

ADMINISTRATIVE – 1.

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 14-10 Approval to Release for Public Comment a Temporary Amendment to Working Preference Requirement for the Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing Programs

ISSUE:

Approval by the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) to issue a notice to receive public comment on a proposal to amend the Public Housing Admissions and Occupancy Policy and the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Administrative Plan to temporarily reduce the number of hours that the head, spouse, or sole member must meet to qualify for the “working preference” from thirty (30) hours per week to twenty (20) hours per week. This change is proposed due to current economic conditions and the increase in applicants being under-employed. This change will expire in two years.

RECOMMENDATION:

The FCRHA Housing Ownership, Management, and Security (HOMS) Committee, reviewed this item and approved placing it on the March 4, 2010, FCRHA meeting agenda with a recommendation for approval.

TIMING:

Immediate.

RELATION TO FCRHA STRATEGIC PLAN:

Temporarily reducing the number of hours required to meet the working preference from thirty (30) hours to a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week is related to the FCRHA’s goal of preserving, expanding, and facilitating affordable housing opportunities in Fairfax County.

BACKGROUND:

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook requires a Public Housing Authority (PHA) to give notice and opportunity for public comment when it wishes to change its current preference system for waiting list application. HUD allows PHAs to use their discretion in determining whether to hold a public hearing or accept written comments. The Public Housing program does not require a public comment period when changing the waiting list preference system.

The FCRHA has long had a work preference based on the former federal preference that requires the head of household, spouse, or sole member to be working 30 or more

hours per week in addition to meeting the other preferences in order to be served ahead of other families on the waiting lists. Elderly and disabled heads of household, spouses, or sole members are exempt from the work requirement, as are those who are in a training program or institute of higher education at least 30 hours per week or more or is the primary caretaker of a person with disabilities in the household.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the underemployment rate, which includes part-time workers who want full-time work but must settle for part-time employment, has been rising during the current recession. The rates are especially high for minorities and those with lower educational attainment levels, which tend to be those served through the Public Housing (PH) and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) programs. Consequently, fewer households are now qualifying for assistance when it is their turn to be called in from the waiting list. As the economic downturn is expected to last approximately two more years, staff is recommending a temporary exemption to the current 30-hour per week requirement to allow households where able-bodied individuals are working 20 or more hours per week to qualify for the work preference. It is recommended that this exemption continue for two years from the date of implementation.

This exemption would not affect the Fairfax County Rental Program, which has minimum income requirements necessitating a certain level of employment so as not to be rent burdened on those properties. Staff will provide a summary of comments received during the public comment period and return to the FCRHA at its April 29, 2010 meeting with a recommendation to approve changing the preference system in the two federal rental housing programs as outlined above.

STAFF IMPACT:

None.

FISCAL IMPACT:

A deeper subsidy will likely initially be required for applicants with lower incomes admitted to the Housing Choice Voucher program during this period; and revenue may be impacted in the Public Housing Program as rents are based on income.

ENCLOSED DOCUMENTS:

Attachment 1: Resolution 14-10

STAFF:

Paula C. Sampson, Director, Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)

Mary A. Stevens, Deputy Director, HCD

Carol Erhard, Director, Rental Services Division, HCD

Vincent Rogers, Management Analyst, Rental Services Division, HCD

RESOLUTION NUMBER 14 -10

Approval to Release for Public Comment a Temporary Amendment to Working Preference Requirement for the Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing Programs

BE IT RESOLVED that the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) approves issuance of a notice of a 30-day public comment period beginning March 12, 2010 to receive written comments on the proposal to amend the working preference requirement in the Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Plan and Public Housing Admissions and Occupancy Policy to temporarily reduce the number of hours required for the Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing work preference from thirty (30) to twenty (20) for the head of household, spouse, or sole member, as outlined in the Administrative item presented to the FCRHA at its meeting on March 4, 2010.