



FAIRFAX-
FALLS CHURCH
COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD

RECEIVED

2008 FEB -4 A 8:24

DEPT. OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

08-37373

February 1, 2008

Mr. Conrad Egan, Chairman
Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority Commission

Ms. Paula Sampson, Executive Director
Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development
3700 Pender Drive
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Dear Chairman Egan, Ms. Sampson, and Members of the FCRHA:

On behalf of the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, I submit for your serious consideration our comments and suggestions summarized in the attached document in response to the advertised *Draft FCRHA Annual Plan for Fiscal Year 2009*. Our recommendations were reviewed and approved for submission to you by the CSB Housing Advocacy Committee and the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board at their January 30, 2008 Committee and Board meetings.

As we review the past year of strategic planning efforts by our community for ending homelessness, we join in support of the recommendations to direct as the highest priority for preferences more housing subsidy to those most vulnerable and without housing, including homeless single adults with disabilities and homeless families. The concept of "*housing first*" has a proven track record in other communities for moving people off the street, out of shelters, and closer to recovery, sobriety, and mental stability with access to housing without time limits and a choice of support services.

We have also reviewed our CSB waiting list documentation which demonstrates an increased demand for community mental health services and substance abuse treatment, an increase in disability issues among homeless persons, and more adults with intellectual disabilities who are losing their primary caregivers when aging parents die. CSB has begun to analyze its waiting lists to further determine the housing needs of those also waiting for our residential programs. During this analysis, we determined we may wish to re-direct some current funding which pays for market rate apartment rents to expanded service delivery, and could do this if the apartment residents were provided with rental assistance from another source, such as tenant or project based vouchers.

The correlation of successful outcomes in service delivery when people have stable and affordable housing further underscores the need for on-going collaboration between human services and housing professionals. We would, therefore, like to request that the FCRHA direct the Department of Housing and Community Development to establish a **special needs housing work group** to create a clear communication linkage that will allow for on-going collaboration and further analysis of respective roles and resources in the provision of housing and services to the most vulnerable citizens of our community.

Mary Ann Beall
Chair
Providence District

Lynne Crammer
Vice Chair
At-Large

Mattie L. Palmore
Secretary
Mount Vernon District

Renée Alberts, L.P.C.,
C.S.A.C.
At-Large

Susan Beeman
Mason District

Raymond F. Burmester
Braddock District

Diane Engster, J.D.
At-Large

Mark L. Gross
City of Falls Church

Trudy Harsh
Sully District

Glenn Kamber
Hunter Mill District

Martha Lloyd
Lee District

Jean P. McNeal, Ed.D.
Dranesville District

Jerome R. Shapiro,
Ph.D.
City of Fairfax

Lori Stillman
Springfield District

Major Jim Whitley
Office of the Sheriff

Vacant
At-Large

James A. Thur,
MSW, MPH
Executive Director

Mary W. Kudless,
M.S.N. APRN BC
Deputy Director

We appreciate this opportunity to provide input to the Annual Plan each year, but also see the need to work even more closely with your Staff and Commissioners to review public funding, and creative partnerships to better serve those most in need of housing and support services to survive in our community. Our Board members would like the opportunity to further dialogue with the FCRHA Commissioners as schedules permit. Thank you for your time and dedication to the affordable housing needs of our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Ann Beall".

Mary Ann Beall
Chair

Recommendations from CSB for Annual Plan FY09

1. **Support the recommendations of the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness**, by elevating homeless persons to the highest priority for housing subsidy, and rental assistance.
2. **FCRHA Establish a Special Needs Housing Work Group** to include DHCD staff, CSB and DFS staff and private partners, to review the input of human services agencies as it relates to the development and allocation of housing subsidy in Fairfax County with participation from the respective Boards.

Note: There are many new initiatives in human services agencies, and at DHCD coupled with changes in staff throughout the county agencies, therefore new methods for structured collaboration and planning should be developed.

3. The Housing Subsidy Application Process:

- A. **Applications for Subsidy:** CSB supports the procedures for keeping the waiting list open allowing people with disabilities to continue to be added to the list, so they can be considered for any special needs preferences. If the list does not remain open, a scheduled re-opening date is preferred to ensure case managers support of applicants with disabilities.
- B. **Open the waiting list** to those that meet the highest preference category in the areas of homelessness, and those who earn less than \$10,000 per year and have a physical or mental disability. Allow preferences to those homeless and disabled who may pay zero or less than 30 percent of their incomes for housing. Provide reasonable accommodations for those eligible applicants who may have missed their communication from DHCD for reasons related to their disability and housing instability, and in collaboration with their case manager reestablish their position on the waiting list.
- C. **Admission Preferences:** Retain and increase priorities for individuals and families who are homeless, or in transitional housing programs and referred by human services providers. The link between successful community living and stable housing is well documented. People with chronic disabilities can achieve more self-sufficiency with the combination of services as needed, and stable housing that they can afford with their disability income of approximately \$500 per month.
- D. **Identifying disability on the Application:** The applicant should be encouraged to state disability information and accommodations as well as interest in preferences targeted toward those with certain types of disability.
- E. **Additional person to be notified:** For persons working with case managers, applicants with disabilities should have the opportunity to list an additional person to be notified for interview dates and assistance with the application process. Example: Some applicants with chronic mental illness may miss an important step in the interview process due to the symptoms of their disability and would benefit from an identified case manager who would be named to be contacted and assist with the interviews, locating an apartment and interested landlord. Other assistance or accommodations may be needed during the application process.
- F. **Income Qualifications ("Strategy 1")**
 - a. Prioritize for additional subsidy persons who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, and those with extremely low income < 30% AMI. Exceed HUD federal targeting requirements for families at or below 30% of AMI in public housing (p.12)
 - b. Terminate assistance to families above 100% of the AMI who are in public housing to allow those with very low income to be served.

- G. **Apartment Selection Deadlines:** Extend the housing search time frame for an additional 60 days as needed for those with chronic disabilities searching for housing units to allow for mitigating circumstances such as coordination for travel and search assistance, negotiating with reluctant landlords, fast paced real estate market, use of public transportation to visit potential apartments, etc.
- H. **Provide Accommodations and Flexibility:** Provide accommodations and flexibility for qualifications for housing subsidy for former illegal drug users who have completed or successfully participated in a drug treatment program. Treatment works and can help individuals to re-direct their lives to become more self-sufficient and responsible citizens if assistance is provided during periods of initial recovery from substance abuse.
- I. **Increase the length of time:** Increase the length of time applicant organizations can apply for project based subsidy assistance from DHCD. Subsidize some FCRHA owned units for possible project based subsidy for the lowest income tenants with disabilities.

4. **Project Based Vouchers**

A. Increase the notification period for the availability of project based vouchers for persons with disabilities and include FCRHA owned properties as units with subsidy to allow more housing options for the lowest income persons with disabilities.

B. Coan Pond Residences: CSB recommends that 25% of the existing Coan Ponds residences units be subsidized and open to persons with disabilities and SSI income as vacancy occurs. Under current guidelines, individuals with disability income cannot qualify for the Coan Ponds units and there have been no similar projects developed since the inception of Coan Ponds many years ago.

C. Assist housing providers who operate group homes for persons with disabilities with the development of financing and subsidy to encourage more group home development.

5. **Preserve affordable housing units then subsidize:** Preserve affordable housing units then subsidize up to 25% of the units for very low income persons with disabilities by assigning project based vouchers to a specific set aside of units, and tenant based vouchers as they are available. The County has been successful in preserving many garden style apartments throughout the community, which still remain unavailable and not affordable to those living with SSI or less income.

6. **Actively develop and subsidize Residential Studio Units (efficiencies for single adults).**
The need to replicate successful projects such as the FCRHA's Coan Ponds Residences and provide affordable efficiency housing with subsidy is critical to the very low income citizens making less than minimum wage. The CSB endorsed the recommendations of the SRO Task Force Report dated July 2005 and continues to encourage the FCRHA to develop an action plan to develop this housing model using public and private resources. (SRO Report on line at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dsm/raps/projects/sro.htm)