Resident Advisory Board Comments

MHA Agency Plan FY 2020 Update

INTRODUCTION:

Marin County Resident Advisory Board ("RAB") members meet monthly at Marin Housing Authority ("MHA") to review policies and procedure documents.

This year RAB reviewed “ACOP” manual as well as MHA Agency Plan FY 2020 Update. RAB held two additional meetings to review the Agency Plan Update FY 2020.

The Agency Plan is lengthy, with considerable new information and proposed policy plans. Members needed additional time to make Comments to meet the Comment Period deadline.

The following requests and recommendations were discussed in relation to the work and role of Resident Advisory Board.

- MHA needs to inform RAB well in advance of the Comment Period start and end dates.
- Provide RAB with details on any changes to the Plan that impact Public Housing residents.
- Board requests that MHA work with RAB throughout the year as the Agency Plan is being drafted.

In order to build trust to work together, MHA staff needs to provide board members with information on the process of review of Agency Plan and the purpose of making Comments. This is crucial as we approach the possibility, probability of conversion to RAD, Revitalization, Renovation of Golden Gate Village and AMP II properties.

The intent of the regulation promulgated ("Role of Resident Advisory Board") by Housing and Urban Development to receive RAB Comments must be fully understood by all members. The RAB would benefit from a workshop specifically addressing preparation of Comments and Review of MHA Agency Plan.
I. Notice of Public Comment Period - MHA Agency Plan Update FY 2020

COMMENT:

Provide the Agency Plan to RAB in a timelier manner. Members did not receive the Agency Plan for review until after the start date of the comment period. MHA needs to be sure to inform members of the start and end dates for Comment Period and provide all materials necessary for complete review.

Update MHA website to include FY 2020 Agency Update along with “Notice” of Public Comment Period/Start and End Dates.

POST NOTICE of Comment Period at each of AMP I and AMP II properties

II. Admissions and Eligibility

Definition – Family (page 10)

COMMENT: Include Kinship Care in definition of family.

III. Denial of Admission/Screening-Reasonable cause, illegal drugs, alcohol abuse

COMMENT:

Request description of type of treatment programs MHA considers valid to approve admission in the screening process for applicants that have a history of illegal drug use and alcohol abuse.

RAB concurs that a record and evidence of conviction of crime is an important and valid reasonable cause for denial. However, an arrest in and of itself should not be used to deny admission.

QUESTION:

Is a misdemeanor criminal record used by MHA to deny admission?

“Behavior of Household Members”

COMMENT:

“Behavior” is vague. Request MHA clarify type of behavior that result in denial.

“Order of Selection” - Does MHA give first preference to Marin county residents?
COMMENT:

IV. Financial Resources page 40- (see Chart)

Provide detail on expenditures for Capital funds and Operating Expenses.

Concerns have been raised regarding consultant fees paid by MHA. These fees drain money from the budget that could be spent to do deferred maintenance at all the properties. Some $300,000.00 dollars has been spent on consultants involved with the GGV Revitalization/Renovation plans and yet no reports with details and follow up have been presented to RAB. Housing Commissioners noted that follow up reports by these consultants should be presented to them at the public meeting. We have not seen any reports so far. The reports should detail objectives and goals accomplished.

Although MHA has indicted that these consultants are required in order to continue to “check all the boxes” required by HUD to review all financial options on such things as the RAD conversions, nothing has been done. It is difficult to see if this money is being spent wisely and that it is not a waste. Properties in both AMP I and AMP II should have some necessary immediate repairs/replacements.

Operating Expenses and Capital Fund not clear how the funding is being used; what programs, consultants, etc. A more thorough review of all documents and budgets must be accomplished by RAB in order to be fully informed on the financial details in the Marin Housing Agency Agency Plan.

V. “EXPLORE WAYS TO IMPROVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY FOR PUBLIC HOUSING”

“Green Energy Efficiency Grant from HUD stimulus award, ARRA funds, ESCO contract with Johnson Controls” with goal to “decrease the utility costs for Residents and Marin Housing to ensure sustainability of the public housing program under asset management.”

COMMENT:

Goal stated by MHA to “decrease the utility costs for Residents” must be reviewed more thoroughly to accurately assess how this goal has been met. The residents have been able to take advantage of a utility allowance required by HUD when the residents living in properties owned and managed by MHA experience higher utility costs. Although Public Housing Residents received new utility allowances as of July 1, 2019, this did not alleviate the need to use more energy.

The increase in energy and lack of energy efficiency in most properties owned and managed by MHA is due primarily to outdated windows, drafty doors and lack insulation and weatherization. Residents have had to use space heaters in winter and
air conditioners in summer to avoid becoming ill due to poor ventilation and lack of protection from cold and heat in their units.

Energy improvements and efficiency are still needed. MHA must aggressively pursue their options to provide new windows, doors, insulation, weatherization.

Some water heaters have not been replaced since 1991. Slider doors on patios cause significant loss of energy. Wiring in older buildings must be replaced to avoid fire danger, outages, power surges. Consumption of energy is directly tied to weatherization, energy efficient windows, doors, insulation. Without replacement it is not possible to reduce consumption of energy.

Request that MHA provide specific details on exactly what energy consumption and costs have been lowered for each of the properties owned and managed.

Request timeframe in which the AMP II properties will have replacement of windows, doors as was stated in Physical Needs Assessment, and as has been stated in Agency Plan FY 2018-2019.

VI. Asset Management-page 48

“Each AMP operates as though it is a separate entity with on-site management and maintenance. Each AMP has its own budget which is monitored very closely.”

COMMENT:

MHA has stated they are not required by HUD to have an onsite manager and maintenance person. Instead MHA has a position filled by one of the residents, known as the “Responsible Person.” This position does not fulfill the requirement to have a qualified onsite manager to address concerns of the property, including monitoring work of vendors and ensuring that residents are abiding by terms of lease agreement.

MHA does not have onsite maintenance person at any of the properties. Maintenance personnel are dispatched from a distance and must travel to each property to handle calls for repairs. Time is wasted in travel to and from the main office in Marin City. It would be more efficient to have one or two maintenance personnel assigned to AMP II properties on a regular basis and thereby avoid waste of time and resources.

Currently, AMP I and AMP II properties are managed by one Property Manager who is responsible for all units in MHA Portfolio (approximately 500 units.) There should be two Property Managers, one for AMP I and one for AMP II properties.
VII. MIXED FINANCE MODERNIZATION OR DEVELOPMENT (PAGE 50)

Demolition and/or Disposition

Possibility of demolition and/or disposition in upcoming Fiscal Year at the site (GGV)

COMMENTS:

GGV has a Historical designation and so there are many considerations that must be addressed in the planning and development of renovation/rehabilitation. In discussing Demolition and/or Disposition possibility the plans have yet to be presented on what is going to happen on the GGV property. Although discussion has included adding more affordable housing in Marin City, the problems of disparate impact must first be examined. Marin City has homes that were built as Affordable Housing. Ridgeway Housing provides approximately 300 homes and it is designated affordable, however, few if any residents of GGV can afford to buy one of these homes.

Marin County must build more affordable housing as is required by the State of California. Attempting to fulfill the mandate of more affordable housing using the land at Golden Gate Village, Marin City is a disservice to the residents. Vehement objection has been articulated in Housing Commissioners meetings to having more units built on the property.

There are other unincorporated areas in Marin County that would be suitable for development of affordable housing. MHA needs to listen to the GGV residents and do all deferred maintenance, repairs, renovations to existing units without delay.

RECOMMENDATION:

MHA and GGV Resident Council need to meet with Michael’s Organization executives to review plans and proposals. MHA needs to negotiate an agreement with GGV Resident Council regarding all aspects of the development process; involvement in design, renovations, community space, etc.

VIII. CONVERSION PUBLIC HOUSING-PROJECT BASED ASSISTANCE - RAD

Pages 50 and 51

COMMENTS:

Concern that there may be a lack of transparency Before, During, and After RAD Conversion. According to some advocacy groups Public housing agencies (PHAs) routinely deny residents and advocates access to plans and documents related to RAD
conversions, or do not provide the information in a timely manner. Consequently, residents are unable to make informed choices and exercise their rights.

**QUESTIONS:**

What is the percentage of ownership between Marin Housing Authority and private developer Organization) when converting properties via RAD?

MHA has been “analyzing” conversion to RAD for some years. Prior year Agency Plan included this same term; “analyzing” and to date there has been no reference as to making an application to HUD. When does MHA anticipate a decision on using RAD conversion?

What is the strategic plan to manage and handle outstanding maintenance and Capital Improvement needs of each of its AMP II properties?

What mechanism will MHA use in upcoming Fiscal Year to decide on either “Mixed-Finance Modernization and/or Development” of Golden Gate Village site?

Has MHA signed a Ground Lease Contract with Michael’s Organization?

Has MHA done a complete and thorough review of all GGV residents to learn their preference for development of the site?

Has MHA made an application to HUD for Rental Demonstration Program (RAD)?

Is there a plan being formulated with HUD to fast tract RAD conversion for MHA properties?

Will MHA be meeting with Resident Council of GGV prior to any agreement to sign with Michaels Organization?

IX. RAD CONVERSION Page 52

“Authority’s Capital Fund Budget will be reduced by pro rata share of Public Housing Developments converted as part of the Demonstration.”

“MHA will contribute Operating Reserves $250,000 and Capital Funds $800,000 towards conversion.”

MHA has debt under Energy Performance Contract (Johnson Controls, Inc.) which may result in additional reductions of Capital Operating Funds.”

**COMMENTS:**

How will MHA continue to manage the properties if the budget is depleted as stated?

Johnson Controls, Inc. –What work has been completed at each property for energy conservation? Is the entire 2.2 Million dollars spent? Details requested.
X. “Public Housing Developments which may be converted to RAD chart” pages 52 to 57

COMMENT: Please provide explanation of amount of money indicated under each public housing development (chart) entitled: “Capital Fund allocation of Development.”

XI. Management Improvements - Nan Mc Kay Contract

COMMENT:
RAB members have concerns about the level of service from this firm. Complaints range from poor answering service to incorrect recertifications; delays in processing paperwork. The firm is receiving $410,000 in a contract with MHA and the renewal of contract is due November, 2019. MHA should cancel its contract and hire its own staff. Residents of both Section 8 and Public Housing need timely and efficient service since issues of income and maintenance are key to their housing.

ADDITIONAL RAB MEMBER COMMENTS:
1. Why the RAB isn’t kept updated on MHA’s website? There is nothing current on website. No agendas, minutes, materials etc.
2. Goal: Explore ways to improve energy efficiency for public housing. What specific actions have been/ will be taken to implement energy efficient improvements? Residents at GGV have been denied weather stripping, energy efficient kitchen and bathroom appliances.
3. Local Preferences - State or Federal Witness Protection What type of outreach has been made in order for victims to get this preference? How many victims have been able to access this preference?
4. Strategy Statement of the Capital Fund Program has not been discussed at RAB meetings. Which RAB meetings were these issues discussed this year?
5. How is Self-Sufficiency Issues addressed at Golden Gate Village?
6. Resident Hiring - How many residents have been hired in permanent positions or contracts within the past 2 years.
7. What outreach effects have made to outreach residents?
8. MIXED-FINANCE MODERNIZATION OR DEVELOPMENT

MICHAELS CONTRACT NEEDS TO BE CANCELLED IMMEDIATELY!!! THEY HAVE NOT MET ANY OF THEIR DATES IN THEIR CONTRACT!!!!!! THEIR ENTIRE VISIONING PHASE WORKPLAN STILL IS NOT COMPLETED! THEY HAVE CREATED PLANS THAT “SUPPOSELY” HAD RESIDENT INPUT. BUT THEY DON’T REFLECT RESIDENT INPUT AT ALL!!

First and Foremost - GOLDEN GATE VILLAGE IS A NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER FOR HISTORIC PLACES!!!! THIS PROPERTY IS HISTORIC FOR BOTH THE ARCHITETURE AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF AFRICAN AMERICANS CONTRIBUTION DURING WORLD WAR II. RESIDENTS WILL NOT ALLOW THIS TO BE TORN DOWN!!!

MHA IS DELIBERATELY NEGLECTING Golden Gate VILLAGE, HOWEVER THE BUILDINGS ARE SAFE AND SOUND. THEY WERE BUILT WITH THE BEST MATERIALS TO LAST ANOTHER 100 YEARS! THE ONLY THING THAT IS NEEDED AT GOLDEN GATE IS TO RENOVATE THE INTERIORS OF OUR HOMES. RESIDENTS WANT THEIR HOMES DEEP GREEN RENOVATED AND RETROFITTED, THE LANDSCAPE RESTORED AND A WAY TO OWN THEIR HOMES AT COSTS THAT VERY LOW AND EXTREMELY LOW INCOME PEOPLE CAN AFFORD IN MARIN COUNTY.
MHA claims that HUD does not give enough money for repairs; MHA will not repair any needed major repairs. Many residents are living in squalor. There are state, federal and foundation dollars that are available to pay for the renovations and restoration of this historic property!!!

The County of Marin desires to create a Disparate Impact situation in Marin City by proposing to add between 144 to 230 new dwellings on the Golden Gate Village site. Marin City has more than our share of “affordable” housing. In fact, Marin City is more dense and integrated than all the neighboring cities. This action will trigger a lawsuit against MHA and Marin County...

- Additional Comments could not be made since the Comment Period cut off date is October 4, 2019.