

Rhode Island Housing Resources Commission  
Minutes of March 30, 2012  
Quarterly Meeting



Commissioners & Designees:

Cola, Jeanne – Chair

Bodington, Susan; Representing James DeRentis  
Botts, Christine; Representing Craig Stenning  
Bruckshaw, James; Representing Robert  
Vanderslice  
DeLuca, William  
Evora, Michael  
Fenton, William  
Flynn, Kevin; Representing Richard Licht  
Hammarstrom, David  
Hannifan, Chris

Hazen Aaronson, Roberta  
Lovegrove, Angela; Representing Michael Evora  
McGunagle, Joanne  
Moore, Jamie  
Raymond, Joseph  
Ryczek, Jim  
Schultz, Gregory; Representing Peter Kilmartin  
Sekeres, Bonnie  
Valliere, Albert  
Zaslow, Carrie

Staff:

Davis, Jeff  
De Los Santos, Doris  
Dennehy, Peter  
Frumerie, Caitlin  
House, June

Kue, Simon  
Neirinckx, Ray  
Price, Darlene  
Tondra, Michael  
Vittorioso, Dawn

Guests

Archambault, Laura  
Brophy, Michelle  
Cucco, John

Fernandez, Paola  
Gorbea, Nellie  
Hirsh, Eric

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Jeanne Cola, Chair at 8:39 a.m.

**2. Approval of January 13, 2012 Minutes – *for vote***

William DeLuca moved acceptance of the minutes as submitted and Jim Ryczek seconded. Minutes approved.

**3. Report of the HRC Chair/Director**

Jeanne introduced Mike Tondra who then discussed the following items:

- HRC staff has met with the Governor's office to discuss expired/expiring commissioners. A list of recommended appointments/reappointments has been developed, incorporating comments received from the HRC. Appointments will be made so that expirations are staggered over time. Mike said that the final list will be forwarded to the Governor's Office and then asked the existing Commissioners continue to serve until a replacement has been appointed and confirmed by the Senate.
- Mike explained that Doris De Los Santos - HRC staff person (Performance & Evaluation) related to Healthy Housing, has been on loan to the Governor's Office for over a year. He said that the office is unable to go forward with filing this position at this time. Mike has requested that Doris be permitted to return to the HRC so that tasks (tracking, monitoring and enforcement activities related to Lead Hazards) can receive the attention they need.
- The Governor's Budget recommended a \$25M affordable housing bond be placed on the ballot in 2012. Senate and House hearings were conducted with many community stakeholders expressing support of the proposal. Consistent testimony requested that the amount of the bond be increased and/or structured more in line with the 2006 housing bond, to assure the program can make significant impact on the housing need and economy.
- The General Assembly has been active with legislation related to housing. The HRC staff continues to draft position papers on the legislation introduced and will testify whenever determined appropriate.
- The Office of Housing and Community Development is working with RI Housing and the HMIS Committee leadership to assess the current HMIS system and develop recommendations on how to improve system administration and data quality. Mike said that the Consolidated Homeless Fund Committee reserved funds, subject to approval of the Governor's Office, to improve HMIS operations. RIH and the HRC have funds which can be used to secure a consultant and HUD technical assistance, as appropriate.

- The media has been focusing their attention around homeless Winter Shelters and Harrington Hall transition situations. Mike said that Senator Tassoni called a hearing to discuss these topics; a great deal of testimony related to the sex-offender population was heard.
- Mike provided an update on the Gloria McDonald building and said the building is now vacant and cleaned. He said that the transfer of this building from DOC to DOA should occur in the near future by the State Properties Committee. He then added that the CHF Committee reserved funds necessary to expand services and/or rehabilitation to improve conditions at this shelter.
- The next quarterly meeting of the ICH is planned for Thursday, April 5th. The Executive Offices of HHS has worked with ICH Staff, Michelle Brophy, to arrange a Service Fair at Harrington Hall on Friday, April 6th. Mike said that this will allow certain benefits/services to be accessed directly on site for program consumers.
- Mike briefly provided an update on CDBG, CDBG-DR and NSP applications and said that the cycles are underway.

Highlights of the above items in which the Housing Resources Commission engaged in discussion are as follows:

Kevin Flynn noted that while the transfer of the Gloria McDonald facility may occur it is not a guarantee that the facility will be utilized for the homeless shelter. He said that the DOA could, potentially, utilize the facility for other purposes. Jim Ryczek elaborated on current issues, including neighborhood concerns related to sex offenders. Jim noted that an average of two percent of the population served are sexual offenders. Jim noted that the Cranston Police Department has not received any complaints about individuals staying in the Pastore Complex. Joanne McGunagle asked if the complaints originated with businesses and residential owners within the Garden City neighborhood. Jim noticed that resident organization, Keep Cranston Safe, were primarily those voicing concerns.

Lastly, Mike took a moment to welcome Nancy Smith Greer representing HUD; John Cucco, representing the Governor's office; Jeff Davis representing DOP and Jamie Moore who currently represents RI Realtors.

#### **4. Resolution – Adoption of “Opening Doors Rhode Island” – for vote**

Jeanne began by briefly summarizing the presentation that was conducted at the last Quarterly meeting. Mike provided a summary of the actions taken since that time and noted that the Plan details specific goals and actions that must be taken to reduce/end homelessness in RI. The Plan aligns with the federal strategy to end homelessness and includes signature initiatives such as the elimination of homelessness among sub populations, namely veterans and chronically homeless. Implementing the Plan would ultimately lead to a change in the way the State responds to the crisis of homelessness.

Mike said since the HRC is responsible for the planning, policy and programs for the State on issues related to housing and homelessness, he asked the Commissioners to consider the passage of Resolution #1 which formally adopts ODRI as the State's homelessness plan. This plan will also be brought to the ICH for their adoption at the next scheduled meeting.

Sue Bodington took a moment and noted that RIH is supportive of the Plan; however, the RIH Board is concerned that the Plan is too ambitious and very expensive. Sue said that recent discussions with the General Assembly indicated that the State will not have resources to support the level of effort required and the State will look to RIH to fully fund plan implementation. She then added that RIH does not have the resources to implement the Plan and therefore, abstained from the vote.

Jim Ryczek noted that the plan was developed through an extensive/inclusive process, which involved Rhode Island Housing. The reality of full implementation is challenging. He hopes the document will prompt State leadership on what must be done to eliminate homelessness in Rhode Island. Jim was sympathetic to Rhode Island Housing's abstention/comments, acknowledging the funding limitations of the agency. While he understood the agency's hesitation, Jim felt it was unfortunate Rhode Island Housing was unable to vote for the plan at this time.

Jeanne asked for a motion to approve the Plan. Kevin Flynn moved to approve the policy for adjustments and amendments that staff recommends. Carrie Zaslow seconded. The motion approved with one abstention from Susan Bodington (RI Housing).

##### **5. Resolution – Approval of Strategic Housing Plan Scope of Work – for vote**

Mike explained that the State received a Sustainable Communities award which included funds to re-write the State's Strategic Housing Plan, as an element of the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. The Division of Planning is taking the lead on this initiative and they are hiring staff to coordinate the Sustainable Communities initiative; as well as the handling of procurement of services. He then said that the HRC has worked to develop a preliminary Scope of Work which will guide the Housing document. It is based upon the previous scope of work developed for the Strategic Housing Plan, adjusted for comments received by HRC Commissioners and community stakeholders. Mike reintroduced Jeff Davis who provided a brief overview of the budgeted items and then asked if anyone had any questions.

Carrie Zaslow took a moment to emphasize that this Plan needs to be integrated with other Plans because it does not only pertain to housing, it is about sustainability. She then referred to the section that discusses interviewing housing stakeholders and suggested broadening this section to include other areas that helped to coordinate efforts such as jobs, etc. Mike thanked her for the suggestion and then agreed that the intent is to integrate existing plans into one document.

As there were no further comments, Mike asked the HRC to approve the Strategic Housing Plan, Scope of Work, as attached and to be incorporated into the overall Request for Proposals (RFP) to be drafted by the Division of Planning related to its Sustainable Communities award. The HRC also grants the authority to the Division of Planning and Office of Housing and Community

Development to draft and incorporate any necessary revisions as determined appropriate for its inclusion in the overall RFP.

Jeanne asked for a motion to approve the Resolution. Carrie Zaslów moved to approve and David Hammarstrom seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

**6. HRC Work Plan and Committee Structure – for discussion**

Mike referred to the preliminary draft work plan as distributed in the Commissioner's packets and explained that staff has been working to develop a work plan for the upcoming year. He then said the Plan includes an updated website structure, staff assignments/focus areas and a revised meeting structure.

Mike noted offices of the HRC (CD/Homeownership - Lead - Homelessness) will be conducting quarterly meetings. To be proactive of the recommendations for Opening Doors RI, the HRC has preliminarily proposed adjusting the committee structure of the Homelessness office to focus on the goals/strategies of the plan - ultimately moving to a more implementation model for the meetings.

Mike welcomed comments on the document and then said that the summary will be provided to the existing COC Governance committee for their consideration as well. Bonnie Sekeres suggested adding the content to include senior housing population. Bonnie mentioned that this will be important to note within the Plan because HUD eliminated funding next year for senior housing throughout the country. Mike said that it was a good point to note and thanked Bonnie. Next, Jim Ryczek expressed his strong support on the structure that is being proposed. There being no further questions, Jeanne introduced the next item on the agenda.

**7. Neighborhood Opportunities Program (NOP) Process – for discussion**

Jeanne reminded the Commission that the current year's budget required that RI Housing fund the Neighborhood Opportunities Program (NOP) at \$1.5 million. She said that applications were solicited and are expected to be reviewed by the NOP evaluation committee during the first week of April. Mike noted that the only difference in this year's cycle is that capital is now included as an ineligible category whereas in the recent past it was provided for operating subsidies only. Mike stated that the purpose was to recognize that the last of the bond funds were obligated in early 2011 and with the reduction of HOME and other programs, there was a potential need for additional capital as well as operating expenses.

Jeanne said the purpose of this item was to provide the Commissioners with a progress update. She then asked if anyone had any questions. There being none, she introduced the next item on the agenda.

**8. Consolidated Homeless Fund (Emergency Solutions Grant) Distribution Plan – for discussion**

Mike explained that the CHF is compressed of several sources, including State and local Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding. The State/Cities are required to submit distribution plans to HUD which generally details the process which will be followed for the allocation of funds. This process mirrors the process that was used for the former ESG funding.

Mike said that the purpose for including this item on the agenda is to solicit any comments that the Commissioners or the general public may have on the draft distribution plan. He then added that the cities and towns enjoyed working with the OHCD on the Rapid Rehousing Program and they asked that the OHCD to continue the relationship with their homelessness funding. Mike said that the cities of Providence, Woonsocket and Pawtucket have asked the state to operate their homelessness program in collaboration. Mike asked if anyone had any questions or comments. There being none, Jeanne thanked Caitlin and Mike and moved onto the next agenda item.

**9. Announcements**

Jim Ryczek announced that Brenda Clement accepted a position in Massachusetts and he will be coordinating a farewell party. Jeanne Cola, on behalf of the HRC and RI residents and RI Housing said they appreciate all the work that Brenda has done and thinks it's important to recognize her efforts.

Additionally, Jim discussed the annual awards luncheon that was held and said he received positive feedback on the event.

Roberta Hazen Aaronson took a moment to discuss the budget cuts with the Healthy Housing program. She said that 94% of Health Departments received a budget cut. She asked the Commissioners for their continued support and asked them to sign the electronic petition, which can be found at [www.facebook.com/childhoodleadactionproject](http://www.facebook.com/childhoodleadactionproject). Jeanne thanked Roberta for bringing the issue to the Commission's attention.

Chris Hannifan announced that the House of Hope will have a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the five units on Thayer Street in Providence on Monday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**10. Public Comment Period:**

Nellie Gorbea who represents HousingWorks RI distributed the Third Annual Special Report, which discusses Foreclosures in Rhode Island. (See attachment 1)

**11. Adjourn:**

As there were no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 9:37 a.m.