

HOMELESS SERVICES OVERSIGHT COUNCIL
Housing Committee
December 17, 2013, 2:00-4:00 PM
Department of Social Services
3433 S. Higuera, San Luis Obispo, Room 356

MEMBERS PRESENT		MEMBERS EXCUSED	STAFF, EXTERNAL GUESTS AND HSOC MEMBERS	
John Ashbaugh	Bob Kelley	Shelly Higginbotham	Laurel Weir	Martin Meltz
Jim Patterson	Steve Martin	Bull Chaney	Denise Rea	Aaron Lewis
Shirley Wright	Scott Smith	Jerry Rioux	Kathleen Martin	Nancy Sutton
		Dee Torres	Jason Carr	Bill Watt
			Elaine Archer	Janna Nichols
			Sandy Murray	

AGENDA ITEM		CONCLUSIONS/ACTIONS	FOLLOW UP
1. Call to Order and Introductions	The meeting was called to order by John Ashbaugh and introductions were made.		
2. Approval of Minutes	Minutes of the November 19, 2013 meeting were discussed and approved.	Motion: Martin Meltz Second: Bob Kelley Motion approved unanimously	
3. Public Comment	<p>Martin Meltz asked if HSOC will form a statement to submit to County requesting info on Housing Element and asked if they could be distributed to members of HSOC. Laurel Weir answered that County Planning is working on the document and it is expected to be available for public comment in January. The County will also be revising its Consolidated Plan next year and a working group could be formed to work on suggested revisions or amendments.</p> <p>Martin Meltz then asked if HASLO's non-profit corporation could suggest what they would like to</p>		

	<p>see built in South county.</p> <p>Chairman Ashbaugh asked Steve Martin if there were other places in Paso that we could look to develop into affordable housing. Steve Martin said he was not sure.</p> <p>Martin Meltz mentioned that no housing projects had been constructed in Morro Bay and said there was a need there for it. Scott Smith said there were some in Los Osos but not in Morro Bay.</p>		
<p>4. Action/Information/ Discussion 4.1 Housing Choice Vouchers 4.1.1 Discussion of barriers and possible steps to reduce barriers or delays</p>	<p>Laurel Weir stated that in a prior meeting, it was noted that Federal regulations differed from local Public Housing Authority rules for Housing Choice Vouchers (vouchers), in that local rules could be changed more easily. She suggested looking at which local regulations, if any, were acting as barriers to clients being able to use vouchers.</p> <p>Scott Smith suggested he could provide some educational background about the Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo (HASLO) and Section 8 (Housing Choice Vouchers), a tenant based form of housing assistance. When a client is approved for a voucher by HASLO, the client is issued a voucher and the client must try to find an apartment to rent that fits within HUD established cost limits and that meets HUD habitability standards. After an apartment is found and the landlord agrees to rent to the client, the client goes to HASLO and fills out a form for tenant assistance.</p> <p>The tenant the signs a lease with the landlord, which HASLO has an addendum to and HASLO has an agreement with landlord. The tenant pays the</p>		

	<p>portion of the rent as HASLO deems they can afford (30% of the client's income) and HASLO makes up the rest. The landlord receives two checks each month for the rent: one from HASLO and one from tenant.</p> <p>Scott Smith stated that the number of people eligible for assistance greatly exceeds the amount of available housing and has resulted in a waiting list. The waiting list is closed when there are so many people that they cannot accommodate them. The waiting list is currently closed. HASLO is allowed to create their own priorities for taking clients from the waiting list as vouchers become available and HASLO has set up a point system. If applicants are homeless, they would get enough points to move them to the top of the list.</p> <p>Sandy Murray said HASLO used to accept calls to be on the waiting list, which proved a problem because they could sometimes get 500 calls an hour. In 2010 they put 2200 households on the waiting list and, of that initial 2200, there are 900 still waiting for vouchers.</p> <p>Scott Smith said that the single biggest thing HSOC could do would be to lobby Congress for more resources. The second biggest would be to find better ways to use our limited resources.</p> <p>Elaine Archer stated that the problem of closing the list is that some people never get back on once it is open again. Scott Smith responded this is why we need to do the 100K Homes campaign to ID the top 50 most chronically homeless. He emphasized that the case management piece needs to come along with it or it won't be successful. Scott Smith</p>		
--	---	--	--

	<p>stated that Sequestration has resulted in significant funding cuts.</p> <p>Elaine Archer stated that there was a 10% attrition per year, most of which were due to forfeits, merging households, moving in with family etc. Vouchers can be taken to other Counties in the Country.</p> <p>Martin Meltz suggested doubling up tenants in shared housing. Kathleen Martin stated that that didn't necessarily result in a voucher being freed up. Martin Meltz suggested proposing that HUD free up some of the restrictions to income etc. to make this shared housing idea possible.</p> <p>Scott Smith said that the affordability barrier has been removed, and if a tenant has Section 8 they can afford the housing.</p> <p>Bob Kelley asked what the budget was for the vouchers. Scott Smith said HASLO pays an average of \$1.3 million a month to landlords for rent (known as Housing Assistance Payments or HAP). Bob Kelley then asked if that included administrative costs. Scott Smith replied it did not.</p> <p>Chairman Ashbaugh stated the average voucher cost was \$607/month.</p> <p>Elaine Archer said that 10% of the population in voucher housing was not paying for rent at all. 75% of new admittances to the program must have incomes below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI) and are considered "extremely low income" by HUD. At 80% of AMI, households no</p>		
--	---	--	--

	<p>longer qualify for housing assistance. Most people assisted by HASLO have incomes below 50% of the AMI, with priority going to households at 30% and below the AMI.</p> <p>Laurel Weir asked what options a client with an income of \$881 per month would have. Elaine Archer said it depended on rent and utility allowances. Sandy Murray explained it would work out for the client if the rent the landlord wanted fit into HASLO's formula. She noted if the landlord wanted rent that was higher, it may not work in tenant's favor.</p> <p>Kathleen Martin stated that there were programs such as Shared Senior housing that pair people in shared housing without Federal funding.</p> <p>Janna Nichols asked how the payment standard was determined. Elaine Archer stated that it was defined by HUD as 90% of fair market rent and it varied by region. San Luis Obispo County's went up but all the surrounding counties went down.</p> <p>Janna Nichols asked if there were differences within the county. Elaine Archer stated that there was no way to differentiate.</p> <p>Chairman Ashbaugh asked if people were taking vouchers to other counties. Scott Smith stated that they were here and he had a distribution list.</p> <p>Kathleen Martin stated that even with a voucher it was difficult to find housing in this County. Scott Smith said that they are 100% leased, meaning that they found housing for everyone who got a voucher for.</p>		
--	---	--	--

	<p>Scott Smith identified the following as barriers to finding housing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Payment standards can sometimes be a barrier to landlords2. Previous background with landlords and problems in credit reports can prevent a landlord from being willing to lease3. Many properties do not allow pets. <p>Elaine Archer stated that there were project based vouchers available, and letters had been sent out to 1000 people on a waiting list saying they could get housed faster on Madonna Road for example. Fewer than 10% had responded to take action.</p> <p>Another challenge was that tenants with vouchers sometimes refused to leave the area they were currently living in to find housing elsewhere.</p> <p>Nancy Sutton asked if project-based vouchers expired after a year. Elaine Archer answered no, that a client had to live there for one year but then it would turn into a housing voucher and they could move wherever they wanted.</p> <p>Chairman Ashbaugh asked if Oak Park in Paso was project based. Elaine Archer answered that some of the units were and they only received 35 names.</p> <p>Denise Rea said homeless people sometimes turned down housing because it was in Atascadero and not SLO. Bob Kelley asked if they got moved to end of list. Kathleen Martin answered no.</p>		
--	---	--	--

	<p>Nancy Sutton asked if someone with a housing choice voucher could use it to move into project-based housing. Elaine Archer answered yes.</p> <p>Elaine Archer stated that the elderly sometimes turned down a studio because they wanted a 2 bedroom due to the accumulation of a lot of stuff. She also noted that half a dozen people lose their vouchers each year because their income increases beyond the eligible limit.</p> <p>Martin Meltz asked if there were any regulations that could be suggested to change. Elaine Archer said if property management companies were willing to work with HASLO, that would help as tenants routinely report such companies do not accept vouchers.</p> <p>Scott Smith said some landlords were barely passing inspections but they were the only ones willing to rent to homeless. Laurel Weir said that if more SRO housing was created, it could address this. She also noted that fewer vouchers were issued this year due to Sequestration.</p> <p>Martin Meltz asked what could be done by cities and counties to sweeten the deal for landlords. Bob Kelley answered that the previously discussed idea to procure money for repair and deposit fund would address this. Laurel Weir stated that this fund was for the 50 most vulnerable homeless people.</p> <p>Janna Nichols stated that in south county, landlords were asking for maximum rental security deposits to cover risk, and that amount was more than has been set aside.</p>		
--	---	--	--

	<p>Sandy Murray stated that there used to be a damage claim of 30% of tenant income and landlords could file a claim against the tenant if damage occurred and HASLO would pay it. It was done away with because it was costing HUD a lot of money and stopped becoming an incentive. Sandy Murray stated that DSS has money that HASLO manages for tenant assistance and move in costs for households working with Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, or certain households who were participating in CalWorks. This money gets refunded to the tenant for APS, CPS and Post-CalWorks if there is no damage when they move out.</p> <p>Janna Nichols asked what would be the incentive that would work to entice landlords. Sandy Murray stated that there was little interest through landlords even with incentives.</p> <p>Scott Smith stated that case management has developed a network of landlords that were willing to house the hardest to house clients and relationships needed to be built with them.</p>		
	<p>Aaron Lewis agreed that the landlord relationship was important and they had been successful once they built a relationship with landlords to house difficult clients.</p> <p>Kathleen Martin said it would be an incentive for better tenants if they knew they were receiving a security deposit back.</p> <p>Jim Patterson said the County and Cities were developing their budgets for next year. He</p>		

	<p>suggested having HSOC make a recommendation to County by March to make funding available and to review Housing Element and make changes.</p> <p>Martin Meltz asked that the Housing Committee forward a recommendation that the Counties and cities contribute \$60K funded together for rental repairs and/or deposit costs for extremely low income people, asking the County to contribute 40% with the jurisdictions contributing amounts proportional to their populations to make up the other 60%. Janna Nichols asked if this was a separate proposal from 100K Homes. Martin Meltz answered yes.</p> <p>Sandy Murray said that who would be administering a rental repair fund would be the big question.</p> <p>Bob Kelley stated that he would want to know how many vouchers were coming from his city.</p> <p>Laurel Weir suggested that an Ad Hoc group could be created to look at this. Chairman Ashbaugh asked who would volunteer. Jim Patterson and Martin Meltz agreed to volunteer. Scott Smith said he would attend but expressed concern that they were “piece meal” funding requests.</p>	<p>Recommend creating a sub-committee including Jim Patterson, Martin Meltz and Scott Smith to look at funding requests.</p>	
<p>4.2 Continuum of Care Update</p>	<p>Laurel Weir announced that HUD has released the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the Continuum of Care grant funding competition. Due to the federal budget Sequestration, only renewals will be funded and one project will need to be put in Tier 2, which will put that project at risk of not being renewed. The County has</p>		

	<p>published a Request for Proposals (RFP) for renewal funding.</p> <p>The likelihood of all programs in the County receiving renewal funding will depend on how well the county scores on the application. Scores are increasingly based on performance. HUD is interested in number of homeless persons housed and number of housing units created for chronically homeless people. HUD also wants to see the Continuum of Care has a plan for the creation of additional, permanent supportive housing, which would help increase the score.</p> <p>Chairman Ashbaugh asked if the enumeration still needed to be done next year. Laurel Weir stated that staff was evaluating that issue and would be making a recommendation after the application was published.</p> <p>Chairman Ashbaugh asked if any permanent housing units were currently being created. Denise Rea said 8 units are being created through her project.</p>		<p>At the January 2014 HSOC meeting, staff recommended and HSOC agreed not to conduct a 2014 enumeration.</p>
<p>5.Discuss meeting times for 2014</p>	<p>The group discussed changing the meeting time and day. The group agreed to keep the time on the third Tues of the month with a next meeting date of January 21st at 3:00pm. The time was changed from the previous time of 2:00pm.</p>		
<p>6.Adjournment</p>	<p>Meeting was adjourned at 3:54PM</p>		