

**MINUTES**  
**St. Charles County**  
**Commission on Housing Assistance**

**February 25, 2022 9:00 a.m.**

**Attending Commission Members:**

Michael Hurlbert, Chairperson; Kurt Frisz, Bob Schnur, Samantha VanNatta, and Dorothy Cedano (via telephone)

**Absent Commission Members:**

none

**Others Attending:**

Robert Myers and Mariza Almstedt, St. Charles County; and Dianna Clair, NECAC

**Meeting Call to Order**

Michael Hurlbert called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. He announced that Jennifer George, who has chaired the Commission, has left employment with St. Charles County and that he was nominated to Chair the Commission. He announced that Bob Schnur, Assistant Director of Administration, and Samantha VanNatta, Public Health Department Director, have been appointed by the County Executive as new members and thanked them for their service.

**Agenda**

**Motion: To Approve the Agenda as Presented**

Mr. Hurlbert entertained a motion to approve the Agenda. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

**Approval of November 16, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Mike Hurlbert and Dorothy Cedano are the two members present at the November 16, 2021 meeting. Mike entertained a motion to approve the minutes. Dorothy made a motion to approve the minutes, and Mike seconded the motion. Upon a vote, the minutes were approved by unanimous voice acclamation.

**Public Comments**

The floor was open for public comment. There was no public comment.

**COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS**

- The Opening of the Wait List on February 14, 2022

Dianna stated that the Section 8 wait list was opened on February 14, 2022 and as of February 22, 69 people were on the list and 231 had applied pending proof of residency. Bob Schnur asked if there is a cap on the wait list and Dianna said there is no cap. She prefers to leave it open as long as possible and follows HUD's rule not to have anymore than can be served in two years. Mike asked how that compares to last year and Dianna stated it was not open. In 2020 there were over 800 at that time and are now gradually finishing up that list.

- HUD Waiver to Increase Payment Standard to 120%

Dianna Clair referred to HUD's published notice Expedited Regulatory Waivers for the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher (including Mainstream and Mod Rehab) Programs. Recognizing a lack of affordable rental housing and the increase of market rents, HUD recognizes St. Charles County is listed by HUD as being eligible to increase Section 8 payments from 100% to 120% of fair market rents. Dianna said she has requested, and HUD has approved, as of February 2, 2022, an increase to 120%. Robert asked if the County needed to take any actions, and Dianna answered in the negative. Dianna noted rents are still higher than 120% and struggles to find affordable units and under this circumstance would be futile to issue more vouchers.

- FSS (Family Self-Sufficiency) Funding Increased

Dianna announced that the FSS grant was approved and almost doubled. The amount received was \$93,554 compared to last year's total of \$47,834. She explained the money can only be spent to FSS salaries and is looking to hire another FSS Coordinator for the O'Fallon office. She provided a brief overview of the program highlighting it is a five-year program which provides counseling to help people become self-sufficient. It is available to anyone who has a voucher. Participants cannot be in the program until they are in a signed lease and must be able to work.

- Budget/Utilization/Projection for the Year

Dianna said HUD has not yet sent out 2022 renewal funding but will continue to operate and project based on last year's funding. Dianna presented two documents (1) MO227 HCV Leasing and (2) Spending Projection – The Goods and MO227 HCV Leasing and Spending Projection – The Goods, that she uses to make projections by plugging in numbers. Payment standards are still below market rates and apartments are not coming in with affordable rates. Dianna explained when a voucher is given, staff informs what their rent rate is and what is affordable. Dorothy asked if vouchers expire after 12 months if a place cannot be found for rent. Dianna said the reason she said she would expire them is because the waiting list was open. Dianna said before the pandemic they were good for 60 days and are now extended to participants who kept in touch with staff. During the pandemic, vouchers have been good close to a year. Bob asked if the 120% is an index that is established geographically. Dianna answered in the negative as all the fair market rents that HUD publishes is by county and are posted early in April.

## **COMMISSION DISCUSSION ITEMS**

- Landlord Outreach

Dianna asked Mike if he had any meetings with landlord prospects. Mike said he had a meeting with Sts. Joachim & Ann Care Service and spoke to their Housing Locator (Heidi) who helps tenants find affordable housing. He learned that Sts. Joachim and Ann have an initiative to create affordable housing and their goal is to buy about 20 units. Currently, they have raised approximately \$700,000. The Housing Locator has a list of about 300 landlords to contact to find housing. Mike said conversations will continue and the Housing Locator will use Community Development as a resource.

- Housing Priority Discussion

Mike said there have been previous discussions about changing the housing priority so participants wouldn't have to be County Residents. He said there was some discussion that it would change this year but will probably have to be revisited next year or later, as elected officials prefer that the housing priority not change. The lack of affordable housing is a barrier.

Next meeting is scheduled to be determined in May 2022.

## **MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

Mike Hurlbert made, and Kurt Frisz seconded, a motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:41 a.m.