

bha update

April 2005

Board of Commissioners

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Robert Graham . Interim Executive Director

The BHA Update is a report from the newly appointed Board of Commissioners, Chaired by Rosa J. Correa

Dear Friend,

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring you up to date with our plans to reorganize and recreate this Authority. The BHA Update will share our mission and vision, identify our challenges, and clarify our plan of action and reorganization.

As you are undoubtedly aware the BHA has been in a state of transition for the last 18 months. That has meant the appointment by the Mayor of a new Board of Commissioners. Our first step was to hire an Interim Executive Director who had the experience of turning around troubled agencies. A decision has been made for the position of the new permanent Executive Director. At the time of production of this *Update* the Board and the chosen applicant were ironing out the details of the agreement. It is possible that by the time you receive this notice we will have already announced our decision.

The BHA does need to reorganize, improve our infrastructure, better serve our residents, operate a more transparent and accountable Authority, and reduce our vacancy rate. We are presently working on a corrective action plan. The Authority also will become a partner in the city's efforts to provide affordable housing to complement the City's community development plans.

Although this Board of Commissioners is not responsible for BHA's recent mis-management, we accept the responsibility to execute changes that will ensure credibility, efficiency, and excellent customer service for our residents and all who transact business with us. We are truly optimistic that we have turned the corner and together we will secure a successful future.

Rosa J. Correa, *Chairperson*

Robert Graham, *Interim Executive Director*

Specific BHA Actions

Through re-allocations of the capital fund the BHA will restore the physical plant, specifically for elevators and fire alarms at Greene Homes as well as improving building systems at all of the other developments. Plant restoration also includes repairing hazardous sidewalks and improving the general curb appeal of our sites.

The BHA and the City will work together in partnerships with CDCs and others in the development of new housing initiatives including mixed use housing. Furthermore, the Authority will participate in the adaptive re-use of Bridgeport properties..

BHA Core Mission

To provide our residents a safe and desirable environment in which to call home, a dignified quality of life. To develop and maintain a community where families can raise their children. To provide neighborhoods which encourage families and children to grow and prosper. To encourage residents to work toward meeting their housing goals; the BHA does so by encouraging resident self-sufficiency, domestic aptitude, and home ownership. BHA will continue to provide appropriate training to that end.

BHA Activity

The BHA meets its mission by encouraging staff development and improving relationships with property owners and leaseholders as well as the community at large. Also, our goals will be realized in part, through the use of a more powerful internal and external communications system while taking advantage of the most current technologies.

Vision

BHA is a leading provider of housing for residents of Bridgeport - and a catalyst for change, if you will, representing those in most need of housing. We aim to enhance the self-esteem of our residents who contribute to the community by paying taxes, working, and providing a wide range of talents. We expect to help people in transition to find housing options while providing services that will help them sustain their properties. BHA will solicit community support for its mission and in turn provide a transparent authority. The BHA will work in concert with the city's community development efforts

RESPONSE TO RECENT CRITICISMS

Recent criticism of the Authority pointed out findings from HUD which suggested:

CRITIQUE

Public Housing waiting List is up to 1700 applicants.

FACT

In fact there number's are approximately 406 as of April 19, 2005 and as a result the BHA is opening the waiting list.

FACT

The average number of days it takes to re-rent an apartment is called turn around time. In the previous fiscal year the BHA's average turn around time to re-rent an apartment was 500 days. Now the BHA has reduced that time to 252 days. Our goal is to reduce this turn around time further to 30 days.

CRITIQUE

The housing authority has over 200 vacant apartments.

FACT

There are now 117 vacant units, 68 are assigned and 49 are available for leasing.

CRITIQUE

Of the 818 Father Panik Village units to be replaced only 505 have been replaced.

TRUTH

To date 520 have been replaced. An additional 12 units will be on-line this summer.

FACT

BHA now operates 2,430 public housing units

CRITIQUE

BHA has Low Section 8 Utilization.

TRUTH

The current Section 8 utilization rate is at 95%.
The Section 8 utilization from Pequonnock relocation is at 75%

Finally,

Bridgeport Housing Authority Commissioners are confident that our commitment, coupled with: on-going training, support from Interim Executive Director Robert Graham, leadership from Mayor John Fabrizi, and the support of our residents and greater communities, will improve the Authority significantly during this transition period. We fully expect to become an efficient operation, a credible Authority through accountability of staff and board, and a provider of additional housing through city-wide partnerships. Our reorganization will lead to efficiencies that will improve our bottom line and the services we provide our residents.

Currently

Within the last year new Commissioners have been appointed and new legal counsel employed. The first step of the newly formed Board of Commissioners was to hire an Interim Executive Director. His expertise in helping troubled agencies encourages and engages staff and other stakeholders in making the recommendations needed to provide direction for the permanent Executive Director. The search for the Executive Director is nearing an end. The board expects to have a permanent Executive Director announced any day now.

Simultaneously, our Interim Director, Robert Graham is preparing a Corrective Action Plan which will identify the Authorities deficiencies and make recommendations for change. A Strategic Plan will outline responsibilities for the corrections and how the deficiencies will be solved.

Daily operations are being improved, the Board of Commissioners are taking part in board training, and a blueprint is being designed which will provide a roadmap for the Authority.

Reorganization

Problem issues related to past procedures, ethics, and financial management of the BHA have been pointed out by Federal Housing and Urban Development Audits. For too long an inappropriate organizational structure has led to many problems including a culture of under-performance, inadequate board oversight, and under-budgeting for personnel. The results of these shortcomings were insufficient professional staff, poor management controls, a poor employee evaluation system, and a lack of employee training.

Our proposed solution is a comprehensive reorganization now so that the BHA could operate effectively and efficiently with appropriate points of accountability. Also, better Board of Commissioner oversight, as well as improved agency budgeting, policies, use of technology, and training will be on-going. We believe these changes will make the agency more results oriented, customer focused, and accountable. The first step of the reorganization has already been approved by the Board of Commissioners.