

Comments and Responses to the BHA FY 2016 Annual Plan.

The following document contains the comments and responses received on the BHA's FY 2016 Annual Plan. The Plan was put out for public comment on November 1, 2015 and the comment period closed on December 15, 2015 with a public hearing held December 9, 2015 at the Boston Public Library Copley Square Branch at 11 am and another at Boston City Hall at 6 pm.

The BHA took several steps to notify the public of the FY 2016 Annual Plan and the opportunity to comment. The BHA placed an advertisement in the Boston Globe, included a notice with the rent statement of public housing residents, sent a mailing to Section 8 participants in Boston and nearby towns and mailed out flyers to public housing resident organizations notifying them of the Public Hearing and the proposed Plan Amendment. The BHA also sent letters to many local officials and advocacy groups. The Plan was made available for review at BHA's headquarters at 52 Chauncy St., and on its website [www.bostonhousing.org](http://www.bostonhousing.org).

## **5 Year Plan**

Comment: The Progress Report on the Five-Year Plan has always played an important role for the BHA and the RAB, as it

gives everyone a chance to step back from the specific reporting requirements of the HUD PHA Plan template and to look at the bigger picture. BHA significantly revised the Progress Report last year to simplify it and limit it to certain key areas. The Progress Report serves several goals. It is meant to articulate, to a broad public, the BHA's vision, accomplishments, and limitations given circumstances beyond its control. It can help to articulate for decision-makers what steps are needed to help support BHA's efforts, and why BHA's programs are so important for the diverse Boston community. At the same time, the Five-Year Plan and the Progress Report are meant to articulate concrete goals and to measure how well BHA has done in meeting those goals—and to identify, when goals have not been achieved, what the barriers are and what steps are being taken.

In some instances, RAB members and residents at particular sites (or those in the Section 8 program) may need a "deeper dive" than is provided in the Progress Report to what's going on. For example, although the Plan may provide information on achievement of overall full occupancy goals, it may be that particular sites are lagging—and because of that may suffer in being able to conduct transfers, etc. Information should be available

somewhere, if not in the Progress Report, so that residents, advocates, and interested members of the public can track this—for example, site-specific information about average unit turn-over time, or the average number of days it takes routine work orders to be processed.

**Structure of the Document**  
The document is organized into Background, Challenges, Key Issues, Opportunities, and then a list of Goals and Updates/Progress Made. This structure is generally helpful, but there are a few suggestions:

- 1/It may make sense to combine the Challenges and Key Issues.
- 2/ It may make sense to underline or highlight the headings under Key Issues (HUD Funding, Personnel/Staffing, Resources).
- 3/ In the Challenges section, BHA is mostly discussing the political/funding climate. But another key challenge is the housing market. Due to gentrification, many tenants of limited means can't live or stay in Boston. Displacement is affecting BHA and other Section 8 voucher participants due to owners electing not to renew leases for "other good cause" (including escalating rents), and it is not clear how many Section 8 participants are able to successfully find alternative

housing within eviction stay and Section 8 search periods. (It would be good to get this data and compare the trends, as well as comparative data on success rates and rent burdens for voucher participants.) There is obviously only so much BHA can do with its limited resources. If Section 8 rents have to increase to match the market, BHA has to serve fewer families—the dollars are limited. There is also the challenge of homelessness, particularly for families. BHA has helped to articulate a model for stabilization efforts (for example, its Housing Court Intervention Project with Homestart) and placement (its homeless priority which is being promoted through the New Lease program in multifamily housing), but it obviously needs others to engage with these challenges as well.

4/ Under Opportunities, it would help to include more concrete examples here, both from the current year and what's projected into the next year. This includes a number of partnerships. BHA has been partnering with the City and with other housing providers, and a good example of that was demonstrated at MBHP's workshop on homeless prevention, which highlighted BHA's stabilization efforts, as well as targeting of Section 8 and public housing units to vulnerable populations. There is obviously the partnership with

private non-profit and for-profit developers shown by the Request for Qualifications at four BHA sites to preserve existing affordable housing. There are partnerships with various non-profit providers, such as collaborations which are trying to ease the burdens of application.

Response: Thank you for these suggestions and the BHA will consider all of them. Most of the suggestions will require some time and discussion and therefore we will plan to make the changes in next year's report. In future we could use the website to provide updated performance and partnership information.

## **Budget**

Comment: AP P. 9: Note that here, BHA points out again that it is not financially feasible to convert from public housing to tenant-based assistance, since this is only permitted where it would be less expensive, and in fact, the Per Unit Monthly (PUM) cost for public housing operating and capital subsidy together is \$875, and for Section 8 (combining average BHA contributions and tenant contributions), it's \$1513/month. It would be good to update the PUM public housing figures for 2015, but I wouldn't expect to see any radical change. BHA's also not required to do

mandatory conversions due to high public housing vacancy rates—vacancy rates are low.

Response: The PUM figure for public housing is a 2015 figure. The year was inadvertently not changed when the plan was updated.

Comment: S Financial Resources (p. 15)

It would help to know if this Project-Based Section 8 is just the allocation out of the HCVP that BHA has chosen to use for project-based Section 8, or if it is something else. Also, the CGP-RHF figure is quite significant, and is more than 1/2 of the Capital Fund figure, so would help to know more about that. For HOPE VI, it would help to know what that is and for what site(s).

Response: The Project Based Section 8 resources on line 1j represent funding from the Moderate Rehabilitation and Single Room Occupancy programs which are separate from the HVCP program funding. The CGP/RHF unobligated funding is comprised of \$7,152,423 from CFP12-14. We are on schedule to obligate all these funds by their respective deadlines. \$4,966,818 of the funds are from RHF12-13 funding. These funds are set aside for development projects. The HOPE VI funds are for Old Colony to cover community and

resident services programs and relocation costs.

Comment: S At p. 41, it's indicated that there were some findings as a result of the audit. It would be helpful to get the audit to know what the findings were, and what the follow-up steps that were taken.

Response: The finding was that Capital grant funds that had been closed out should have been reclassified in the BHA general ledger from Construction in Progress to Buildings. The finding has been corrected with accounting entries and is no longer deemed to be a finding.

Comment: AP p.9 Based on the BHA's \$901 Per Unit Monthly (PUM) cost for covered (general occupancy) you've determined that the change to tenant-based assistance would not be cost effective.

However you say:

The above formula applies to the following developments: Alice Taylor, Bromley Park Barkley (Cathedral), Charlestown, Commonwealth, Franklin Field Heath Street, Lenox Street, Mary Ellen McCormack, Old Colony, West Newton and Whittier Street... What about the other developments?

Response: This is in a section of the Plan under Voluntary Conversion from Public

Housing to Tenant-Based Assistance Initial Assessment and the question only relates to federal family developments over 100 units.

## Capital

Comment: AP P. 15: This notes that BHA does not yet know what Capital Funding it will get for this coming year, and that because of the de-linking of the Capital Fund information from the rest of the Annual Plan, it isn't providing Performance and Evaluation reports. However, BHA is supplying the information about its Capital Plan annual statement and projected 5-year plan. There may be questions about the advantages and disadvantages of this, and whether it may make sense to completely taking the Annual Statement and the 5-year plan out of the rest of the PHA Plan cycle and agree on a time each year that would be done, along with the P&E reports, and it would be good to hear BHA's thoughts on that. If BHA thinks there are good reasons to keep the Annual & Five Year Plan together with the rest of the Annual Plan, then it would be helpful to know when, each year, BHA intends to get the Performance & Evaluation reports to the RAB and what opportunity may exist for feedback on that information.

Response: The Capital Fund Final Rule (2013) separated the CFP Annual Statement and Five-Year Plan from an agency's Annual Plan. However, the Final Rule still requires a public review and comment period and a public hearing for these capital planning documents. The Final Rule, as well as subsequent HUD training on the subject, goes on to recommend that authorities still combine the public review of capital documents with the Annual Plan for efficiency's sake.

The BHA agrees with this recommended approach for a couple of reasons: 1) it is more administratively feasible for the BHA to manage and staff one public review and comment period rather than two, and 2) this approach makes use of that time during the year when residents and other interested parties are already focused on reviewing BHA goals and progress.

Since the Performance and Evaluation reports for open grants are no longer required to be submitted to HUD, the BHA has not included them in the Annual Plan or the public review process, and does not currently have plans to present them to the RAB. The P&Es are available after October 31<sup>st</sup> each year for anyone who may wish to look at them. During calendar year 2016 BHA will work to have the P&Es posted

annually on the website, where they can be more readily available to all.

## **Center for Community Engagement**

Comment: 5Y On pp. 6-5, Support BHA's Center for Community Engagement, as was noted last year, CCECR has been a real success and continues to develop. The Resource Fair that occurred at Roxbury Community College this fall, as well as the initiatives outlined here, show how residents working collaboratively with BHA can foster organizational and leadership development. It would be good to have the specific information available somewhere (if not here) about which particular sites had elections or trainings and what plans BHA has for the coming year to support elections at sites that are starting new organizations, or to help existing organizations make sure they stay on target.

One key area here is Mixed Finance, which has been a bit of a mixed bag. While there has been good attendance by owners/managers, residents, and BHA staff from many mixed finance sites, it is not clear that work is getting completed in terms of having recognized resident organizations, having

memoranda of agreement executed for tenant participation funding, or finalizing a grievance procedure that can be utilized in lieu of the BHA's Tenant Grievance Panel for these sites. Legitimate issues have been raised that need to be resolved. The ultimate goal is to standardize this and have protocols that will also be used as new sites go through the Mixed Finance process.

Response: In conjunction with members of the Resident Empowerment Coalition (REC), program staff develop in December the annual REC Work Plan, the Local Tenants Organization (LTO) Sustainability Plans, and the Election Timelines. This process culminates in a discussion meeting open to all BHA Residents by which residents review and discuss the draft plans, and take part in determining which local tenant organizations or communities would need the most support from the REC and program staff. The Work Plan details the target goals for key components such as language access, post-election support, and citywide organizing efforts. The LTO Sustainability Plans include specific goals and target dates for individual sites, by which program staff provide support for current and emergent resident leadership, as well as training on LTO elections, roles and responsibilities of elected members, financial

responsibilities, and conflict resolution. The Election Timelines is a document that chronicles each LTO's most recent election(s), including the dates of election held and the number of new members elected. These documents are available upon request and kindly forward request to the Resident Empowerment Program Manager, at [TREC@bostonhousing.org](mailto:TREC@bostonhousing.org).

For the Mixed Finance sites, Resident Empowerment Program staff provide trainings to Mixed Finance residents on elections and leadership development. Current resident leaders are invited and encouraged to participate in citywide organizing efforts, as well as all the networking and technical assistance opportunities organized by the Center and program partners. Center staff is committed to supporting resident participation and protections as part of any BHA redevelopment process and will help move forward any resolutions adopted by the BHA-Mixed Finance working group as the group continues its ongoing discussions.

Comment: BHA has continued its efforts in the area of resident participation, having robust tenant participation through its Resident Advisory Board (RAB), its Resident Empowerment Coalition (REC), fostering the election and maintenance of local

development resident councils and Section 8 resident empowerment efforts. A model Memorandum of Agreement is being implemented at Mixed Finance sites. While more remain to be achieved, such as in finalizing a standardized Mixed Finance Tenant Grievance Procedure and in identifying how resident elections can be supported on an ongoing basis with limited resources, here again, much of this work can be seen as a model—both as additional developments go through the Mixed Finance process and for discussions within the Commonwealth and nationally.

Response: The BHA will continue the discussion that is already ongoing at the Mixed Finance working group related to how to best preserve and make consistent certain resident participation and resident protections as part of any BHA redevelopment process. Please also see above response.

## **Civil Rights**

Comment: BHA has, over the course of the past 12 months, made a number of changes to its programs and developments:

It sought and obtained HUD approval for a new Designated

Housing Plan (DHP), allowing it to designate 80% of turn-over units in its federal elderly/disabled public housing portfolio for elderly persons 62 years of age and older, and 20% for younger disabled persons, as opposed to the 70/30 allocation that was previously in place. In response to comments, BHA exempted its wheelchair accessible units so that applicants, regardless of age, who have difficulty finding such units in the private market will not be adversely affected. BHA also established a new pool of Section 8 mitigation vouchers to offset the reduced availability of elderly/disabled public housing units to younger disabled applicants. There will need to be good monitoring of this program to ensure that the mitigation voucher program is successful, particularly given the challenges of finding accessible affordable housing with a voucher within voucher search periods.

Response: BHA has partnered with 7 local housing search and advocacy agencies to ensure that applicants offered mobile vouchers in conjunction with the DHP get the support they need. The partner agencies are City of Boston Office of Fair Housing & Equity; Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health & Human Services; Hearth, Inc.; New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans; AIDS Action Committee of

Massachusetts; Homestart, Inc.; and Pine Street Inn. In addition, BHA has dedicated one Leasing Officer to manage DHP voucher offers and lease up, as well as ongoing support. The leasing officer acts as a housing resource specialist and is the liaison between voucher recipients and the partner agencies, making referrals and following up with both clients and service agencies to ensure successful screening and leasing up. The leasing officer also works directly with those clients who fall outside of partner agency parameters or decline outside assistance. Finally, the leasing officer follows the families housed via mitigation vouchers to provide ongoing support, assistance, and referrals.

Comment: BHA has revamped its Reasonable Accommodation Policy. While the final policy has not yet been implemented, a number of changes are already in place, including an automatic internal BHA review process by Civil Rights and Operations staff when a reasonable accommodation request is initially rejected by a BHA department. These changes are welcome and should lead to positive results.

Response: Thank you for your comment. BHA's new Reasonable Accommodation Policy ("RAP"), once implemented, will replace the two reasonable accommodation

policies that are currently in place at the agency: *Leased Housing Division Reasonable Accommodations in Rental Assistance Policies & Procedures* and *Reasonable Accommodations in Housing Policy & Procedures* (covering the Occupancy and Operations Departments). The RAP is intended to be easier to understand and navigate (for clients and staff alike), and more easily updated when necessary.

Additionally, the two biggest policy changes in the RAP should be noted:

- As was mentioned in the comment, the establishment of a Reasonable Accommodation Review Committee (“RARC”) for the review of all proposed reasonable accommodation denial letters (decisions addressed in court excluded). The RARC will decide whether a given denial is acceptable and, if not, what corrective steps are needed. Having a centralized review committee will improve BHA’s ability to identify and address any inconsistencies in how its various departments handle reasonable accommodation requests.

The creation of an Assistance and Service Animal Policy that will govern how BHA reviews

requests to keep such animals and provides information on client rights with regard to such animals

## **Communications**

Comment: 5Y On p. 8, Continued Customer Service and Efficiency Enhancements, it should be noted that the BHA did roll out its new website this year. It’s not clear if there has been any effort to evaluate how consumers, the public, and BHA staff regard the website, and it may be useful to obtain that feedback given the substantial investment that was made in this. BHA has also revised its Reasonable Accommodation forms to make them more user friendly and understandable to the average user.

One area that seems to have been dropped, likely due to lack of resources, was the Navigating the BHA initiative, which was intended to create manuals that the average BHA public housing tenant and Section 8 participant could use for common areas of concern. It may be that the website information is meant to replace certain aspects of this. However, there continue to be requests from the RAB and elsewhere for simple pieces like “what’s the chain of command” as to persons who should be contacted if a problem isn’t

addressed and there may be a number of areas where simple factsheets or flyers could help. BHA did help sponsor a public housing rent training that GBLS, Homestart, and the Boston Resident Training Initiative did in the spring of 2015 to ensure residents were aware of new reporting and rent-setting policies. It may be that the RAB would want to sponsor some broad-based trainings that would be open to residents on topics of interest (such as rent, searching for a unit with a voucher, eviction prevention, transfers, grievance rights, etc.)

Response: The BHA would be happy to work with the RAB on any such workshops.

## **Community Services**

Comment: BHA has continued to foster both self-sufficiency and employment opportunities for its public housing and Section 8 residents while helping to eliminate barriers to work and housing. The JOBS Plus initiative at Charlestown, coupled with redevelopment, should provide significant opportunities for low-income residents. BHA and GBLS are exploring grants from HUD/DOJ which would help people seal juvenile records that could

otherwise be a barrier to employment and economic mobility. And, in conjunction with the draft FY 2016 PHA Plan, and as part of its collaboration with the City of Boston's re-entry efforts, BHA is establishing reasonable lookback periods on criminal history for public housing and Section 8 applicants so that those who've have old criminal histories are not denied a second chance.

Response: The BHA will continue to seek out self-sufficiency and employment opportunities for public housing and Section 8 residents and we look forward to sharing the outcome of our application to HUD on the Juvenile Reentry Assistance Program when the awards have been announced.

Comment: 5Y On pp. 6-7, Link efforts to Education, Jobs, Public Safety, and Health. What's discussed here is very positive, and is continuing BHA's leading work in this area. It may help to add some discussion about the Pathways program. The City of Boston's Office of Fair Housing and Equity has also been convening working groups on trying to lessen the barriers of criminal history to permanent housing and employment, and BHA and other partners are active participants in these discussions. It may be interesting to bring in initiatives

like Our Brother's Keeper to a discussion with resident organizations and the RAB, particularly in helping to identify ways to engage young emerging leaders with overall self-sufficiency initiatives.

Response: The BHA is happy to explore opportunities that will engage additional youth who are emerging leaders with overall self-sufficiency programs. The BHA is beginning its second year with the This Away Ahead Program that focusing on youth 16-24.

## **Grievance Panel**

Comment: S Public Housing P. 26, this should be modified to reflect that a different grievance procedure exists for the Mixed Finance public housing units, and these do not go to the BHA Grievance Panel. Moreover, we are having active discussions with BHA, residents, and the Mixed Finance partners about whether and what appeals process exists. By the way, DHCD does NOT mandate the further stage (appeals to the Board of Commissioners, for which the designee of the Administrator hearing substitute) for terminations of tenancy. There have also been concerns about whether BHA is following procedures and allowing Panel members to select their own chair. Both of these issues may

be worth discussion at a future RAB meeting.

Response: The Plan has been revised to clarify that there are discussions ongoing with mixed finance partners as noted above. To be clear this section in the Plan Supplement template addresses public housing residents. The BHA has recently begun the process of reviewing its Tenant Grievance Procedures for public housing residents. The BHA would be happy to discuss Grievance Panel issues at a future RAB meeting.

Comment: S Section 8 Tenant-Based Assistance On p. 26, BHA may want to also reference the Reasonable Accommodation Policy, which may in particular cases modify the standard procedures for these cases (and public housing cases). BHA also want to refer to the special policies used for grandfathering public housing residents who were switched to PBV assistance, where it continues to provide such residents with a pre-judicial grievance hearing regarding termination of tenancy (similar to what they would have had if their units had remained public housing).

Response: This Section in the Plan Supplement template addresses only grievance procedures for the tenant-based program, so including information about grievance

procedures for the project-based program may not be appropriate here. Referencing the RA policy doesn't seem to add anything.

## **Legal**

Comment: S Violence against Women Act

Elsewhere, BHA has said that certain changes are needed to ACOP to reflect VAWA changes. Are any changes needed in the related policy (pp. 43-53)? We understand that HUD issued proposed regulations on the 2013 changes to VAWA but final regulations are not out yet.

Response: The ACOP was updated to reflect the 2013 VAWA changes on an earlier ACOP submission to HUD. If warranted when final regulations are issued ACOP revisions will be made.

## **Leased Housing**

Comment: BHA has continued strong collaborations with community partners to help reduce and prevent homelessness, within the limits of constrained resources. Its programs have been a model for new efforts by the City of Boston in multifamily housing, and may also be expanded to

help those BHA Section 8 participants who, with some intervention, can avoid homelessness and/or subsidy loss.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The BHA looks forward to working with its community partners in the future to reduce and prevent homelessness where possible.

Comment: Good afternoon. I was wondering how Section 8 recipients can transition to a first time home buyer's program and take advantage of the benefits put into place for a fixed rent amount using the Section 8 voucher.

In other words, can you explain to me how I can use a Section 8 voucher to get a fixed rate loan to own a house for the first time?

Please let me know. I won't be able to make it to the meeting.

Thank you.

Response: The BHA requires participation in the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program as criterion for eligibility in the Homeownership program, unless the family qualifies for a waiver. All Housing Choice Voucher Program participants are eligible to apply for participation in the FSS program. The BHA's Homeownership program is generally limited to first-time homeowners. The BHA assists the client with the mortgage

payment, much like the rental assistance. The BHA does not provide financing, the client is responsible for obtaining approval for a mortgage. The BHA will provide the lender information regarding the payment assistance available to HCV participants. Please see the Leased Housing Administrative Plan for more information regarding the BHA's FSS program (section 14.3) and the BHA's Homeownership program (chapter 16).

Comment: AP P. 13: Note that for the PBV program, the 20% cap is 2,857 units, and as of the end of FY 2016, BHA will have 1,679 PBV units. I don't believe the criteria on pp. 13-14 have changed. It would help to have more data about what, how & where new PBV expansion will occur during the PHA Plan year (i.e., how many additional units expected, and any information about particular proposals, siting, etc.) It would also help to get that data for what's occurred this year, possibly as part of the Progress Report. This is part of the Analysis of Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH), which will be unfolding under new HUD regulations over the next few years. If, for example, PBV was showing that disproportionately more studio and one-bedroom units were being created through PBV in comparison with overall housing need, BHA and the City would want to rebalance this through creating more PBV

units for families requiring 2 bedrooms or more.

Response: Thank you for your comments. BHA will provide this information as available.

Comment: S P. 13, (4), preference points: Both this and the main template discuss priority for PBV elderly, but doesn't indicate how this priority works at these sites, or which sites are involved. Is this supposed to be a "switched on" preference, similar to elderly preference in federal elderly/disabled public housing, where the composition of a site goes under 80% of the households being elderly?

Response: Thank you for your comment. This preference is done by a provision in the PBV HAP contract for a number of units at each site. It is not done in the same manner as the preference in elderly/disabled public housing.

Comment: S P. 13, (5) special purpose Section 8 assistance program, materials: Similar question to above, as there's a reference to Leased Housing Reasonable Accommodation Policy, and this is now being collapsed into one policy that covers both public housing & leased housing.

Response: Thank you for your comments, upon implementation of the new policy all references to the old

policy shall change to reflect references to the new policy.

Comment: S Pp. 19-20: HUD only issued new FMRs as of December 11, 2015. There is also the possibility that during the course of the year, HUD will implement the Small Area FMR option, and this may affect FMR and payment standard options. Can BHA now provide information on the effective date for BHA payment standard changes? There are similar question with regard to any utility allowance changes.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The BHA payment standards were changed effective 1/1/2016. Utility Allowances are reviewed annually and will likely be updated in June.

Comment: S In early 2015, HUD issued a notice that "streamlining" authority that had previously been granted to PHAs was withdrawn, and that while it expected to ultimately issue final rules on various "streamlining" ideas, that hasn't happened yet. One area where BHA did use that "streamlining" authority was to approve higher payment standards as a reasonable accommodation (between 110% and 120% of FMR) without having to go to the HUD regional office. HUD indicated, in the notice, that it would entertain waiver requests from PHAs to take action similar to "streamlining". Has BHA

sought such waiver authority similar to what it did under "streamlining"?

Response: Yes, the BHA has submitted and been granted such a waiver request.

Comment: 5Y On p.4, Maintain 100% Utilization of Section 8 Resources, as noted above, it would help to have data on success rates (how many voucher holders are able to secure units within search periods) and rent burden (what percentage of the HCVP participants have to pay more than 30% of income for rent and tenant-paid utilities, and for those with burdens above that, what the overall picture looks like—i.e., how many between 30-40%, how many above 40%, etc.?)

Response: Thank you for your comments. The BHA will provide this information upon request where available.

Comment: Admin Plan: Throughout, this changed the definition of "personal care attendant" to "live-in aide", and added clarifying language from HUD Notice about distinguishing this from arrangements where an aide is temporary, or part of a shift, etc., where there might not be the same reason to provide an extra bedroom (and larger subsidy).

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Admin Plan 3.2.7 (p. 5): This adds, in the applicant break-up section, that if the family break-up results from domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault, the PHA must ensure that the victim retains the assistance. That makes sense and is consistent with VAWA.

Response: Thank you for your comments.

Comment: Admin Plan: Revision pages 6-7 (can't tell what the Admin Plan subsection ID is): This includes, under the documentation to establish Priority 1 status due to involuntary displacement by domestic violence, etc., reference to the kinds of verifications and forms used for VAWA status. I think this is OK, but it should be noted that the VAWA forms are used for a different purpose, and may need to be supplemented in some instances. The VAWA forms are used to confirm that domestic violence, etc. has occurred, so that the BHA knows that it should consider special relief for an individual. The Priority 1 forms, on the other hand, are utilizing what was the former federal preference of involuntary displacement due to domestic violence, and there may not always be a precise fit. Two examples come to mind: (a) for

involuntary displacement, if the applicant is still in the same housing where the violence occurred, she must show that the violence is ongoing or relatively recent (within the past six months), and this isn't an element for a VAWA determination; (b) it may be that the domestic violence occurred some time ago, and the applicant was displaced and never secured standard, permanent replacement housing thereafter (she doubled up with various friends/family members, etc.). VAWA might be seeking current certifications of domestic violence, but the kind of verification or forms the client might need to complete to get the priority would have to be from when the violence occurred.

Response: Thank you for your comment, the distinction is noted.

Comment: Admin Plan: 3.3.8 (revision page 8): This just adds the points for the mitigation vouchers, and I don't think it's new, but was what the RAB reviewed this summer when BHA revised the ACOP and the Admin Plan to implement the new Designated Housing Plan.

Response: That is correct, thank you for your comment.

Comment: Admin Plan: 5.3.3 (revision page 11): Here again, I think this is something that we

already reviewed, where BHA proposed that when it does applicant reviews, and determines that an applicant didn't qualify for Priority 1 status at the time of application, but some later date, instead of just removing the client from the waiting list and making him/her reapply, can assign the correct date for priority so that the person will be reached in proper order. (We agreed with this and thought it was a good policy change.) However, it's possible that BHA only did this on the ACOP change, and not for the Admin Plan—in which case, it would make sense to implement the change for both programs and both type of applicants (public housing and Section 8).

Response: That is correct. Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Admin Plan: 5.7 (revision p. 14, see also p.2): This lookback period on criminal history is something that BHA is required to do by federal law (establish a reasonable lookback period), and the time periods here and the distinction between the types of crimes make sense. As this was originally drafted, Leased Housing had a longer look back period, and it was inconsistent with what was proposed for the ACOP. However, I understand that BHA staff have discussed this further, and have agreed that the 5- and 10-year periods

proposed for the ACOP would also be used here. We are glad to see BHA make that change. It should also be noted that the lookback periods do NOT mean that if someone has offenses within the 5- or 10-year periods, they are automatically disqualified, but merely that BHA may consider those offenses, as well as mitigating circumstances and other offenses, in evaluating the applicant. (See comments above about trying to simplify the task for evaluating whether a felony or misdemeanor is involved.)

Response: Yes, the look back periods in the Admin Plan section 5.7 effective 4/1/2016 have been changed and are the same as in the proposed version of the ACOP; 5 and 10 years.

Comment: Admin Plan: 6.1.4 (revision page 17): This discusses the consideration of mitigating circumstances as part of evaluating an applicant's criminal history, and is something that was already done during the mid-year Admin Plan revisions (where we agreed this was a good policy change).

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Admin Plan: 6.2.3 (revision page 18): This discusses what happens when a hearing is scheduled and the

applicant doesn't try to reschedule at least 24 hours in advance or doesn't arrive within 30 minutes of the scheduled hearing time. This also discusses use of both regular and certified mail and presumed receipt. I cannot remember if this was in prior versions for review. A few thoughts: (a) I don't believe for applicant hearings, BHA uses the two notice system, and if not, it would make sense to remove that language; (b) obviously in any of these circumstances, reasonable accommodations comes into play, and HUD regulations specifically discuss reinstatement of applicants if the reason for non-response or failure to follow through was related to a disability (obviously BHA may want a plan in place so that similar problems won't arise in the future, such as the involvement of a third party).

Response: Thank you for your comments. The BHA will revise this section accordingly.

Comment: Admin Plan: 8.1 (revision page 19): This may be a technical change to match HUD guidance about enhanced vouchers and opt-outs. It would help to get more information about why this change is being made.

Response: This change is being made to clarify what an assisted unit is, in accordance with PIH notices 2010-51 and 2011-46.

Comment: Admin Plan: 8.2 (revision page 19): This provides that if a lease has been in effect for 5 years or more, BHA doesn't consider it for rent reasonableness considerations/comparables. I doubt that there are such leases; tenancies obviously may last this long or longer, but usually this would be under a different lease or tenancy at will, and it's not clear how BHA implements/interprets this. Some clarification here would help.

Response: The BHA is adopting procedure suggested by HUD guidance here, in conjunction with PIH notice 2011-46.

Comment: Admin Plan: 8.3.2 (revision page 21): This discusses how to do rent reasonableness/comparability analysis if the lease has been in effect for 5 years or more. BHA would also want to review the owner's general rent setting process to evaluate whether Section 8 tenants are being treated in the same way (for example, if other long-term tenants in the property are not getting rent increases, or more modest increases, and the Section 8 tenant is also a long-term tenant, why shouldn't the same policy apply to the Section 8 tenant)? Here again, some clarification would help.

Response: The BHA is making this clarification in accordance with PIH notice 2011-46 and

would be evaluating the landlord's general rent setting process in accordance with the same.

Comment: Admin Plan: 11.3.3(e) (revision pages 22-23): I can't tell if the underlined language is new or something we saw earlier this year. It may be a portability provision added because of changes in HUD portability regulations. If I am reading it correctly, it appears to create a presumption that if, within the 90 day period prior to a request to move, the family is a victim of domestic violence, etc., it would be presumed that you fit within the exception to the usual limitations on portability. It may be helpful to get some clarification here.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The underline will be removed as it was unintentional. The language is being added in conjunction with VAWA.

Comment: Admin Plan: 11.7.1 (revision p. 23): Similar to what was done on applicant break-up, this says that the victim of domestic violence should be the one to get the assistance, and is consistent with VAWA. Good change.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Admin Plan: 12.2.1 (revision page 25): This requires, as mandated by

HUD's revised portability regulations, that the voucher issued by BHA for families coming from outside the jurisdiction trying to secure housing here, be good for at least 30 days—this is true even if the balance of time that was otherwise left on the voucher was less than 30 days.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Admin Plan: 13.6.3 (revision pages 32-33): Changes here are just to fix two typos in the paragraph about compelling circumstances that might warrant permitting a late hearing request.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Admin Plan: 14.3.2 (revision page 35): This provides that a participant in the BHA's Public Housing FSS program who becomes a participant in the Section 8 HCVP program may retain FSS status for Section 8. This is a good policy change. Shouldn't there also be language allowing this in the other direction (if a Section 8 FSS participant goes into public housing)?

Response: Thank you for your comment. The BHA will review and consider this comment with its public housing program staff.

Comment: Admin Plan: 14.7.12 (revision pages 38-39): This

discusses project-basing VASH, and I believe was already done in the mid-year Admin Plan changes. If there is something different here than what was previously reviewed, please let me and the RAB know.

Response: That is correct, thank you for your comment.

Comment: Admin Plan: An additional proposal for revision to the Administrative Plan, not proposed by BHA in the draft but which makes sense given HUD's recent notice about use of criminal history information in admissions decisions (see PIH Notice 2015-19), is to change how Leased Housing handles applicants who have open criminal cases. At present, BHA's Occupancy Department, for public housing, will give these applicants an option of "documented delay" to resolve these open cases. The applicants don't complete screening while they are in documented delay, but they are not denied and they keep their place in line. Leased Housing, on the other hand, doesn't have this option, and may deny the applicants with open cases of the sort that would be a concern under the HUD regulations. This issue arose at a discussion of the new HUD rule that the BHA Administrator convened on November 4, and it was agreed that denying applicants merely because there are open cases is not consistent with the Notice. BHA can and should

make changes to the Admin Plan along these lines as part of the current PHA Plan round of revisions.

Response: Thank you for your comments. The BHA has made appropriate changes to its procedure.

Comment: Admin Plan: Chapter 15 (revision pages 40-48): Here again, these are all related to Project Based Voucher technical changes, and I believe were already reviewed in the mid-year Admin Plan changes. Please advise me and the RAB if there is any different here.

Response: That is correct, although BHA did make further change to section 15.2.1. Thank you for your comments.

Comment: Admin Plan: Glossary (revision pages 49-53); There appear to be two changes here: (a) the change in terminology from “personal care attendant” to “live-in aide”—see above); and (b) a change that I previously commented on during the summer, which would expand the definition of “use” of a controlled substance to include simple possession. As I explained in my comments in the summer, I don’t think BHA is free to change the federal definition of drug-related criminal activity, which is statutory and regulatory, and the addition of the term “use” should be deleted. (Federal law

does not include simple possession within the definition of drug-related criminal activity, but does include use or possession with the intent to use, sell, etc. It may be rare when there is simple possession without use or intent, but it can happen.)

Response: Thank you for your comment. The BHA has defined the term “use” in its administrative plan, as that term is not defined under the law and is open to interpretation.

## Occupancy

Comment: AP P. 18, housing needs of families on the waiting list: As I have commented in prior years, there is a whole question here about why Asians are in such small numbers on the Section 8 waiting list, in comparison both to general demographics and to the public housing waiting list. As shown on p. 16, roughly 8.1% of the eligible households in Boston are Asian, and roughly 12.4% of those on BHA’s public housing waiting list are Asian. However, only 1.7% of those on the BHA’s Section 8 waiting list are Asian. It may be that this is because the Section 8 waiting list is only open to those with Priority 1 status. But if the priority system means that a particular group is underserved in terms of its relative need, this

requires examination, particularly under the new AFFH regulations.

Response: Thank you for comment. Yes, the BHA has and will continue to review and discuss what other changes may be possible to increase the Asian population within its Section 8 programs. The BHA will closely monitor the Asian population residing and on the waiting lists for its Section 8 Project-Based Voucher and Moderate Rehabilitation programs as those waiting lists are open. The Section 8 Tenant-Based Voucher (mobile voucher) waiting list has been closed since 2008 thus little changes are possible regarding increasing the Asian population.

Comment: AP P. 19: Note that this provides that while the Section 8 waiting list has been closed since November, 2008, and BHA doesn’t intend to reopen it, the project-based waiting lists (PBV and Mod Rehab) are open for new Priority 1 applicants. In addition, there are limited other circumstances in which Section 8 mobile vouchers are issued—for Super-Priority, for PBV participants switching to a tenant-based voucher after a year of tenancy in good standing, and Mitigation Voucher applicants (non-elderly disabled public housing applicants who have to wait longer for assistance due to the new 80/20 designation of

federal elderly/disabled public housing). It may help to spell out here, or somewhere for the RAB, exactly what the Super-Priority category is, so that people understand it, as well as to have references to what currently fits within Priority 1 (something relatively simple). It's also noted here that six Elderly/Disabled Section 8 PBV waiting lists are open for non-priority elderly applicants 62 years of age and older effective May 9, 2014. It would help to know which sites these are and exactly how these waiting lists work—i.e., are they the same kind of designation as for federal elderly/disabled public housing, with a “mix” of populations, and if so, did these stay at 70/30 or go to 80/20, or do they operate differently?

Response: Thank you for your comments. BHA staff will work on a summary for the RAB. The information is spelled out on various locations such as the Administrative Plan, the various signed HAPs, the BHA's website, the Applicant Informational Briefing Video, and the BHA's application package.

Comment: AP P. 23: This discusses certain set-asides designed to help low-income families, like HomeBase, Health Start to Housing in Public Housing, Leading the Way Home, High Utilizers of Emergency Services, and NED programs in Section 8. It would

be helpful to get specific figures here (how many units) and what the likely turnover is (in terms of, in any given year, how many new families likely to be served), as well as places where RAB/others could get more information on these (relatively short descriptions).

Response: Thank you for your comment. The Administrative Plan documents how many vouchers are targeted for each specific program. The Memorandum of Agreements for each public housing supported housing program documents how many units may be made available for each program. 200 units for the MBHP Supported Housing program for families displaced from a unit in the City of Boston and currently in Shelter, Hotel, or Motel, 75 units for the Healthy Start in Housing (HSiH) supported housing program for families displaced from a unit in the City of Boston and with a high risk pregnancy, 15 units for the HOPWA supported housing program, 12 units for the PACE supported housing program for very disabled households requiring services in place, 4 units for the Summer House supported housing program for frail elderly requiring services in place, 20 units for the ELAHP supported housing program for frail elderly requiring services in place, 16 units for the JRI supported housing program for disabled individuals needing services in place. These

programs have low unit turnover on a yearly basis. BHA does not hold vacancies except for the JRI, Summer House, and PACE programs where specific units are designated for very specific needs. You may contact the Director and Assistant Director of Occupancy for further information regarding each program and to be directed to the appropriate program representative(s) as they may change from time to time. The BHA can put the descriptions of these supported housing programs on the BHA website. Additionally, if the RAB wanted more information, BHA staff could provide a brief overview at a RAB meeting if invited.

Comment: S In 1.A (1) e... Eligibility, Selection and Admissions Policies, including Deconcentration and Wait list Procedures, Public Housing, on p. 2, it states that BHA doesn't yet have access to the FBI/NCIC records. It would help to know what the time frame is expected to be for the protocol. (Same comment on B.(1) d., Section 8, p. 9.)

Response: BHA has no timeframe as it depends on other city department's resources. BHA will continue its efforts as it is important to have access to the FBI/NCIC records.

Comment: S P. 3, (2) Waiting List Organization, item c.4:

This includes Old Colony Phases III and IV, but these are not yet in existence and response is a little inconsistent with the rest of the Plan.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Old Colony Phase III and IV when completed will be covered under the same policy as Phase I and II. Thus they have been included.

Comment: S P. 7, (5) Occupancy, item a.: This refers to the Reasonable Accommodation in Housing Policy, and question is whether the revised consolidated policy is in effect yet, and if not, when. The Rent Manual should be available on line, and the supportive documents around ACOP/Administrative Plan for Mixed Finance sites should be available not only at sites, but also with BHA centrally in Planning Office.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The consolidated Reasonable Accommodation policy has been submitted for HUD's review and approval and it will be implemented upon HUD's response. The BHA will put the Rent Manual on the website. The ACOP/Administrative Plan along with supportive documents can be made part of the BHA Planning Library.

Comment: 5Y On p. 8, Analyze Wait List practices and develop strategies to streamline placements while

communicating more effectively with applicants, it would help to have a little more detail here. My sense is that BHA has been fairly successful in its collaborations with partners to try to improve the application process, but if there are barriers here as well as success this should be described. The mid-year change in the ACOP made a common-sense approach to go from removing applicants from the waiting list (who could not document that they qualified for Priority 1 status at the time of application, but who did establish that they qualified for that status at some later date, to just changing the effective date of Priority status. This should have reduced unnecessary hearings, withdrawals, and reapplications. The proposed changes to the SPAR/Residual Tenancy policy and to criminal history look back periods, included in the current PHA Plan proposal and discussed below, should also streamline the screening process and avoid unnecessary hardship. In addition, the use of set-asides in collaboration with partner agencies (like MBHP and the Boston Public Health Commission) also reduces the burden on an already stretched and reduced BHA staff.

Response: Thank you for your comment and acknowledgments. Yes, the BHA has been pretty successful working with our various partnerships and we continue

seeking ways on how to improve our policies, services, and communicating as well educating/training as many people as it may be possible in order to disseminate and make accessible our programs to the disabled, elderly, families, and individuals from all races, ethnicities, and backgrounds. Given the dire need for affordable housing thus the on-going increased number of applicants applying with the BHA and the BHA striving to provide the best services possible with an ever shrinking staff capacity, the BHA will explore how other PHAs handles the Preliminary Application process and other services in order to continue enhancing its services if at all possible despite the limited resources. Our partnerships are extremely appreciated and valued.

Comment: ACOP Throughout, BHA has changed "Emergency Transfer" to "Special Circumstances Transfer" and "Grievance Policy" to "Tenant Grievance Procedures" (to avoid confusion with other types of grievance procedures that might exist, such as those for employees under collective bargaining agreements). These are fine. It must be recognized that use of the term "Emergency" doesn't quite cover how non-Administrative transfers are processed. It should be noted that for Mixed Finance sites, the Tenant

Grievance Procedures may be different than those in the BHA's policy; procedures are still being worked on here to ensure compliance with applicable law and a system that's workable for owners, residents, and BHA.

Response: Thank you for your comment and support.

Comment: ACOP BHA may want to consider, as it has in the Section 8 Administrative Plan, revising the use of the terms "personal care attendant" and "live in aide", and adding some language about limitations in guidance from HUD. (I understand that for the ACOP, BHA must comply with both HUD and DHCD mandates, and there may be reasons to depart from what was done in the Admin Plan, but as long as the review is underway, it may be worth thinking through what would benefit from change and where existing terminology should be maintained.)

Response: Thank you for your comment. The BHA will revise the ACOP to include the term: "PCA / Live-in Aide" in order to address the federal and state requirements.

Comment: ACOP 5.E.#2(a) (revision page 21): This provides, as required by federal law, for a reasonable look back period for certain criminal history (5 years for

misdemeanors, 10 years for felonies). GBLS is glad to see BHA adopt this. Two small comments: (a) The draft includes an exception for life-time registered sex offenders, since there is a federal prohibition on admission of such individuals, regardless of when the offense occurred; and (b) it should be noted that it's often difficult to know whether a particular offense is a felony or misdemeanor, as it requires a resort to the particular statute and whether the individual could be subject to incarceration at the house of correction for that offense. (For out of state offenses, this may be even more challenges.) Presumably BHA can come up with a relatively simple way to tack offenses to avoid burdensome work for screeners and applicants.

Response: Thank you for your comment and support. Language will be added to clarify that time limitations will not be applicable for criminal offenses in accordance to local jurisdiction, state and federal law, regulations, or mandates. The BHA will continue working with the respective entities on ways to access accurate criminal records. However, this will be an on-going task.

Comment: ACOP 5.E.#8 (revision page 23): This was just catching a typo, and noting that the term "Reasonable Accommodation" is separate

from Mitigating Circumstances, and can also come into play.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: ACOP 8.4 (revision pages 42-43): While the text doesn't reflect the change, the summary (p. 1) does, which is that previously if the original head of household had died, remaining household members could be denied if the head owed rent to the BHA or was under eviction. As noted later in the changes to 9.1.3.3 (revision pages 46-47), BHA is adopting a new policy here, such that if an application has been submitted to approve an addition to the household, but action is not finalized before the death of the head of household, BHA will continue to process the SPAR application and, if approved, will make it effective back to the date of the application—and will then proceed to evaluate the remaining household members for residual tenancy. This is a far better and more humane approach than has been taken in the past, and is a good policy change.

A couple of things may be worth noting here: (a) in not all cases when a family member moves in to take care of a household member who is infirm will this result in a SPAR or a residual tenancy request. The family may choose to have that person be treated as a live-in aide, with

the understanding that income does not count, and the individual must leave if the original leaseholder passes away or becomes permanently institutionalized. However, in a number of instances, family members have had to give up housing elsewhere to choose to care for their loved ones, and are asking to be household members; they should not be made homeless if the head of household passes away; (b) BHA may want to revisit other aspects of the Residual Tenancy Policy. For example, it may be that the leaseholder has become permanently institutionalized, but moved into a nursing home owing rent. It may be that the remaining family members can cure this or enter into acceptable arrangements with the BHA for payment that would not be an issue. In addition, GBLS has always opposed the portion of the Residual Tenancy Policy that would deny legitimate remaining household members the right to remain if the head of household vacates. We understand BHA's concern to avoid end-running of the waiting list; however, there are very legitimate cases where it makes no sense to render remaining household members homeless. (While there are exceptions for divorce, separation or protective orders, there may be more circumstances than these that result in family break-up and departure of the head of household. We also recognize

that BHA established a means for families to ask that another adult be added as co-head, or to shift who is the head of household, and this can help in some cases, but we still think this is worth reexamination. But we want to thank BHA for taking this step at this time.)

Response: Thank you for your comment and support. The BHA is not considering any further changes at this time but will take these suggestions into consideration. To be clear, the BHA's tenants have the right to determine if they want to add an identified person(s) as a Live-in Aide only with no rights to the unit and the Live-in Aide moves in clearly knowing and understanding his/her options including the right to be processed as a Live-in Aide and household member with rights to the unit and, therefore, undergoing a full eligibility screening process and have his/her income included towards the monthly rent payments. Additionally, the BHA tenant at any time may request to add a qualified individual to his/her lease. Every year during the annual recertification when the household composition is re-confirmed and the income verification processed for the rent calculation, the residents have the opportunity to decide if they want to make any changes to their household composition.

Comment: ACOP On 9.1.3.3 (revision pages 46-47): See comments above. This provision about how to handle SPAR requests which haven't been finalized by the time the head of household passes away makes good sense, couple with the change to the Residual Tenancy Policy, and should be adopted.

Response: Thank you for your comment and support.

Comment: ACOP 9.4 (revision pages 48-55), Community Service Policy: HUD has focused on PHA compliance with this requirement due to a recent audit by the Inspector General, and the changes here are either clarifying or are meant to address what's in PIH Notice 2015-12. The change to "job readiness or training" on revision page 48 makes sense, as does the change in language about notification on revision page 49 (since it's not a new requirement, but is something that new residents need to be told about, as well as existing residents at the time of annual review). Regarding the hours of work activity requirement, HUD has indicated that PHAs should include some figure, and the 10 or more hours each week provision is more realistic and less punitive than some more burdensome requirements used by some PHAs. This is an appropriate balance where residents new to the workforce, may only be able to secure

limited placements while juggling other responsibilities and getting the necessary training and experience (revision page 50). The change on revision page 51, referring to SNAP, follows HUD's recognition that SNAP too should be treated as a program that already has these requirements, thus avoiding duplicative effort by PHA staff and families to document with BHA what they already have had to show for other programs. This is a change that BHA and advocates tried to do a while ago, and is welcome. Deleting the opening paragraph about exemptions (revision page 51) also makes sense, since that was only needed during the first year when BHA was rolling out the policy. The changed language on revision page 52 (about verification forms provided at the recertification appointment) makes sense. The one area where I think some language may need to be changed is on revision pages 53-54, which refers to the steps to be taken where there is a noncompliant household member and the opportunity to cure. There, it appears that there are some missing words after "stating that the noncompliance adult". Moreover, it makes sense for both the noncompliant adult and the leaseholder to sign the agreement about the time being made up, since it is the leaseholder who has the lease obligation, and who needs to

also acknowledge what the noncompliant adult needs to do so that the household is considered lease compliant. I would not delete the words "and the head of household".

Response: Thank you for your comment. The BHA will review and make revisions where warranted.

Comment: ACOP I'm not sure why Chapter 10 and revision pages 56-59 were included—I didn't see any changes there, and there is no reference to this in the summary of ACOP changes.

Other: While BHA didn't propose this, I noticed that in the Section 8 Administrative Plan, there is language so that a BHA Public Housing FSS participant could retain FSS status if s/he transfers to the Section 8 HCVP program. It would make sense to have parallel language in the ACOP, to the extent Public Housing FSS is addressed at all, so that the same thing can occur there—i.e., if a Section 8 participant who has FSS were, for some reason, to transfer into BHA public housing, s/he would continue with FSS but in the Public Housing program.

Response: Thank you for your comment. You are correct no changes were made to Chapter 10. The public housing FSS is a stand-alone document not referenced in the ACOP. The

BHA will review and consider this comment with its public housing program staff.

Comment: S p.7 In the Annual Plan under: (6)

#### DECONCENTRATION AND INCOME MIXING

Did the PHA's analysis of its family (general occupancy) developments to determine concentrations of poverty indicate the need for measures to promote deconcentration of poverty or income mixing?

Your answer: NO

Why? Did you not find any concentrations of poverty - or does the BHA not see a need for deconcentration?

Response: The BHA does not see a need for deconcentration. The BHA properties are located at economically diverse neighborhoods and it services those in most need of affordable housing.

Comment: AP p18-20 Strategy 2: Conduct activities to affirmatively further fair housing, BHA seems to be focusing mainly on Section 8 Tenants:

- a) Counsel section 8 tenants as to location of units outside of areas of poverty or minority concentration and assist them to locate those units
- b) Market the section 8 program to owners outside of areas of poverty /minority concentrations:

However, according to HUD:  
(2) Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing. A PHA's policies should be designed to reduce the concentration of tenants and other assisted persons by RACE, national origin, and disability in conformity with any applicable Assessment of Fair Housing as defined at 24 CFR 5.150 through 5.180 and the PHA's assessment of its fair housing needs. Any affirmative steps or incentives a PHA plans to take must be stated in the admission policy.  
...which takes me to my final comment: Waitlist Disparity And Waitlist Homogeneity.

→ DIVERSITY AND PROPORTIONAL ETHNIC REPRESENTATION.

BHA residents are roughly 42 percent Latino, 32 percent Black, 16 percent White, and 10 percent Asian. The public housing waitlist includes about 36,000 applicants at this time. Someone voiced concern (at the last RAB meeting) about the percentage of Asians on the BHA Section 8 Waiting List, Quote:  
"Roughly 8.1% of the eligible households in Boston are Asian, and roughly 12.4% of those on BHA's public housing waiting list are Asian. However, only 1.7% of those on the BHA's Section 8 waiting list are Asian. It may be that this is because the Section 8 waiting list is only open to those with Priority 1 status. But if the

priority system means that a particular group is underserved in terms of its relative need, this requires examination, particularly under the BHA's duties to affirmatively further fair housing."

In addition, I have a further RACE-BASED concern that based on the demographic composition of Boston, BHA needs to take stock to determine whether its housing developments MAY be becoming too heavily weighted in favor of one race/ethnic group - and whether BHA needs to guard against its housing developments reverting back to a time when these developments were dominated by one race.

When any one race or ethnic group dominates the tenant makeup at housing developments, that does not foster harmony; it stifles diversity and tends to breed gang-style\* activity and a sense of "We rule here" as races/cultures band together and deliberately or inadvertently foster an atmosphere where other tenants feel unwelcome, are either intimidated or become fearful of these predominant races/cultures and often leave voluntarily - or are forced out subliminally through subversion. (\*Gang-style - not "gang" as in AM remarks.)

Response: HUD's new rules on affirmatively furthering fair housing are very complicated

and far-reaching. We are working with our office of civil rights to develop some plans and to do additional analysis to make sure that we're really living up to those regulations, not only because it's the regulations, but because it's the right thing to do. Thank you for those comments.

Comment: One of the questions that came up from a resident at Bellflower outlined was, how does the revised ACOP policy about adding persons to the household & the head of household passing away mid-stream apply with the 80-20 designated housing policy. In thinking this out it's not a clear answer. Clearly BHA cannot evict. I gave the example, though, that if say, the remaining member of an elderly/disabled household were neither elderly nor disabled, while they would remain eligible for BHA public housing, BHA could legitimately require them to transfer to an available appropriately sized unit in non-elderly/disabled public housing. Let's say, though, that the proposed addition were non-elderly disabled, and then the head passes away. This is an "admission" decision, and so the DHP does apply there. On the other hand, it would be wrong to simply evict if the person is otherwise complying with requirements of ACOP. I'm not sure that there is unanimity of opinion on this one

among the RAB (another Bellflower resident, Jackie Rice, mentioned that she was trying to get someone who was non-elderly disabled added to a household). I just wanted to flag the issue for you.

Response: Thank you for your comments. Should a qualified and approved remaining household member not be eligible for the elderly/disabled program, he/she would be transferred to the appropriate bedroom size within the family public housing program. The elderly and non-elderly resident population will change either because a non-elderly disabled head or co-head becomes elderly, vacates, or a change of head of household, or elderly vacating or changing head of household. Yes, these and new admissions will force the occupancy percentage to fluctuate.

## **Operations**

Comment: AP p. 1, sec. 1.o: PHA Information: BHA is high performing for its Section 8 program, and a standard performer for its public housing program. It would be helpful to review again the latest Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) and Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) scores and any

explanations about scores and steps for improvement. If recent PHAs information is not available, BHA should share this information with the RAB when PHAS scoring is completed.

Response: The BHA will share PHAS scoring information with the RAB.

Comment: AP P. 22: In a number of the steps here, regarding maximizing the number of affordable units available to the BHA within its current resources, it would help to have more concrete numerical goals—for example, what should be unit turn-over times. These are also comments that we've repeatedly raised regarding the Progress Report.

Response: BHA staff would be happy to discuss this topic with the RAB if invited.

Comment: S P. 7: HUD's Inspector General has been paying attention to the number of "over-income" families residing in public housing, and has asked PHA to take steps in this area, and BHA was one of the PHAs identified in the report. It would be helpful to get information about what BHA plans to do in response, and what the time frame & opportunity will be for resident/public input.

Response: BHA staff would be happy to discuss this topic with the RAB if invited.

Comment: S P. 17, (1), item e.: The language here about ceiling rents is a little confusing, as the first part says there are ceiling rents for only some developments, and other says for all developments, excepting HOPE VI and redeveloped. I believe BHA is using ceiling rents at all federal sites as an alternative to flat rents, i.e., that the rent will always be the ceiling rent unless the tenant has elected an income-based rent.

Response: The ceiling rents are not being used as an alternative to flat rents. The ceiling rents will be put in place to cap the income-based rent that a tenant may pay. Residents will still have the option to elect the income-based rent or the flat rent each year. The ceiling rents will only be in place at the federal Public Housing developments that have not been redeveloped.

Comment: Pp. 18-19: HUD slightly revised the methodology on flat rents, and I believe this matches those changes.

Response: The changes in the flat rent methodology have been made in accordance with federal regulations.

Comment: S Pp. 25-26, Section C, Management and

Maintenance Policies: This refers to separate Reasonable Accommodation Policies for Public Housing and Leased Housing, and I believe they have been or soon will be merged.

Response: That is correct and we will reference the change when the new RA Policy is implemented.

Comment: S BHA may want to review whether the definitions of assistive animal, etc. referenced here is consistent with later changes in law and/or BHA policy. (See pp. 38-39), particularly given recent amendments to the BHA's reasonable accommodation policy.

Response: BHA staff will take this comment under advisement.

Comment: 5Y On p. 3, Strategic Focus: Achieve and maintain high performer status for public and leased housing. As noted in the Template, above, BHA has high performer status for its Section 8 program, but not for public housing. It is not clear if an occupancy rate below 97% was the sole reason that BHA did not achieve high performer status in public housing; if so, the summary show say that, and if there are other areas where BHA needs to improve performance to achieve this status, it should say so. BHA should identify barriers and

strategies to overcome those barriers, and try to encompass this through measurable criteria that can be assessed.

Response: BHA staff would be happy to discuss this topic with the RAB if invited.

Comment: 5Y On p. 7, under the Strategic Focus: Create healthy and supportive living environments through policy and partnerships," the first Goal is to "Formalize partnerships to deliver an equitable baseline of services across all BHA sites." Under the Updates/Process, the Report says: "The BHA has engaged its elderly services partners such as the Boston ASAPs to develop a more formalized and accessible approach to services in its elderly/disabled buildings", and indicates that this is still in its planning stages. The description is not concrete enough to know what's being proposed, and what sorts of things can be expected by residents to grow out of this. It would also be helpful to identify timelines and any reporting back on this to the RAB or residents. There is also nothing here about a similar "baseline" analysis for family public housing, let alone figuring out how Section 8 participants might be able to better access services that they may need. The Progress Report should be supplemented in this respect.

Under this topic, BHA should also acknowledge several accomplishments that it made this year (see comments in Section I above regarding Reasonable Accommodation Policy and DHP changes.)

Response: BHA staff would be happy to discuss this topic with the RAB if invited.

## **Public Safety**

Comment: S P. 36: It's not clear if any of this is new. For example, is the "new key security system" something that was in last year's PHA Plan, and is not, what's involved? Is the "Safe Street" team proposal new, and what's involved with these "action teams"?

Response: The new key security system is an on-going upgrade at the BHA's Family and Elderly/Disabled sites utilizing keyless entry systems for the buildings.

"Safe Street" teams is not a new proposal. It involves combining police personnel and resources from the Boston Police [including specialized units; Youth Violent Strike Force – Drug Control – Bike Unit – Gang Unit] – Housing Police – MBTA – State Police to address critical issues [gangs – gun violence – drugs] in identified "hot spots".

The “Action Teams” consist of not only police but civic and religious leaders in the different neighborhoods and links to social service agencies whose goal is to steer young people away from gang activity.

Comment: S It would probably make sense to limit the report to the HUD developments (i.e., not include sites like Fairmount), but also provide some information about what is done on public safety efforts at the Mixed Finance sites and how information is shared.

Response: In the future we will only provide information on the specific sites needed. Regarding information sharing, the department provides a weekly synopsis to Area Directors / Managers on the departments patrol activities on each shift. We also provide a weekly synopsis of criminal activity occurring on BHA property throughout the city to management and administration personnel. This includes a recap of the crime as well as pictures of individuals arrested or named as suspects and any weapons, drugs or property recovered. Managers receive copies of police reports for crimes committed on their property in order to address any resident transgressions.

## **Real Estate Development**

Comment: BHA has proposed and approved redevelopment at a number of its sites (Charlestown, Amory Street, West Newton Street, and Lenox Street) in need of rehabilitation, working with private and community development partners, with the goal of preserving the same number of deeply affordable units with long-term use restrictions. In some cases (Charlestown and Amory Street), this will be coupled with the development of new market housing. At most sites, rehabilitation will be done with existing tenants remaining in place (with such temporary relocation as may be necessary); Charlestown is the only site where the buildings will be demolished and replaced with new housing. BHA also engaged residents and resident organizations on this initiative with a major community forum in the spring. BHA has had to be aggressive in pursuing new directions with the help of developers because existing federal resources are inadequate. These will be continued discussions both at these sites and over time at other BHA sites. While BHA just missed out on getting approved for Choice Neighborhoods implementation funding at Whittier Street, it will

continue to pursue redevelopment there, and hopefully will qualify in later rounds. While HUD’s Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program had earlier been identified by BHA as not providing sufficient funding to provide workable preservation solutions for its site, BHA will continue to assess whether RAD, working in conjunction with other programs, may help achieve preservation goals.

Response: We agree with this summary and would only add Old Colony as an additional federal site and Orient Heights as a state site where BHA is actively pursuing plans for redevelopment.

Comment: AP P. 2: This notes that HOPE VI is still active for Old Colony Phase II, with construction and reoccupancy complete, and final community service & stabilization activities still underway. This indicates that BHA intends to apply for a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) implementation grant for Whittier Street; this should be revised to reflect what happened this past fall, as well as any BHA Plans to reapply and to start Whittier Street efforts possibly without CNI funding in the meantime. This also indicates that mixed finance activities for the Plan year (April 2016 through March 2017) will include finishing Phase 2 at Old Colony and planning Phase 3 there, as well

as planning for mixed finance redevelopment at Charlestown, West Newton, Amory St., and Lenox St. It may help to get more information on timing of all of these, as well as the related demo disposition applications referenced in the next pages (pp. 3-7).

Response: The plan has been updated to reflect the unsuccessful Whittier Choice application this past fall and the BHA's intent to re-apply.

In terms of more specific timing on demo-dispo applications, we will continue to update the RAB and affected sites as the timing becomes clear.

Comment: AP P. 3: This refers to Replacement Housing Factor funding from various past redevelopments (and reduction of units under the Capital Fund where they are no longer counted as public housing units, such as ones that became PBV units). As noted in the separate chart in the Supplement, the total amount of RHF funding is significant, and equals more than 50% of what BHA expects to receive this year in Capital Fund. It is being targeted to Old Colony Phase 3. It may be, as other mixed finance proposals go forward, that the RHF funds may need to be flexible (to be part of the seed money for redevelopment efforts), but BHA can spell this out. I haven't checked to see if the numbers here and the

numbers in the Supplement chart add up.

Response: The BHA will continue to publish its RHF funds plan going forward. Based upon HUD's new RHF regulation, which is phasing out RHF funds, we do not expect there to be much RHF funding beyond the Old Colony project.

Comment: AP 22 It would also be helpful to know what's meant by "affordable units". Increasingly, as BHA has had to explore alternative funding sources to be able to preserve as many units as possible, units may no longer be public housing. If the subsidy structure is relatively similar so that tenants have similar rights (or perhaps even better rights due to mobility options), such as occurs with project-based vouchers which have similar 30% of income rules and "just cause" eviction limitations, that's one thing. On the other hand, nonsubsidized tax credit units or mere issuance of Section 8 vouchers may not replicate the same protections since they are not protected from market forces with displacement. Redevelopment may also not always mean one-for-one; for example, it may be that if a site had a lot of 1-bedroom units, and there is a need for larger unit sizes or more units with accessibility features, this would just a reduction in the number of units to achieve a better response to

the needs of low-income individuals and families needing affordable housing. The RAB and other community partners have remained interested in engaging with BHA on these issues as they come up at each site and in long-term planning.

Response: We agree that the affordability of replacement units is a critical issue of importance to both BHA and its residents. We are happy to continue to engage in dialogue about this in order to ensure that our redevelopment activity optimizes the replacement of units, BR sizes, and affordability.

Comment: S It may help to have the Approach to Preservation and the Sustainability Plan available as attachments (see p. 42). In particular, I'm not sure if the Sustainability Plan was distributed as a final (non-draft) document to the RAB, and neither are listed on the Agency wide policies referenced on pp. 25-26.

Response: We have referenced these documents in the Plan and will work to make these documents available.

Comment: 5Y On p. 4, under Strategic Focus: Preserve the BHA portfolio of affordable housing by developing a site-by-site preservation strategy, the first goal discusses ensuring alignment between BHA

priorities and the City's Housing Strategy, and the Update/Progress Made discusses Whittier Street and securing development partners for preservation projects at Charlestown, Amory, West Newton, and Lenox. It would help for this to be revised/updated more. It may be that preservation requires that units switch from public housing to Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers coupled with tax credit financing, and there can be discussions, as has occurred with residents and owners in the Mixed Finance working group, about how to best preserve existing structures that work (such as tenant participation recognition and funding, grievance protections, etc.)

Response: The BHA will continue the discussion that is already ongoing at the Mixed Finance working group related to how to best preserve and make consistent certain resident participation and resident protections as part of any BHA redevelopment process.

Comment: 5Y On pp. 4-5, there is a discussion, beyond the 4 specific sites mentioned above, that BHA got a strong response from a range of parties at other sites, and that long term plans are being developed for other sites. BHA should share this information with the RAB, community partners, and

residents as it becomes more concrete. We understand that because of limited Tax Credit availability, etc., and the size of the inventory, there will have to be strategic choices here about how best to phase this, and how best to meet development needs in the interim with limited Operating and Capital Fund resources.

Response: The BHA will continue to share this information with the RAB, community partners, and affected residents as it becomes available.

Comment: 5Y On p. 7, the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is remarkable. BHA should also report on progress on other environmental and sustainability goals

Response: We have added additional information to this section.

Comment: AP p. 10 Does the PHA administer any homeownership programs administered by the PHA under an approved section 5(h) homeownership program or an approved HOPE I program or has the PHA applied or plan to apply to administer any homeownership programs under section 5(h), the HOPE I program, or section 32 of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937? BHA's answer is NO -- and I'd like to know why...

Is the BHA administering any Public Housing Homeownership programs like it does for Section 8 - and if no:

- a) Why not
- b) And are there any plans to do so?

Response: BHA does not have any active public housing homeownership programs but is open to the possibility.

## Transcript General

Comment: I just wanted to send a note as I never really know what my next week's schedule will be until the Saturday before, so I don't know if I will be able to go to the Agency Plan Public Hearing. But I wanted to thank you people because I think as of January 29, 2016 when I will be 66 I may be able to retire on my social security and as I have a small retirement already and may yet get royalties on my book, I may be able to buy something in Florida and retire and move out of MA PERIOD. But I did want to say if I should get real royalties I wanted to pay back some of the money if possible to the BHA which has helped me with my apartment and when I lived with my mother too who really did do jury duty although she was over 90. Anyway although the rent here is supposed to be higher, I have been paying what the

BHA approved before with no difference, and they are perfectly happy with that. But I did want to say the kind of electric-gas-heat I have is really wonderful and it only costs about \$40 a month for my electric and gas (including GOOD heat) although sometimes the oil pipes still here come on too but to someone who has in past years in former apartments gone through heat-no-heat no-care landlords before, this is like HEAVEN. (And heat according to Mass Standards is half your rent) Sincerely.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: I have a general comment and question about the process. The prior speaker had clearly read the document. I got the notice in the mail and did not review anything. As the person that's administering this, I'm curious as to what are the reasons – are there any changes or things, other than what she said, that would impact the residents, especially since a lot of people in here don't speak English and may not be able to be qualified or able to contribute to all the legalese of the document that is your strategic plan, as an agency? I'm just curious: what is the overall focus for you, as the person leading this meeting? Can you give a synopsis? I heard the introduction, but it wasn't clear

to me.

Response: Actually, we went through an introduction which talked about the purpose of this meeting. We indicated places where the plan could be found and could be reviewed.

No. I really can't give a detailed synopsis of the Plan and all the pieces; the plan is very lengthy. Much of it is required by HUD. There are many questions. There is information about capital improvements. There are some policy changes. I would really recommend, if you wish to review the policy – review the plan – it's available at management offices. It's available here at the library. It's also available at our main offices at 52 Chauncey Street. John is there and I am there. Actually, if I knew when you were coming, we would be happy to sit down and spend some time going over the plan itself with you. For me to off-the-cuff do that here, I think, would be doing a disservice to what's in the plan. We can talk afterwards if there's a time that you'd like to come by. I can actually even point out to you where the major changes are, which are not all that extensive. We report about demographics and we report about status of programs. Also, if there are any changes to major policies, like our admissions policy or our leased housing administrative plan, those are also... We can

go over this with you if you wanted to come.

Female: I've got one follow-up.

Gail Livingston: Sure.

Female: I'm just curious, we have a lot of people here [inaudible phrase 00:17:30] academic backgrounds and [inaudible phrase 00:17:36] interpret that particular document. I wondered: can other people whose native language, first language is not English, who may have a high school education, are they able to intelligently respond and interpret that document? Is there a way for BHA to put that in laymen's terms?

Gail Livingston: We also, as you heard, work through our Resident Advisory Board. Attendance at those meetings has a lot of discussion about the particulars of the plan and any changes in policies, et cetera. We do not translate the entire plan in writing. We have interpreters here to talk about it. We can – and we always do – set up special purpose meetings to discuss particular aspects of the plan. I welcome discussing this with you later. I really want to, now, go through and allow the people who have signed up to speak, to speak and then other people can contribute and we can add other people to the list to chime in later. (in followup the Plan

documents were emailed to the commenter.)

Comment: Hi. Good morning, everybody. I, first of all, want to say thank you for there being agencies like HUD and Boston Housing [inaudible phrase 00:24:06] services that we have here. [Inaudible phrase 00:24:14] the responsibility of being able to care for so many individuals – resident and non-residents alike. We have a big immigration problem, but we also have an immigration alliance and support system. Therefore, finance is an issue, fairness is an issue, property maintenance is an issue, [inaudible phrase 24:36] an issue. But I'm thankful that, despite the fact that I am homeless or I deal with the things I deal with, I can say, honestly, that, after traveling and being in some spaces, we have a system here that works better than many systems in other places. The bad news in availabilities here are not relevant in other places I've been. In one sense, I guess I just wanted to get up to say thank you. On the other hand, as a citizen, [inaudible phrase 00:25:13] housing application or subsidy. But I can say that I hope, as part of the operations, that they would take the time in HUD and BHA to be more respectful of those that make their jobs possible, their positions [inaudible 00:25:39], and the opportunities available for others to utilize these

properties and services and these funds, that they would be allocated appropriately based on truth and fairness and that they find a way to dispose of pillagers, deceivers, and waste in order for those that have the necessity, to have that necessity met as opposed to scoundrels sucking up resources and drying them up so they just cannot benefit from these services. That's one. Two: I think we should definitely pay attention more to our seniors and elders who are in the retirement field. I don't think they should become second-class citizens after spending their whole lives caring for [inaudible 00:26:31] in some of these buildings that they stay in. I think that's a priority. They shouldn't have to fight with a rat to get their cheese. I think there should be some consideration as to income-based subsidies as opposed to – what is it: [inaudible phrase 00:26:49] percentage? - on a person who's limited income in entitlement under a full general relief income, social security – an SSA as opposed to an SSI. You know what I mean? [Inaudible phrase 00:27:02] as far as really [inaudible 00:27:05] income, as opposed to someone who may have a disability. I'm not saying that they're not important; I'm just saying that if they have [inaudible phrase 00:27:16]. Other than that, I'm thankful that my sponsor has allowed me to come with her today. I

thank you guys and I hope that this year can be a good year and that they really take the time to appreciate the tenants that make this city what it is. Have a good day.

Response: Thank you for your comment. BHA staff should always be respectful of the residents they serve. BHA staff work very hard to verify information to make the best use of the limited resources available.

Comment: I'm here to ask a question. My question [inaudible phrase 00:28:27] about it... The place I'm living now, I didn't want to live in that place but, because if Boston Housing was okay for me to even take two bedrooms, I would be happy to take two bedrooms to live with my two kids. Also, I asked them if I can take three bedrooms, even if it was more than they would give me, I would pay the rest, and they refused. Now, the place I'm living, I have only one [inaudible phrase 00:29:08]. So, it's very messed up. [Inaudible phrase 00:29:27] because I didn't have no choice [inaudible phrase 00:29:36]. So, now I'm asking if it's okay if even two bedrooms, any place I want to take the children away, just to move out for him because I don't want him to get killed. That's what I was saying. [Inaudible phrase 00:30:00] he came home [inaudible phrase 00:30:07]. I

took him. I said, "I want to know what's going on." I took him. I went back to the site with my daughter. When I went back, so many police were already there. I walked there. I get, off the floor, I pick up his sandal. All the police came to me and said, "Ma'am, are you okay?" I said, "It's my son," and they start talking to him. [Inaudible phrase 00:30:36] but if I don't want to [inaudible phrase 00:30:39] two bedrooms.

Response: You also are a voucher holder. You take your voucher – you have a housing choice voucher; you're not project-based?

Female: No.

Gail Livingston: You can take that voucher and move. So, if you want to find a different place to live, we will continue to subsidy with you. I have your name, so I'll touch base with your leasing officer and have someone get in touch with you.

Comment: Hi everybody. My name is [Inaudible name 00:32:09]. I am really happy to live in part of Section 8 housing. I come here to say, just, thank you so much for who is working in Boston Housing. [Inaudible phrase 00:32:30] because they are really, really helpful. Before, I lived in projects and I had trouble with them. So, think about that. Now I'm really safe, really good, and I would

say thank you very much, all of Boston Housing. I love Boston, [inaudible phrase 00:32:51]. Thank you everybody.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Right here. I just have a comment. I am with Boston City [inaudible 00:33:38] Office. Back to what this lady was saying, I would just recommend, based on the actual title of the meeting – maybe I was misinformed – I made the assumption that we'd at least have highlights of the annual plan for people to review. It's really difficult for folks to comment on something that they may have not had the opportunity to review and that they were told today that they could get it from the management office. Just in the future, I would just highlight some points for some folks to review. Thank you.

Response: Thank you for your comment. We will take into consideration as we think about the Plan process.

Comment: How are you doing, everybody? I'm a Pastor. I've been with Section 8 over 30 years but God has blessed me all these years to never really have such a terrible place and such a terrible landlord. [Inaudible phrase 00:35:00] but, through the grace of God, got broken through. I want to speak unto just the issue of the

living conditions. [Inaudible phrase 00:35:21] also is one of the tenants because, when we bring up complaints in housing, they tell us to go to the landlord. The landlord, quite a few of them – not all of them – are just slums and they have told them, "I will not fix nothing." I said, "I will not live in your place." Sometimes we are in a place where it's worse than where we're really going. So, you leave that place and go to another place to try to get to a better place. Sometimes, we take a place just to get from where we are, trying to get a better place and it doesn't always work out when we get there, like the lady said about the condition of the place where you live at. I understand and I see it so much in Boston, New Orleans, and areas where I lived at. As a preacher, I have to tell you the ways of the word of God. We need Christ, like never before, in our life, and you need praying. You can't pray to a God that you don't know. You have to have the personal relationship with him and you have to receive him as your lord and savior, Jesus Christ. [Inaudible phrase 00:36:38] on God, one lord, one savior, amen. Housing can't do it all. They have the houses, but we must pray and ask God, "Lord, help us to help make things better. Only you can truly make things better for us, amen." Once again, I give praise to Housing. I'm not trying to butter them up or

nothing like that. My experience of 30-something years of Housing, I've had, like I said, some good things or some bad things, but I thank God for what it is. I thank God for Housing because, if it had not been for Housing, I would not have a place of my own. By the grace and mercy of God, that I wouldn't have to pay \$1,500 a month in rent; I only pay a portion of it – amen. We wouldn't be here if we could pay that \$1,500, \$1,800 – amen. We give praise to God for Housing.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Hi. I just wanted to [inaudible 00:38:26] you guys on the question that I had. I got this – thing you pay your rent with...my rent statement. It says, "The purpose of a public hearing is for residents to speak on the agency plan and for the BHA to listen. The agency plan describes the BHA's policies and program. You can review a copy of the plan between November 1 and December 15 [inaudible phrase 00:38:54]." So, for me, I got this on last Friday. Today is Wednesday. The lady from Representative Jackson's office that said a highlight might be helpful for her, even though I think I have a pretty good academic background, I'm not so sure that I have the wherewithal or the training to review a large document all the time. I would

appreciate if there was a way – a highlight, as she said, or an overview – that can be made available to all of us. I'm sure I'm not the only one in that particular situation. The other thing I wanted to say is "Yay." I love BHA. I was in transition – was not homeless – could have been and got in for a decent place to live for affordable rent. But, at the same time, if there is a meeting that's called in a public and people are supposed to comment on specific thing that will better the life of residents and make the role of BHA more valuable across the board, then we ought to be informed in a manner that we can respond effectively and efficiently. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

Response: Thank you. Those are some good suggestions.

Comment: I want to thank others for pointing out that we have not had access to the document. We thought that the point of this meeting was to review or highlight some of these issues. I'm asking of you guys: is it possible to a PDF format online so we can stay at home and read the documents [inaudible phrase 00:41:19]?

Response: The document is on our website.

Female: It is? I did not know this.

Gail Livingston: Yes, it's posted on our website. We put a public notice in the newspapers at the beginning of the process. The thing that I would try to add is that this is part of a larger conversation. We have representatives from our Resident Advisory Board. We have a draft of the annual plan and we share that with the Resident Advisory Board in open meetings. We give presentations. We talk about this for hours and we give presentations about different pieces and we interact with that Board through September, October, November, and December, and then we have our public hearings at the end of that. But, it's part of a much larger process. This hearing today is just one piece and time but we try to put the plan out there in a lot of different places, in hardcopy as well as online, so that people can access it and be part of that conversation. But I think that we – I hear the comments being made about having these highlights. It is difficult to summarize. We have a lot of programs and policies. So, from year to year, we're making some changes in some of those programs or policies but, as I say... That's why we have meetings for months where we're talking about these, planning, describing the programs and policies. This hearing today is this chance, "We've been putting it out there and now this is a chance for

comments about what we've had out there in draft form." That's why the text is about, "this is a public hearing. It's our chance to listen." So I really do want to encourage people – there is a process that people can engage with that public process. The meetings are open to the public. But, at the same time, it's constructive to hear people's comments. If there's some way that we can turn a lot of those programs and policies into sort of a one-pager, highlights that we could have here at the hearing... If you only had about 20 minutes and you wanted to get a flavor of what the BHA annual plan was all about, there is a five-year plan progress report. It's probably about 10 or 12 pages long, but it has the largest goals that the BHA is working on, split into two columns with goals on one side of the page, and then progress made in the other column. I have a couple copies here with me in my bag, which I'm happy to give out. I've already given a few copies out. I can try to give to anybody else here today who might not have access online. Then I'm happy to also take down the mailing address for anybody here who would like me to mail you a copy maybe of that five-year plan progress report so, that way, you can walk away and still be able to have some of that information, with a little more detail. This is also – just this public hearing is today, but, after today, if you still wanted to engage or you

still wanted to ask a question you can... So, again, this hearing is like this one point in time; I don't want to over-pressurize this one hearing over a 45 day period because I'm available. You can call me. You can send me an email. You can write me a letter so we can keep going and have the conversation.

Comment: [Inaudible phrase 00:46:27] people who want to go online and read the document online and, if they want to pose questions, you could have some sort of forum for each and every chapter there is. That's my thought.

Response: That's an excellent thought. There's so much we can do just online.

Comment: An online dialog, because some people work nights [inaudible phrase 00:46:43].

The other thing I'd also like to address: I live in an area that used to be mixed and I loved it. In the past few years, they've changed the housing into BHA and what the management did – they came politely and encouraged residents to move out. What happened is we [inaudible phrase 00:47:02] moving in. I'm really quite sick and tired of putting up with party animals. Next door to me was a building that is completely filthy and [inaudible phrase 00:47:16]. It's all college dorms. The street

that I'm living on, it used to be mixed. It used to be Latinos. It used to be African Americans. It used to be all different nationalities. It has now turned into a college dorm up and down the street. This is something that I find very upsetting because I'd rather have the lady that was talking about her son and living with neighbors that she does not like – I'd rather have her as a neighbor than someone who is partying until 3:00 a.m., keeping me up. I would rather have mixed people. I'm wondering if there is a regulation within the City of Boston where landlords can be mandated to have X-amount of minorities – 10 percent or... If there's a certain population within a building, they have to have certain openings for vouchers or someone who is on low-income. I do wonder if there is a way to have more of a mixed income within the City limits because the fact is, people of darker skin color – and I'm saying this as a fact – they're being pushed out into the neighborhoods where there is more crime. There is no fairness in that. They should be given equal opportunities. [Inaudible phrase 00:48:30] I was almost homeless over 12 years ago. I thank God in heaven I wasn't; he saved my life. I was very lucky. But I think there should be some sort of a system where we encourage people of different ethnicities to move back into the City and then get the college

students out. I'm sorry. The constant change of residents is very annoying, to say the least. The other thing I'd like to bring up, within the building that I'm living in, there are some buildings that they own their house.

I have a voucher now. I'm very lucky. I was in [inaudible 00:49:11]; I now have a voucher. The only residents who were encouraged to move out [inaudible 00:49:16] units – I am asking for one simple thing. Can we please [inaudible phrase 00:49:24]. “No, you have to move out.” They're trying to have me move out. I refused to move because I'm in a nice neighborhood; I want to stay there. I'm not going to move anywhere else. I'm wondering where this landlord can go because my landlord says, “No,” and I'm stuck, besides the building that was mouse-infested. These are just general issues and I feel I have no voice. I'd rather have mixed people in my buildings, in my neighborhood, than college students. I think is something that needs to be done. I think the colleges need to be [inaudible 00:49:59] to house their students. “I'm an undergraduate.” “I don't care. Forget about the resident buildings.” I'm tired of this, all week long. This is my two cents.

There has to be a way, with the Governor, to say, “We have to

have mixed income people living in the city...”

[Inaudible phrase 00:50:44] and they pay monthly rent. It's like \$2,500 for a two-bedroom; it's ridiculous. No one can afford it. It's insane. There should be a rule.

Response: I think maybe you could speak with the representative from the City Council [Inaudible name 00:50:22] could talk about City ordinances and legislation. That's beyond the ability of the Housing Authority of Boston.

I think it's certainly part of the political process.

The housing market in Boston is very, very difficult. Voucher holders, in some cases, have a hard time finding units that are within the HUD fair market rents.

Female: The other thing is, [inaudible phrase 00:51:16] in the City of Boston, but there's just no chance. I should have the same rights as somebody else because I'm trying to make ends meet.

Gail Livingston: Actually, I think the Mayor is signing an executive order today about putting more money into the affordable housing trust. I think that working with the City and the Department of Neighborhood Development and the City Council – I think

that's a good venue for working on those issues.

Female: I would just say to folks that are looking for affordable home ownership units – I don't know if you're aware of the DND website of Boston Neighborhood Development. They have a website. It's a lottery, and the BRA website posts units that are available for purchase in some of these developments. Basically, the City mandates developers to do an affordable mix if they're building above 10 units. But, other than that, it's –

Female: [Inaudible phrase 00:52:23]?

Female: No, but I could talk to you.

Gail Livingston: And if you wish to give me... Well, with your name, I could probably get enough so that we can look into the situation with your landlord. We're supposed to be inspecting those units regularly. There are housing quality standards.

Female: But they're not doing that.

Gail Livingston: I need to hear that, because I won't know unless you tell me.

Female: [Inaudible phrase 00:53:00-00:53:10].

Gail Livingston: I can look into that specific situation with your landlord and the inspection, et cetera. I'd be happy to do that for you.

Comment: Follow-up: I reviewed that five-year, 20-page overview and – thank you: I have the Chinese man's – the Asian man's copy. I was just curious: when you write a dissertation, you have an abstract, that little one-pager, that tells you what it's about and it's in terms that everybody can understand. For me, reviewing that 20-page document, just skimming it, certainly I got the gist of it, but it doesn't tell me specifically what it is that the Boston Housing Authority wants to do. I don't mean to be picking on you, but I was just curious. I came to the meeting to see what was going on. I evidently care about where I live – I'm in [inaudible 00:54:32] – and I'm thankful to live there, so I'm just saying that so that maybe someone else has some concerns about that. That's it. Thank you.

Response: Great, thank you. We get that message and I think that's something that we're going to take into consideration.

Comment: : Hi. Right now I'm in the process of looking for a new apartment. I stay on Norfolk Street in Mattapan. The lady right there, she was saying the thing about the mice. When

I first moved into my apartment, I noticed a mouse hole and I saw one. Over the period of time that I was staying there, the mice got bad and eating the food. I would catch one with a trap and the next day I would see another one. I'm sitting there, watching TV, and they're running around and I'm just sitting there. To me, it's like, "Yo man, who was here before? [Inaudible phrase 00:55:44]." That's how bad it was. It just seemed like they didn't care. I'd just be sitting there and, every now and then, out of the corner of my eye, I'd catch a big one. I want to say, the Saint Francis House down here at 39 Boylston Street, it's for homeless people. I've been going there for years. I've been out on the streets, using and getting high and stuff, in and out of jail. I got tired. [Inaudible phrase 00:56:24] transitional housing program [inaudible phrase 00:56:30]. I just want to say, if you need help trying to find an apartment, there are people at Saint Francis House that can help you. Like she was saying about the computer and everything, the lady said she'd help me find an apartment. I went to Housing today and I asked my leasing officer, "Do I have to wait a year before I can move?" She said, "No, you don't have to wait." I just want you to know: 30 Boylston Street is helping.

Response: They do wonderful work there. That's a great place.

Comment: I live in Boston Housing. I've lived in it, going on 40 years. I live in Southie. I'm not a South Boston person, I never thought I would be, but I came to love it there. I put my name in for a transfer. I have a [inaudible 00:58:54] neighbor, right next door. There's a man upstairs who's going to kill every [inaudible 00:59:00] and every black person and every [inaudible 00:59:06] that's a black person. I live in a development, in an apartment, that I feel like – I'm elderly. I should have some respect. Yes, I fight for what I want and I'm sick of it because I'm not getting anything. I got a restraining order next door, three times in court; had no problem getting the restraining order. She's gonzo and he's gonzo upstairs and I had to call the police on him because I'm afraid he's going to kill everybody. But it's still coming in. There's no place for elderly. I've had my name in one elderly building. I have my name in early for 40 years. I had a scooter. I had to give it up. I live on the first floor because I can't carry a scooter up the steps. [Inaudible phrase 01:00:03]; they would leave me the key. I'd have to have somebody let me in so I could plug in the scooter at night and let me in to get it in the morning. [Inaudible phrase 01:00:20] that

I plug it in. I've gotten stuck in the streets. I've had to give up the scooter. It's hard for me to walk [inaudible phrase 01:00:30]. What I'm saying is there's nobody listening to the elderly. I want to get in the new development – uh-uh-uh, unless I make more than \$30,000 or \$35,000 a year they won't even take an application. They're only taking non-subsidies, [inaudible phrase 01:01:00] and they only take who they want back in. You'd think that I would be able to get into just decent housing, not because I'm elderly, but because I deserve it. I always pay my rent. I [inaudible phrase 01:01:26] unless someone's coming to inspect and then they decide they will. I think I deserve a decent place to live. They want \$1,500 for one bedroom. I wish I could have someone live with me to help me now because I need help, but I couldn't get a two-bedroom and pay for it. [Inaudible phrase 01:01:46] it's \$1,400 a month. I don't make \$1,400 a month. I don't have \$1,400 a month; it's ridiculous. I'm elderly but [inaudible phrase 01:02:04]. They've been building a new place down there in Maryellen for the elderly and disabled and homeless. The homeless could get in on a small subsidy. The elderly have to pay \$470-and-something a month; that's their subsidy. I can't pay that. What are you doing for the elderly? The judge said to me, "Did you

talk to Boston Housing about what's going on with you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, what did they say?" "Well, [inaudible phrase 01:02:42]. They said, 'Well then move. When you're being threatened and all this: move.'" I said, "Okay." I attempted again, just last week. He said, "You belong in elderly housing." "Duh." [Inaudible phrase 01:03:14].

I just wanted to say that because it's the elderly... I worked 40 years for the elderly; I did daycare. I thought they had everything. They did nothing. I'm not against the homeless. I'm not against anybody. Everybody should have – and someday we all will. But, right now, it's not... On top of housing, [inaudible phrase 01:03:58], it's so small the bathroom is in the bedroom. It's on the first floor in the back where it was abandoned with the trash [inaudible phrase 01:04:16]. Anybody could look in the window, step their foot up, and go right into the apartment. It was three feet from the floor – the ground, outside. I turned it down. My son said, "Mom, I'm so glad you turned that down. I wouldn't put an enemy in that place." So now I'm being punished because I turned that down and I told Housing, "I will refuse anything I don't want. If I don't like it, I'm not taking it and you can't make me. I'll stay where I am." It's better to stay where

you know where you are than to go someplace where you put your foot in the trash. I don't like to live behind bars. I've never done anything to deserve it and I'm not going to take what they give me because they say, "You are elderly. You've got no right to choose where you want to go." [Inaudible phrase 01:05:12]. I know I sound like there's no answer, and maybe there is no answer. Maybe I'll stay where I am and just call the police, but then I'm getting to be known as the woman who calls the police. But if you're going to kill every pedophile, you're going to kill every black person in this place, then I have to stay and listen to this, morning, noon, and night. Filthy, filthy language coming out an upstairs window, with signs on it, "Jesus saves." You've got to forgive your neighbors, and then he's going to kill them. "Shut up. Will you please stop it, Ron? Please?" And he comes to my door and he tells me why he wants to kill these people.

I want to say one more thing. The elderly hotline that you call is awesome. The people that work there are awesome. Emily Shea, I happened to know her since she was 18 [inaudible phrase 01:08:03]. I know people. It doesn't do any good sometimes. Senior hotline if you have a problem, they are awesome people.

Response: I know you have a transfer. We'll look into all of this and also getting on the waiting list for Old Colony. I'll talk to you afterwards.

Comment: First, I'd like to say thank you. I really do love the building that I'm in and I've been there for quite some time. I also have significant allergies. So, when I was working, I couldn't find a place to live and no one would accept me. But I found a great place, after a long time and after being mugged. The things that I run into that I really dislike is the fact that what's being developed in my state is luxury apartment buildings or condos when most people don't want to pay that price. Even the people that can afford it don't want to pay for luxury; they'd rather find something inexpensive where they can use the money for something else. So, that's the one thing I'm really disappointed with.

The other is: you know, it's one thing to create some low-income housing which, obviously, some people need to live there, but it's another to put a lot of people – there are two types of low-income people. There is public housing low-income people and there are Section 8 low-income people. I just feel it's unfortunate as a landlord because many of the people that are low-income that are public housing, when they transfer – if they transfer – to Section 8 housing, it's a

disaster. I mean, no one wants to take responsibility for a tenant that shouldn't be there in Section 8 housing. There should be more of a trial to start off in public housing, if you don't have rental history, you don't have any kind of references whatsoever, because landlords are looking for tenants that have – or try to have – at least a somewhat positive background and to at least take some responsibility for what they can afford. So, I really hope that the State develops similar buildings like mine for those that have a history – a tenant history – and those that need some rental assistance. It is a mixed-income building. It's very successful. It has a five-year waiting list for market rent and, of course, Boston University wants it and they want it for nothing. So, recently, two people were placed with this so-called “bed-on-demand in Section 8 housing, mixed income, which is wrong because they don't belong there.

My other thing is with the utilities that may have skyrocketed for some Section 8 tenants. Meanwhile, the public housing – you know, you have the same grant of, like, \$50.00, which is a lot, lot cheaper than what we have, and you even get refunded for the laundry money. I'm just wondering, “Well, what about us?” I mean, you know, it seems like, “Oh, well, we're the better tenants, but it doesn't matter if we get

thrown out on the street,” which is what will happen if we're not financed, but, you know, public housing isn't thrown out on the street because, obviously, there's a discrepancy in funds for public housing and you still get to live there. We don't. We don't have that luxury. So, I would also like to hope that the amount of funding for existing Section 8 tenants is there before opening up any kind of waiting list. Thank you.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Good evening. Can you hear me? Can you hear me? Wake up. I'm here to speak as a formerly-homeless veteran getting off heroin and I was wondering if there's any way you folks at the BHA could negotiate with the landlords to lower the rent or keep it steady. Where I live, they seem to be going up every year or every six months and I keep getting new recertifications more than once a year, which is against the law, from what I'm told. I'm thoroughly confused. I read here where the BHA, the RAP have proposed for the next four years, to 2019, which might not be accepted by the government, HUD, and, if they don't accept it, can't you negotiate with these folks because we probably will be homeless again, in the streets? I kind of don't like that – sleeping on cardboard in winter and freezing, stuck to the

ground; that's not good, and I have some health [inaudible 00:16:32]. So, I really hope you can nail that down, hone in on that one, because it's vitally important to me and I kind of like living. I'm in remission from cancer. So, I really need you to work with me on this one because I like where I live and I'd like to stay there. You know, I don't know how long I'm going to live, but I like to think that god has me on his plan a little bit longer – quite a bit longer anyway. Hopefully you can figure out why I'm being recertified more than once a year. I just had one not long ago and I had one not long ago again.

Response: Miss Cronin is here from leased housing

Male: I spoke with her on the phone.

Cronin: Yes, I recognized your name. Here's my card. Can you give me a call tomorrow and I'll look into it for you?

I can look at the specifics of your case and talk with you about it.

Male: Okay. I guess that's all for now.

Cronin: Okay, thank you.

Male: Thank you very much. Thank you, Ms. Cronin. Nice to meet you formally.

Cronin: Yes, you too. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

Comment: This is my first meeting. The concern I have – I'm a voucher holder and disabled. I can only live on the first floor, so that puts a block [inaudible phrase 00:19:00] housing. Another thing – don't get me wrong; I'm grateful for the program, but my concern is, with the rents as high as they are, the landlords want more money. They don't appreciate what you're giving them for us. My situation: my landlord wants me out because she knows she can get more money for that unit. We're being forced – there's a systematic force-out in Boston. I've lived here since 1971. For me to get something decent and affordable, it now means I'm going to have to go outside of Boston and that's not fair. Why do we have to? We're at the point where we have to lose our home and I heard – I don't know – there's a plan that stretches from Cambridge coming through to Milton and there's an overpopulation because of the colleges and a lot of these students, they can afford – or parents can afford – the high-priced rents. But, as the other person says, "Well, we can save a few dollars." So, there are a lot of different elements that are taking the affordable apartments from us – our apartments – and that's what's going to happen because I'm forced to stay... Right now, my

landlord added an extra step. I'm supposed to be in a wheelchair. I have a wheelchair in my home and I can't utilize it outside because she added an extra step. They're doing what they have to do – not all – whatever they can do to force us out so they can get that money. I don't understand. The voucher is supposed to help us but it's really harming us now, moving forward. So, if Congress could figure out something to do, because we're going to end up in the streets again, for those who've been out there. Thank you.

Response: We do hear this from voucher holders because the rents are increasing so it is more difficult. From time to time, it's hard to move sometimes. If you believe that you're in jeopardy or if your landlord is increasing the rent beyond what he or she should, you can always move. You can talk with your leasing officer.

Female: No, that's the thing that I mentioned. Then I would have to go to Taunton, Brockton, [inaudible phrase 00:22:14]. I have to go out.

Gail Livingston: Yes, I see what you're saying.

Comment: Good afternoon. I'm a resident from Charlestown [inaudible phrase 00:23:04]... They need to enforce some policies first about the no

trespassing, the trespassing, the locks, [inaudible phrase 00:23:39]. And no smoking, there is this big thing about no smoking [inaudible phrase 00:24:15]. They need to enforce those and [inaudible phrase 00:24:28]. ...people that came from way down in Dorchester or Quincy and then they are here in Charlestown, in the hallway, and [inaudible phrase 00:24:46].

Response: Please give us your name and address and we will follow up with your property manager.

Comment: One lady had a question about, when we get Section 8, how long [inaudible phrase 00:25:31] and how long you're given to find an apartment?

Response: One hundred and twenty days. So, almost four months.

Comment: And another question I was raising outside was it seems like properties [inaudible 00:25:56] of the BHA are being sold to private owners or being converted. What do tenants do if they're privately-owned? Do they have the same rights? How does that work? How does that work out?

Response: I could respond briefly to that. Thank you. The BHA has reached – some of you have been to some of these meetings where we've talked

about this... Because the federal government, through HUD, has greatly decreased operating subsidy – the money that we need to operate public housing – and also capital funds that we need to fix up the buildings and keep them in good order. Those dollars have been greatly decreased over the past several years. So, the BHA has put out requests for proposals or requests for qualifications to developers saying, "What can you offer to do to partner with us to bring in some capital and operating money for these units and maintain the units that we have for low-income people?" So, there are some proposals out there. Charlestown, as you mentioned, is one of those developments. What the developer has proposed to do and what we will require them to do is to maintain the current number of affordable units there and keep them as deeply affordable as they are now. People throw around that word "affordable" on these different things, but when we say "affordable" to the developer, it means that people won't be paying any more than they have now. So, they may wind up redeveloping Charlestown into about maybe almost 3,000 units instead of 1,000 units or 1,100 units, so there will be some market rate units and some others that will help support everything. In every proposal that the BHA has requested for any redevelopment of public

housing property, we are going to require that the developer maintain the same number of affordable units – deeply affordable units – that are there now. We can enforce that because, when we do these deals, we maintain – "we" meaning the BHA – the ownership of all the land. The buildings get built by somebody else and they own that, but what we call the "ground," the land, is always owned by the BHA and we can put certain requirements on the people that we allow to build on it. So, that's what we're doing. So we are. In the past, we've always said, "No, no, we're not..." but we are looking at doing some of these kinds of redevelopments where we get some private money in to fix up units and preserve them for low-income housing for the foreseeable future because we don't have any confidence that the federal government is going to continue to provide enough money to keep these units in good repair.

It's a 99-year ground lease. You can't do it longer than that. There's [inaudible phrase 00:30:04] law against perpetuity.

Anyone who lives in a public housing development where we are talking to a developer, we have had community meetings at your site. Bill McGonagle, the Administrator of the Housing Authority, has been there to talk about it before we

do it and when we're seeking proposals. Then, if a developer is designated, there will be more meetings. There will be resident process throughout. So, depending on where you live, if there's any plans for your development, you know about it because you've seen – whether you went to the meeting or not, you've seen notices for the meeting, so you know about it because he's in Charlestown.

Male: Gail, there's one other part of the process, and that's the approval by the Monitoring Committee of any of these projects. There is a committee made up of mostly tenants but a few outsiders as well, known as the Monitoring Committee. One of the purposes of the Monitoring Committee is to look at these expansions, these new construction projects, and we must give approval. That is by law. And, if we don't approve it, it doesn't happen. But that is by law and, in fact, last week, we approved three projects to go ahead.

Female: What were the three projects?

Male: Whittier Street was not – did not get a project, or the type of grant they were looking for, but they have a partner that said, "Let's go ahead with a piece of it for now and we'll do it ourselves and then we'll use it as a basis for doing the rest of Whittier Street." Now you're catching me off guard – a

senior moment on the other two projects.

XX: So, we have designated a developer for Charlestown. Maybe Amory Street –

Male: Amory Street, we have a designated developer there, and probably one of the finest developers for low-income housing in the country. We've got West Newton Street coming up; nothing yet on that.

Oh, the other was Old Colony. We approved a phase 3-A. That's in South Boston. That's a little piece; that's ongoing. But they're into phase 3-plus right now and there's two more to go.

Female: So Old Colony is in phase 3?

XX: Right.

Male: Phase 3-A. It will concern just one large building. Phase 1 and phase 2 have been done. Phase 3 is in process right now.

Comment: We only have three minutes to talk, so this is my concern. The congressional says, okay, says that if you are an active person in the armed services since 1940, you have 30 days from the time that you're deployed to cancel your lease, which means you'll only have to deal with 30 days. Boston Housing Authority, it has corruption – and I'm not making

something that I'm not willing to step aside and put some stock in it. My child was deployed to Iraq four times. My child left in 1999 – he left Boston, Massachusetts. In 2002, Boston Housing was forced by the City of Boston, the Mayor's office upstairs, to relocate me where they took and wrote my child's name back on their lease, took me to court, and was able to get an inclusion because of default to include my child's income in my rental recertification. The only problem is the Soldier and Seller Act of 1940, passed by congressional law, they violated. I'm standing at BHA's office in the South End and a young lady comes up and stands beside me and tells me that, for \$725, you can get jumped to the next person for an apartment over the person who's on a waiting list.

Number two: how do you work for Boston Housing for 25 years, turn around, have free rent, your own car on duty there, but when you retire, you're now able to move into Boston Housing? For 25 years, you got a full salary and you got free rent, but now you qualify to move into Boston Housing? How do Boston Housing allow people to go to court, be put out of their apartment, when somebody in Boston Housing is scanning your signature on other documents that you don't even know about. I have seen documents with my signature on it and I have known for a fact

that, on that day, neither was I in the City, let alone did I meet with BHA. There's a problem here in the City between HUD and 10 Causeway Street, between the Office of Civil Rights on the ninth floor here, between MCAD. There's an inner circle of people and I'm willing to put my documentations on the table. The reason I asked, "Who are you?" because, Ms. Livingston, I see your name on some documents that I'm dealing with, okay? But the only way you could deal with Boston Housing is either go to the Mass Bar Association – which I do have three of their attorneys with concerns with them – and in the federal court – which I do have. You have this booklet that's called your "Civil Rights Guide Plan." Every person that's listed on the back of there – Housing Police has no authority on Housing property if Boston Police show up. Boston Police has inner friendships with people who are in management, so you've got people who's got keys to your house that's coming in, stealing your merchandise. When you say to Housing, "Who's been in my house?" "Oh, nobody." You've got an inner circle of friends who cut keys in the basement because that's where they make your keys at, so they know when you're not home and everything you own as a low-income person walks away but nobody knows about it. Even tonight, at the Schubert

Theater, they have a meeting for low-income residents that's being done by Tito Jackson, but those people there don't even know about the meeting here. They know about the one they had here this morning at 11:00, but they don't know about the 6:00 p.m. In order for Boston Housing to do for the citizens of Boston – I've been here since the [inaudible phrase 00:37:42]. I've been here since the subsidies came in and subsidies went out. Unless you clean up your own house, when HUD come out to do inspection for Boston Housing, if you've got a problem... Housing: "Oh, it's okay." HUD walk right over it. Then, when you file your report, you say, "Everything's okay." Okay? Then when you turn around, you have tenants coming up and complaining. You isolate them and say, "Oh, that's the person with the problem." Before I moved into Boston Housing, I'd never had a police report. I used to rent to Section 8 in 707, okay? I bought low-income housing property back in the '80s. Then, when I turn around and start saying things to people who sat on the different boards that are supposed to delegate the authority to low-income people to have safe, standard living, you find that there's an inner circle of people just playing with these people because HUD sends their complaints upstairs to room 966, then they make their decisions and they send any

complaint that you have back to MCAD and HUD. The only problem is you've got an inner circle group of people who are playing the system. If you have a friend in BHA's office, you can go... I was over in front of the Cheesecake Factory in front of the Prudential. Man over there collecting money from people for him and his 15-year-old son. You know what the man tells me, after I'm giving him resource as an advocate for people who are low-income? He tells me his wife is the Director of BHA which, at the time, I know is a lie, which is a man. But how do you write a complaint to HUD about blacks not being in a certain development, okay? HUD gave the City of Boston \$56 million, for 56 apartments, which should have been 14 Spanish, 14 white, 14 black, and 14 Caucasian families moving in. Over three-fourths was Spanish families moving in. Not one development, duplex, on the ground has any family in it besides Spanish who is supposed to be a mother with her children. When my neighbor, for nine months out of the year, she go in there with her husband, okay, and she rent her duplex out. The one who live next door to me, her husband leave two times out of the year and come back with new people that happen to work in these businesses that the community is going out to have established, okay, that says, "Oh, we're going to give jobs to

the community.” The only problem is the community is the people coming in, not the people living here. I know, three minutes is up.

Response: Thank you. If there is any documentation that you would like to bring to my attention –

Female: Yes there is. If you’re the only Gail Livingston that’s now there, that’s your name on documents they scanned in. “She was brought into court on XYZ,” but when you look at the court document for the docket number, there’s no number. There’s a lot of corruption inside the BHA and the perimeter offices of the people who work there.

Could you tell me something? How an old woman, 75 years old, have a two bedroom apartment when BHA has subsidized housing?

XX: Well, I can... We have more people that wish to speak; we need to go ahead with that. I’m happy to stay here with you and discuss any of this.

Female: Oh, I was just venting because I already got my document things [inaudible 00:41:22] different offices. But for y’all to be here tonight to listen to the people is just like when they give the people a private conference or hearing in BHA; they pick out what they want and then they come back

on a new retaliation. I’m [inaudible phrase 00:41:36] because I can’t believe that these people here don’t know about the meeting at Schubert or vice versa. They’re all talking about low-income housing and keeping people in the perimeter. How do the City of Boston give these luxury apartment tenants an abatement on the backside when they’re trying to get rid of low-income housing on the front side?

Comment: Hi. How are you doing? Good evening. This is my first Advisory meeting. I’m totally 101 on this, but it’s great that I got to hear.

But I just had a question. If you could elaborate a lot more on landlords having the right to evict without cause. I don’t know if anybody had heard about that, or if you could elaborate more on that for me, I would greatly appreciate that. And, if you could clarify, you know.

Oh, cool. Hey, hi. Ladies and gentlemen, I was just talking about landlords having the right to evict without just cause. So, I wanted the ladies here, and gentlemen, to elaborate a lot more on that for me and let me know what’s going on, you know, with that. I would greatly appreciate that.

Response: So, the BHA, as a landlord, never evicts without cause, without a lease violation.

In the private market, a landlord can just chose not to renew a lease at the end of a lease term, whether that be a month-to-month tenancy or a year’s lease. That’s a straight, private landlord. That’s a contract thing. A tenant can chose not to renew their lease and a landlord can.

Cronin: The landlord could chose to not renew a lease at the end of the term but he would still have to evict you through a court of law. The court is likely not going to find the judgment against you without lease violations. There have to be causes to get an eviction.

Female: Then why do the papers say that? [Inaudible phrase 00:45:20] –

XX: What paper?

Female: It’s one of the Housing... When you get the packet from Housing, it says in there – I’m a voucher holder. It says the landlord – there are a few things they can evict you for: drugs, violence, something else, and they can do it with no cause. For no cause, [inaudible phrase 00:45:49].

Cronin: Okay, yeah, I think you’re speaking about the obligations under the Housing

Choice Voucher program. There are approximately 20 obligations for the family, and that's to participate in the program. That states that you could lose your voucher for a drug-related, violent criminal activity –

Female: No, I'm not talking about the voucher. I'm talking about the reasons why the landlord can get rid of us. One of the reasons are "no cause."

Cronin: Okay.

Female: Not the voucher, the reason a landlord can get rid of you: no cause. So, why would you all set up a situation like that. We're dependent on you. Give us the [inaudible phrase 00:46:31]. Also, they don't even have our back. So, to me, I would say you're saying, "Well, if you take these tenants now, but that's your way out if you need to." We need you to have our back.

Cronin: Any voucher holders that contact BHA and say that they're being evicted and they feel that they're not being represented appropriately, we're going to refer to Greater Boston Legal Services or Harvard Legal Aid, otherwise known as HAB. So, we are going to get you in touch with legal assistance to advocate for you. Plus you still have your voucher and you can take your voucher to any other apartment.

Female: That's not the point.

Cronin: No, I understand that, but –

Female: That's not easy. That's why we're here. Oh, this is easy for you to say, "Oh, move," but it's not easy to move.

XX: No, I understand that it's not easy.

Female: And it does say – that needs to be addressed. It does say "no cause," and it doesn't have to do with the Section 8 program; it has to do with the landlord saying, "Okay." They can say our family members if [inaudible 00:47:42] one of their family members or they want to raise the rent. There are different pieces that fall under that "no cause."

Female: [Inaudible phrase 00:48:04].

Cronin: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Yes, another question I had... Oh, I just lost my train of thought. Yes, I know there's a lot of voucher holders and, in some cases, voucher holders have rented through private homes. When the owner asks to please leave without whatever cause – right now, of course you know, there has been a high rise of rent increase. One issue that one individual had encountered is

that their voucher was for [inaudible phrase 00:49:04] or something. So, now it's time for them to move, to find somewhere that is that price – market rate that price. It's hard. So, what's going on with that? I mean, it's like, more or less you're going to be homeless again when you're searching for a home for you and your children and the market rate is so high that the voucher does not even cover what they want [inaudible phrase 00:49:36]. So, what happens with that?

Response: Okay, so the question again is just reiterating that the price of the vouchers is not really keeping current with the exorbitant rental rates in the City of Boston. I mean, at the BHA, we completely understand that it's very difficult to search for housing, you know, because of the rental prices in the City of Boston. That being said, you know, BHA, we've issued I think close to 1,200 vouchers in the past year, year-and-a-half, and we have over a 90 percent success rate with people finding housing with their vouchers. It's incredibly difficult and incredibly competitive and we certainly understand that. You know, we have our payment standards set to 110 percent of fair market rents, which is the most we can do under regulations.

HUD sets the fair market rates. We have nothing to say about that. HUD publishes what they consider fair market rents for

regions. So, if they say, “The fair market rent in Boston for a one-bedroom apartment is \$1,200 a month,” then that’s what the voucher can pay. We have permission now... HUD says, “Okay, because of the market and to make it better for people, you can pay up to 110 percent of the fair market rent,” which, I think, would take us to \$1,320 from the \$1,200, but we are prevented from paying any more than that from the vouchers. It’s not like we make a decision that says, “Well, we’re just going to pay this much.” There are a lot of rules with the program that we have to abide by that are made by Congress and the Department of Housing. So, sorry, but... We’re prevented from paying any more than 110 percent of the fair market rent.

Comment: what is the flat rent rate?

Response: The rule is that the flat rent for public housing has to be at least 80 percent of the fair market rent. So, whatever the fair market rent for a one-bedroom apartment is, the flat rate is 80 percent of that.

Comment: I have sat at these meetings since the [inaudible 00:52:30] program which said [inaudible phrase 00:52:35], market rate, or moderate-rate income [inaudible phrase 00:52:44]. So, I don’t have to be here if it’s, you know, irrelevant to you, sir. You don’t

have to do that. I can read sign language too. I’m not here to debate but you’ve got people who come in to find out why they have a voucher from BHA and then they can’t find a home [inaudible phrase 00:53:05]...income housing in different places that says they expand themselves throughout the State of Massachusetts.

Male: Ma’am, would you let us continue? I get your message. Let us continue with the hearing, please.

Female: But they probably want to know the same thing. We want to live where we’re living now, within the city area, and if you have delegated vouchers out to the landlords to guarantee that they get paid, why is everybody having to move on the outside of the city when they want to be where they grew on the inside of the city?

Response: It’s a problem in the City of Boston. Rents are high in the City of Boston and rising faster than many other cities in this country. Boston is the number two city in the country for income disparity between low-income and upper-income people. And, as distressed as we all are about it, it’s not something that the Boston Housing Authority, in running its leased housing program, that we can control. As I said, we are prevented from paying more than 110 percent of the fair

market rents with our vouchers. I think that, as a couple of years ago, we did public hearings where, when the Section 8 program itself was under assault, we weren’t sure what the funding was going to be. Was it going to be continued? We got sequestration. Boston Housing Authority was able to get through that without terminating any families from the program, which happened in many other cities. But, at that time, there was a lot of conversation about, “How do you approach a problem like this, where the rents are high, where the program may not be adequate to allow people to take advantage of it?” So, the issue is to go – it’s a legislative problem, it’s a federal problem, state problem. We need to mobilize. There are people in this room who I know are working with other tenants and working to mobilize to preserve the Section 8 program and to make it better and to put it in a position where it can be expanded. I will say that fair market rents – usually, new fair market rents come out in October. HUD has not put out new fair market rents. We learned today that, probably, they’ll come out within the next couple weeks which will increase, again, the payment standard for people who are out looking or who are currently living in apartments. We don’t know what the increase will be, but most bedroom sizes – I think all bedroom sizes, really,

are going to be increasing, so that will also increase the payment standard. We hope to learn what those new regs will be shortly because we know that between last year and this year, average rents have gone up. Many people have been asked for rent increases. We are now waiting to see what those are, which will then increase the amount that people will be able to – that the BHA will be able to pay with the vouchers.

Gloria Meneses: I would like to add to the response. I work with the Boston Housing Authority, at the Occupancy department. We completely understand the frustration of people that need affordable housing. It's not just a problem in the City of Boston; it's a problem nationwide. I do know, from working at the BHA for over 28 years, that the BHA has engaged more and more in fighting with the residents – the RAB – the tenant task forces and with advocates. We have the highest number of advocacy and lawyers working to protect the rights of low-income families. The BHA has increased the number of landlords that will accept Section 8 vouchers in the City of Boston. It has gone from 9,000 vouchers in the past to, now, about 14,000 vouchers of people renting in the City of Boston and vicinities. This is a problem not just for low-income families; it's a problem renting

affordable housing for the working class as well. Could Congress force private landlords to rent and have their income – their rents at a certain level? That's a bigger decision that's beyond the BHA's control. The BHA has been working and continues to work hard to really maintain affordable housing in the public housing program and the vouchers, it is doing everything possible. Unfortunately, yes, it's working with Congress and saying, "Where is the funding?" The funding is getting cut – and trying to really increase the number of families that we are able to house and preventing families from continuing to be homeless or become homeless. So, I think it's about working together with the BHA and not just sitting here and saying, "The BHA has to take ownership of this." This is a bigger picture of residents, the City, the State, and the federal level of how the disparity of income, in general, is going to be addressed and finding affordable housing for all, because, right now it's so competitive for everyone... Except for people who are in the one percent of income, that have the high income, everybody else is really battling with, "How do I remain in the place where I want to reside? How do I keep living in Boston?" Boston has the hospitals and the schools, the colleges, so it's extremely competitive. It's working

together to ensure that we don't continue losing funding so that the budget for the Section 8 vouchers get shut down and that public housing has to be closed because there is no funding.

Comment: How can I participate and have a voice on this? Is there a board already set up?

Response: There are a variety of ways to get involved. Write into Congress. Write to your Representatives.

When you do your comments on the Plan, that goes to HUD, but HUD also has restrictions. Many of the issues you raise really goes to Congress when they're doing the budget.

There are residents here tonight that are from the Resident Advisory Board. There is information in the front of the room on how to contact the RAB. I know that there's people in this room who are working with City Life, particularly on the voucher program – not so much public housing, but on the voucher program. I know that there's at least one person here from that organization. Another group is the Section 8 Tenants Incorporated.

You can connect with some of these resident and advocacy organizations.

Comment: Good evening, everyone. I'm just listening to everyone wondering how they can stay in the city and save their Section 8. I'm with an organization called Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants (MAHT). What we do is we help people who are in low-income, privately-owned Section 8 buildings. The way we do that, we save buildings, one building at a time. The people who are talking about being kicked out for no just cause, that's City Life. City Life is now – they're a group of people; they're on Amory Street in Jamaica Plain. What they're doing is making it harder for landlords to kick people out for no just cause. You do have to, I believe, go to the courts to get kicked out of your apartment. But you might want to contact City Life in Jamaica Plain if you think you're being asked to leave your apartment for no just cause. Another way to address your problems is you can't just sit down and just come here now that you have a problem. "Oh, okay, I have a problem, so now I need to come and speak." BHA puts these things out there; they put things through the mail, but you, yourself, have to come down, listen to this, but you also have to be involved in the organizations. You can't just sit down and let people do the work for you. You're coming down here, venting – it's okay to vent; I vented, believe me – but that's not the way to do it. You have to

organize. That's what we do. Unfortunately, I didn't save my building. My owner opted out of his Section 8, so where I live is no longer affordable. That's in Stony Brook Commons up in Roslindale. It's all market rate. But we saved Georgetown. Georgetown is over 940 apartments. We also got Georgetown to be able to have repairs not only on the outside but on the inside of their apartments. They were only going to do the repairs on the outside of those apartments but, because we formed a tenant organization, they were able to get whatever repairs they needed in their apartment. But, you have to organize. You can't just sit here, come down and, you know, just say, "What are you going to do?" What are you going to do? What are you willing to do to save where you're living? Where were you when they were having all of these meetings before they started building up all these apartments? Was anybody at any of those meetings? I mean, you have to come out. We have a bill up at City Hall. We have bills up at the State House that we're trying to get passed. If every single one of you were out there, there's no way – and you have to be a voter, and no way would they not pass this because look at all these people in here, all diverse. That's what we need. They think, "Oh, it's just you. There's no problem." But they need to see these faces. They need to

see the faces. You can't just sit here and say, "What are you going to do for me?" now. You should have been, back when it was first happening. I was. I didn't save my building, but I'm still out here. I'm still fighting. I've saved a lot of buildings for a lot of people and it's very – it's a good feeling when you can help somebody save their home.

Female: How did you know that these meetings were happening?

MAHT Rep: Because BHA sends it out to my executive director.

Female: So was that the form that they normally send?

MAHT Rep: Usually, when BHA's having meetings like this, they put them in the mail to all of the people.

Female: This is one meeting that I've gone to. I never have any time, so I said, "Let me just come here so I can get some knowledge and get the 411 before acting," and that's why I'm here. You know, so, when there's other meetings being held outdoors, as you were saying, you know, how do you get that information?

MAHT Rep: Well, because I'm – like, Mass Alliance HUD Tenants, a grassroots organization, you know, we stay in touch with each other.

[Inaudible phrase, simultaneous speaking 01:05:49]

Female: ...this whole group right now. Is it possible you could get all their emails and put an email blast and let us know when these meetings are happening outside?

MAHT Rep: Well, I can give you my business card. Once I give you my business card, I can put you in contact with S8TI.

We have the same numbers because we're all in the same kind of thing. Only thing: they do public and we do privately-owned. So if, you know, you want to keep your home, you have to get out here and do something. We have bills up at the State House. We have bills at City, here in this building. We're trying to get meeting with the Mayor. He promised that he would give more money for Housing. He has given money for Housing, but only for the elderly, and it's fine, but there's people like ourselves in here who need housing. So, we need everyone that's in this room to come, whether you go to S8TI, whether you go to City or [inaudible 01:07:28] depending on what your need is, you need to become involved. I mean, if all of you were to come to our meetings or the City Life meetings or S8TI... It's not going to come overnight. It's not going to come overnight, but it can

happen. If anyone wants my business card, I can take it. I'll put you in contact with City Life. I'll put you in contact with S8TI, depending on what your initial business is. You have to get out there and you have to fight. If you want to stay in your home, you have to fight, unfortunately.

Not only are we a Mass organization, we're also a national. My executive director, he's the one who's writing most of these rules for HUD. We're getting ready to change them. So, he goes to Washington just about every month, every other week. He's down there in Washington. We go to Washington every June and we go to Congress. We actually got some people in Georgetown to have lower rents because we got Scott Brown, a Republican no less, to do something out on the Congressional floor and got some of the people in Georgetown lower rents and they got rebates. So, you know, it takes time but it can work. So, it all depends on how bad you want it, if you want to stay where you're staying.

Female: I'm not worried about [inaudible phrase 01:09:17], but I see this. My concerns, they aren't about myself – I'm going to do me – it's for everyone.

MAHT Rep: The organizations [inaudible phrase 01:09:35] then, like I said, depending on what you need or what

anyone's need is. I mean, there are just so many organizations. There's Jobs for Justice. There's the Mass Senior Action. All of these, we're all grassroots organizations. We're all in this together. Honey, we go to Washington every June – every June. That's what I'm talking about. Not only do you need to go to Washington, we need to be right in this building and talk to Marty Walsh, who's our Mayor. He has a lot to do with what's going on here – not so much BHA. But, if the Mayor says, "Do this," BHA will do it.

Comment: I've got a little story, and I'm going to keep it short. I might speak in Spanglish, English, different languages, I don't know. This is my story, and I'm speaking for me and my family; this is what happened. When I was living in Boston Housing – I'm sorry, in Framingham Housing, I was exposed to asbestos. I didn't know until they went in and took that asbestos out. I got sick. The mother of my child got sick. She died. I'm still alive. [Inaudible phrase 01:11:24]. They haven't done anything about that. They're going to tear it down. I live in Charlestown right now. They're going to tear down the buildings. I asked one question and they never answered. "Why are they tearing down these buildings? What's the reason? Is it anything that can cause our health problems, or what is it? It's about occupation

or size or money? What is it?" I've been waiting for a two-bedroom apartment. I moved there in 2008. I need a bedroom for my son. I was approved in 2010 on today's date. I haven't had any room for him. I'm fighting about people moving. I've got a mouse problem. He's got asthma. I know sometimes it's hard because we love pets. You know, I love pets. My son loves pets, but he cannot be near his pet because he's allergic to it. So, we do our best to not be around them, but we still love them, you know. We love people who've got pets too. So, my thing is I fight for getting a two-bedroom apartment. They haven't given it to me. Now they're going to tear down this place. I tried Section 8. I went to the Boston Housing at 52 Chauncy Street and I got the application. When I got there, they denied me to give it to me. I fight. I put in a complaint and a hearing. [Inaudible phrase 01:13:45]; that's it. I don't understand that. I don't even know what it means, but I still have a child with me for a two-bedroom apartment. I asked them, "Give me the Section 8 so I can move into a place that I can live without having the smoke from the people. People in the building or who live there, they smoke. You don't want your child to get up at 3:00, 4:00, 5:00 in the morning saying, "Daddy, my chest. Help. I'm in pain. It hurts." That hurts me

too. I get up and I cannot breathe. It doesn't matter – we open the windows sometimes. The windows, they're not really tight or they do work and they really seal it, you know, so all that smoke going in anyway. There's a lot of dust because [inaudible phrase 01:14:47] back to the same apartment, back and forth all these years, and it's like we don't have a place that is safe. I don't have a safe place because my life is at risk, and my son's life too. So, the issues, they have to be fixed way before something wrong happens – people pass away or, you know, like, drug-related or somebody gets killed or whatever. The issues have to get fixed, not just we come here and say, "An organization knows about it," but do the organizations do anything to take care of the issues so people can sleep? What about the playground for the kids at Charlestown? Those playgrounds are bad; they're really bad. I say, "Why?" I don't let my kid play outside because of guns, because of drugs, because it's not a safe place. Even myself, I don't feel safe. So, you know, the system has to change and the way to do the right thing is no lies, no look on the other side because you know the truth, yes, from the truth. Go forward. [Inaudible phrase 01:16:20] don't give your back to let them continue doing what is wrong.

Response: Can you make sure that I have your address before you leave and I can speak to the manager about a number of those things – the manager at Charlestown – especially about the smoke. We can talk after. Make sure I have your address.

Comment: The question I have: I remember reading something [inaudible phrase 01:17:24]. I'm saying, is there anything in place that the tenant gets a quality apartment? If they're demanding more rent, is there something that says, "The standard of living should rise in that apartment?"

Response: The apartments are inspected by the BHA Inspection Department. They're required to pass inspection before a rent increase will be approved and if, at any time, you have any tenant complaints about the quality of your inspection, you're entitled to submit a tenant complaint with the Inspection Department to go out and do another inspection [inaudible phrase 01:17:57] that repairs need to be made.

There are Housing Quality Standards. So, if there's any violations of Housing Quality standard, the Inspection Department would reject the unit and give the landlord a certain length of time to make the repairs.

To this young lady's point about the quality of the cabinets, whether there's stainless steel

or maple or whatever, the units are inspected for Housing Quality standard, so it's Mass State Sanitary Code. That would be a cosmetic issue. The BHA would have no authority to enforce that stainless steel be installed if the existing cabinets met code.

Comment: I'm a member of the RAB also. One of the tenants where I live was supposed to be here to ask this question, but she's not here. Her question was, basically, how much more can BHA do to increase the no smoking policy for conduct? I guess [inaudible phrase 01:19:58] too, but it came from her.

Response: We need to make sure, if the resident smells smoke, thinks someone is smoking, they need to report it to the office. But, also, we're working with managers and our legal department to have what we think is going to be a more efficient enforcement method. When we first implemented it, it was multi-stage. So, we're coming up with what we think is a more efficient approach to enforcement which we hope will make an impact and hopefully shortly – in early next year, we will be rolling that out, also, with various ways to make complaints, including a call-in line. In addition to reporting a complaint at a manager's office, you can also call this number. The central number is 617-988-5030. You can also email your

complaint. The email address is very easy: smokefree – one word - @bostonhousing.org, smokefree – one word - @bostonhousing.org. Phone number: 617-988-5030, email: [smokefree@bostonhousing.org](mailto:smokefree@bostonhousing.org).

This system will allow us to really track complaints more efficiently than we can right now. If we've got an email or a phone message, then it will be transmitted to the manager who will have to take action and we'll be able to follow – to see if it has been followed-up on.

Female: How come you can smoke in section 8?

Gail Livingston: We don't own the Section 8 housing, but S8TI – Section Eight Tenants, Incorporated – is working with a number of landlords to try and convince them to go smoke-free. Additionally, we have a partnership with the Boston Public Health Commission and they've been involved in that as well – trying to work with landlords, but it has to be voluntary on the part of the landlords. The BHA, right now, is not able to force them to do it.

Female: We're worried about [inaudible phrase 01:24:06] because I'm a smoker. I'm a smoker. I'm not going to go try to rent a place where it's smoke-free and smoke my cigarettes. So, if I had an area where I can smoke and I'm a resident, who are you to come

in and say, “[Inaudible phrase 01:24:27]?”

[Inaudible phrase, simultaneous speaking 01:24:38]

Gail Livingston: For public housing, it's throughout. It's apartment, common areas within 15 feet of the building.

[Inaudible phrase, simultaneous speaking 01:25:07]

Gail Livingston: It's completely voluntary on the part of landlords, which it could be with or without us doing –

Female: But you just said you're trying to encourage it; that's what you just said.

Gail Livingston: The Section 8 tenants organization is trying to encourage it.

Female: In most private buildings, there is still smoking in the common areas – in the common areas.

John Kane: We had a hand over here.

Female: Are these cameras on? Are we also being videotaped?

Gail Livingston: Not by us.

Female: Okay, because I see the red light on this camera when this one up here's on and I'd just like to know if I'm being recorded.

Comment: My question is very simple. I heard what you said earlier, that BHA was leasing the ground for 99 years to the different developers. How many years are the developers guaranteeing low- to moderate-income housing for people within the City? Because I know [inaudible phrase 01:26:19] different developments doing different programs, they only had to submit 20 years of their development before everything went up to market rates. So, are people who are coming in, getting BHA by the City's property for this 99-year contract, what is their obligation to the City to keep low-income residents as to what percentage, for how many years? Is it through the duration of the 99 years? Do they become owner of the property after 99 years or does that revert back to the City of Boston? How does that 99-years' lease work with the developing?

Response: I'm not the attorney for the housing authority or for the developer, so I can't discuss it in detail. I know that – so – but, the obligation that the developer has to the Housing Authority extends through the time period of the lease. [Tent City], other developments that were done through voucher and other kinds of programs have housing assistance payments or HAPs that have a period of

time – 15 or 20 years, depending on the program. At the end of that time, the owner is able to return the building to market, but that's not the same process that's being used with the three BHA developments.

Female: [Inaudible phrase, simultaneous speaking 01:27:58] those parcels of land that was given by the City through the housing redevelopment; that was City-owned property.

XX: It's a different entity. It's a different process.

Female: Even though you're saying that it's a different home property that is being allotted, there's still a specification as to who owns the ground that those developments sits on.

Gail Livingston: BHA.

Female: Okay. If BHA still owns the ground that those developments –

Gail Livingston: Well, not [Tent City].

Female: Well, I know [Tent City] [inaudible phrase, simultaneous speaking 01:28:28] –

Gail Livignston: Those aren't our developments.

Female: No, that was when we had all the tenant organizations throughout the City on every

street, but I'm talking specifically about the developer that's coming in, getting the 99-year lease on the earth that their development's set on. Once that 99-year lease is up, how much of that goes back to BHA and, during the construction of the development over the 99 years, what percentage of that do people with vouchers or Section 8 or low-income housing people benefit from that because, on the back side, they're most likely going to get a tax abatement from the City just because they have low-income and disability people?

Gail Livingston: The requirement for affordability extends through the period of the lease, is my understanding, without being the lawyer who's writing it and not having read one of these. So, we can get more information should you. How that will come about? I think 99 years from now, none of us knows what kind of federal, state, or other subsidy programs might be in place, so that's not dictated. What's dictated is the requirement for continued affordability throughout that period.

Female: Okay, [inaudible phrase 01:30:06] look back during the '80s and the '70s and when we had this thing called "rent control" where a two-bedroom apartment in the South End area was only \$250. When those apartments were

de-controlled, all they did was add a zero and made it \$2,500 a month for rent in the landmark district that was established through the City of Boston. Now, I could go to [Inaudible 01:30:30], Columbus Ave, Tremont, Washington Street, Harrison Ave, all the way to Arlington Street with the different developers that's come in there from Arlington Street to Mass Avenue when they're developing those different parcels at the same time. There are certain developments that BHA own down there because of what went through with the HUD failures and things through the churches and stuff. Back then, they didn't sell those properties around the Washington Street area – let's say Dedham Street, Washington Street, going across Tremont Street. Now you have different organizations like [Inaudible 01:31:19] Properties and different places who are buying up Tremont Street and different phases of Castle Square coming down, so now they're developing up by the 93 north and south. How much of that property – let's say what's between Castle Square to Mass Avenue from over by the bio lab on [Inaudible 01:31:40] Street back over to [Inaudible 01:31:43] around – what's that, 70, the high-rise that they own up there for the elderly people? Seventy St. Botolph Street – the senior home up there – how much of this property that BHA owns in

the South End or over near Roxbury is going to stay for low-[indigent 01:32:05] people? People are not being able to use their Section 8 and they have to move out of the City. What percentage is going to be within the City for people that have housing in these new developments?

Gail Livingston: We have no plans for the elderly developments to sell. I can only speak for what the BHA owns. And, for all the rest of it, – the City is hot for development. So, the BRA, the City of Boston, we – excuse me – we work with them. We are not part of them. We are not BRA. We are not the City of Boston, so I think we've continued this conversation for as long as we want – excuse me; just let me finish my sentence please – but this is not directly addressing anything that's really in the plan. I want to make sure that there's nobody else in the room that wants to speak about something in the plan before you and I go on and talk more about this.

Comment: Is it on? Okay, I guess it's on. Alright, as a former RAB member, I would like you to understand the forces that are forcing us out of our homes. And I think that it's always about blaming someone else when, really, a part of it is making these agencies what they ought to be by your participation. You know, it's

always a few people that end up doing all the work for every other tenant, which is really unfortunate because it's not about just joining to say you joined. It's about actually reading and saying, "No, we don't agree with this." And there have been, you know, a few times that the RAB Board did not like what HUD said and, unfortunately, HUD has the final authority, the federal government has the final authority over certain matters, which I think is unfortunate because for some of the things that make Metro Boston unique, we should have our own rule to make up our own rules rather than HUD, the federal government, always telling us what they think is best. Besides that, I think that some of the major threats, in terms of having diversity in Metro Boston and having our historic livability which we now have and other cities don't have – most cities don't have housing of any kind, except for luxury-type housing in the city proper. We're very lucky, very fortunate that we have any at all in Metro Boston. Second of all, there's corruption in nearly every agency in the State, and with different people; they're all corrupt and that's really sad. At some point, they've all been this way, including BHA. I have a number of newspaper clippings that say certain things or whatever, and it's up to us to make sure that we catch them when they do these things

because, otherwise, we're all going to lose. We're the groups that [inaudible phrase 01:36:04] but we have to stick together. It's not, "Oh, well, you know, this person's from this background and this person's from that background." No, it's not about priority preference points either. It's about sticking together. It's about being responsible, being good tenants wherever you're at, trying to be good tenants to each other, and paying the rent and being responsible. The other thing was, in terms of the competition for places to rent, you know, I like universities. Okay, I'm not an exception, but the expansions of all these universities – which we have about 1,000 in this state – their expansions are unregulated and unchecked, takes many, many houses, many blocks. I don't even think the federal government knows how many places were taken by university expansions. What were those buildings? Those buildings were either owner-occupied or tenant-occupied. They were not businesses. They take over several blocks, claiming that it's only one or two places, when it's several places that has one number, not seven numbers, as an address. So, you know, it just seems that, when it comes to several government things, that all we hear about is the university expansion and we have to let them know that they're the ones that are tax-free and they're not helping us.

Part of their job was to help us to, you know, learn and to have a place to live that we're comfortable and to have communities and they just do whatever they want. It's up to us to tell them, "No." It's up to us to form a group, to go to Washington and tell them what we want.

Thank you.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: What did y'all hope to accomplish by this meeting tonight, besides just listening to the public?

Response: That's what we intend to accomplish.

Comment: The last time on one of these, they established the BHA's plans and guidelines for the different developments and things, I still have those documents and papers and stuff. Listening to the public just simply means that you say you're listening to the public but it doesn't say that you're going in and change anything that's already been [inaudible phrase 01:38:52]. We know – we know that each city has what we call a 10-year production plan. So if this is 2015, everything we're doing now actually came about in 1995.

Response: So that's another City of Boston process, that they set goals for, I believe, new housing units that they

want to develop [inaudible phrase 01:39:27] how many of those are affordable. As we said at the beginning, at the outset of this, we want to hear peoples' comments on the plan and about what's going on. We submit – we type out the comments, we submit them to HUD on our plan. We also write responses to the comments and we take the comments into consideration with the potential of revising things that are in the current plan. We have been known to do that in the past. We can take – so, we have these comments that we received by people speaking tonight. We have comments that we already received in writing from people and we will continue to receive comments in writing on the annual plan until at least the fifteenth of December.

So, thank you all for coming out tonight. Sir, please make sure I have your address so I can follow up. If there are any other questions, specific to someone's housing situation that they would wish to ask, Kelly, Gloria, and I are here and we can address that with you if you have any additional questions. Thank you very much.