Section 8 does not offer such options. Ms. Norris also noted that as the Housing Services Director, she is unable to grant any leeway whatsoever to Mesa's participants relative to the manner in which the City administers the program.

Ms. Norris further indicated that when individuals voluntarily quit their jobs in an attempt to stay on Section 8 housing, rather than recognize they have an opportunity to leave the program and earn sufficient income to support their families, she has no tools with which to address such action. She added that these are Federal regulatory decisions that must be made and stated that she would welcome the Board's assistance in taking the message back to the government leaders in Washington, D.C.

Chairman Hawker commented that the Boardmembers, in their capacity as City

Councilmembers, travel on occasion to Washington, D.C. to lobby for support on various issues that impact the City of Mesa. He stated that he is aware of several Councilmembers who are interested in the topics being discussed this morning and agreed that the manner in which to address such concerns is by changing Federal law. Chairman Hawker advised that he will be traveling to Washington, D.C. next week and requested that Ms. Norris identify for him the problems she has encountered with the Section 8 Program and outline how greater flexibility in HUD's regulations would assist the participants in becoming more self-reliant.

Ms. Norris stated that she would be pleased to assist Chairman Hawker with his request and noted that one of her primary goals for MHSD is to establish time limits relative to the length of time working families should be allowed to receive Federal assistance. She added that she also has concerns relative to fostering the participants' dependency on such assistance.

Discussion ensued relative to the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, which works with families who voluntarily elect to participate in the program to promote self-sufficiency and provide referrals to various service providers; the fact that the program is detailed in the Annual Plan; the fact that MHSD has implemented a strong de-concentration policy, whereby eligible low-income families or individuals who receive a voucher are encouraged to relocate to newly developed areas beyond west and central Mesa locales; the fact that the vast majority of the landlords who provide Section 8 housing are located within the state; and a breakdown of the primary household income (i.e., wages, food stamps, unemployment benefits, cash assistance) of the participants in the program.

Boardmember Walters suggested that the following goal be included as part of MHSD's five-year plan: "Work with HUD to reform the regulations, while giving the local housing departments greater discretion." She commented that by including such an objective in the plan, Mesa would have greater leverage when City officials travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with the legislators and discuss this issue.

In response to a question from Boardmember Egan, Ms. Norris clarified that staff is required by HUD to recertify every participant in the Section 8 Program on an annual basis. She added that when participants experience a change in their income levels, they are required to inform the City of such changes within ten days.

Boardmember Griswold concurred with the comments of the other Boardmembers and said that he would like to see greater flexibility with regard to the Section 8 Program's regulations. He acknowledged that it would be necessary to implement such changes gradually over a period of time.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson suggested that the Board reconvene on April 14, 2005 in order to consider the adoption of the resolutions for the Five-Year Plan and Annual Plan.

Chairman Hawker thanked Mr. Egan for his participation.

4. Consider a resolution authorizing approval and submission of the Streamlined Annual Plan.

(Discussion continued. See agenda item 1.)

5. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Mesa Housing Services Governing Board Meeting adjourned at 7:58 a.m.

KENO HAWKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Mesa Housing Services Governing Board of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 7th day of April 2005. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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